TECHNOCRACY:

ITERATION X™

A Sourcebook
for Mage: The Ascension™

TECHNOCRACY:
ITERATION X

Flesh and the Machine

Credits

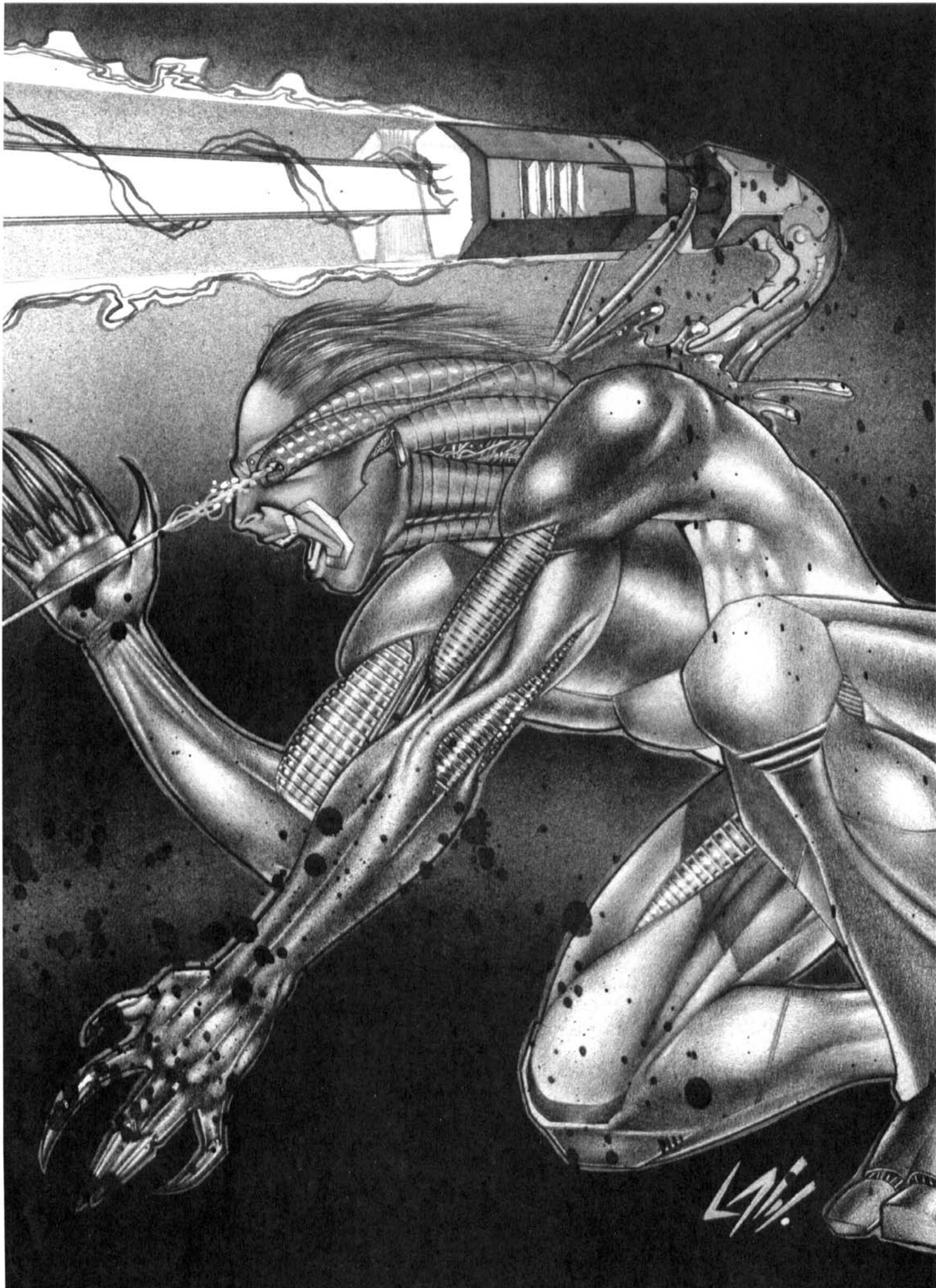## Special Thanks To:

SCANNED BY
SG <:B-

Dedicated to Harlan Ellison, whose stories of a dark future dominated by technology are too frightening for many of us to imagine on our own. Perhaps the inspiration is far too familiar.

TECHNOCRACY: ITERATION X

Table of Contents

Documentation Demo: IIIOOIOIOO

Cast away the greed and death machine and bytes and abacus and lights and hold onto your dreams tonight.
— Midnight Oil, "Renaissance Man"

My name is William Smith, and I am a man.

```
¤ ERROR 253
CORRECT DESIGNATION = 1110010100
CORRECT FUNCTION = ARMATURE OF
ITERATION X
CORRECT DESIGNATION = 1110010100
CORRECT FUNCTION = ARMATURE OF
ITERATION X
CORRECT DESIG
<<BREAK>>
```

A man. I first remembered this fact earlier this morning. I record the events leading up to my freedom of thought in hardcopy now — before I am forced to forget.

```
02:59:06.83
02:59:07.66
02:59:08.49
```

The atomic clock in my skull kept time to the pumping of my heart, a regular seventy-two beats per minute. Sensors indicated that the mountain air had fallen below freezing sometime after dark. Suspended in insulative gel, encased in an armored exoskeleton, I would have never known. Body temperature remained at an ideal 37⁻C; breathing rate — had I been breathing rather than sucking oxygen directly into the bloodstream through a tube — would have remained a perfectly calm twelve inhalations per minute.

My artificial eyes cut through the darkness. The others appeared as grainy, green-tinted holo-images. They could have passed for two men and a woman. Or more specifically, for Iteration X's image of the ideal humans: synthetic skin stretched over the frames of body-builders. Shaved heads. Standard-issue gray uniforms of stiff military cut. Standing motionless and emotionless in the sub-zero weather, neither shivering nor exhaling clouds of frosty air. A crimson glow behind each cornea hinted at their mechanical origin. And the fact that some deviant in Public Works had rigged one HIT Mark with the face of Arnold. I planned to report this sign of personality to a Programmer upon returning to the Construct.

At 3:00:00.00, I stepped up to the chain-link fence and raised the thermic lance integrated into my exoskeleton's left arm. I dragged the tip against the mesh. Where it touched, super-heated slag burned through the links. An efficient use of time and motion, with a minimal chance of alerting our enemy. Since the fence was probably made from some material far stronger than steel, the waste in energy would be permitted.

Arnold#2 grabbed a fistful of mesh in each hand and prepared to bend back the fence. He had hardly begun the motion when he was interrupted. With a screech and grind, his perfectly-built frame locked for an instant. Then began to vibrate. Lightning played over the syntheskin, outlined by a corona of St. Elmo's fire.

The rest of the Shock Corps stepped back respectfully.

Now conducting some powerful energies, the HIT Mark jerked like a papier mâché puppet rather than two hundred kilograms of hi-tech wizardry. The stiff collar and sleeves of its uniform leaked smoke just before catching fire. Arnold's

¤ ERROR 253
CORRECT DESIGNATION: HYPER INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGIES MARK V
MODEL NUMBER: 01010101

features ran like wax on a cheap museum replica. No longer resembling Arnold, the HIT Mark's locked fingers eventually

¤ 5.38 SECONDS

came loose of their grip on the fence. It crashed to the snowy ground, smoking and steaming. I couldn't say what melted syntheskin and fused circuitry smell like; the exoskeleton's sensors had not been not calibrated for scent and we were discouraged from imagining.

From the looks of it, even the HIT Mark's skeleton had melted slightly under the stress. That was pure Paradox. Primium is impervious to mundane electricity. It neither conducts nor insulates. Its melting indicated that magickal Forces were involved.

As if to confirm this conclusion, I suddenly noticed a sign: "Warning — 10,000 Volts." It had definitely not been there a minute ago.

A taunt from our enemies.

I was not amused. Neither was I angry. However, I was aware that we were 14.07 seconds behind schedule. And the Sons of Ether had detected us. I transmitted a brief communication string to this effect.

¤ OPEN "COM1:9600,E,8,1,BIN" OUTPUT

SEND "01010011 01001000 01001111
01000011 01001011 00000000 01000011
01001111 01010010 01010000 00000000
00000011 00000000 01000100 01000101
01010100 01000101 01000011 01010100
01000101 01000100 11111111 01001111
01001110 01000101 00000000 01001000
01001001 01010100 00000000 01001101
01000001 01010010 01001011 00000000
01001111 01010110 01000101 01010010
01001100 01001111 01000001 01000100
01000101 01000100 11111111 01010010
01000101 01010001 01010101 01000101
01010011 01010100 00000000 01000110
01010101 01010010 01010100 01001000
01000101 01010010 00000000 01001111
01010010 01000100 01000101 01010010
01010011 11111111 01000101 01001110
01000100 11111111"

CLOSE "COM1:9600,E,8,1,BIN" OUTPUT

We wasted precious milliseconds waiting for a reply. This was procedure: no action without the Comptrollers' confirmation. Personal initiative is unpredictable, and therefore to be avoided. Deviance throws off the program. The electrified fence seemed to confirm this universal law — magick is unpredictable, cunning, irrational and careless. Beyond the fence, our enemies plotted within that Dutch mansion, seemingly another outcropping of the barren mountains.

Not for much longer.

Our orders came through.

¤ RECEIVING TRANSMISSION:

01000011 01000001 01001110 01000011
01000101 01001100 00000000 00100010
01001001 01001110 01010011 01000101
01010010 01010100 11111111 01000011
01001111 01001101 00100010 00111011
01001100 01001111 01000001 01000100
00000000 00100010 01011000 00111010
01000001 01010011 01010011 01000001
01010101 01001100 01010100 11111111
01000011 01001111 01001101 00100010
00101100 00000000 01010010 11111111
01010100 01000001 01010010 01000111
01000101 01010100 00100100 00111101
00100010 01010110 01000001 01001110
00000000 01000010 01000001 01010011
00100010 00111011 00100010 01001000
01000001 01010010 01001100 01000101
01010001 01010101 01001001 01001110
00100010 00111011 00100010 01000100
01011111 01001110 01011111 01010110
01000001 01001110 00100010 00111011
00100010 01010111 01000101 01001100
01001100 01010011 00100010 11111111
01001100 01001111 01000011 01000001
01010100 01000101 00000000 01010100
01000001 01010010 01000111 01000101
01010100 00100100 11111111 01000100
01000101 01001100 01000101 01010100
01000101 01010100 01000001 01010010

JoHNSoN

01000111 01000101 01010100 00100100
11111111 01000101 01001110 01000100
11111111
CONVERTING TO ABSTRACT THOUGHT...
DOWNLOADING TO CORTEX...

Almost instantaneously, my CPU had converted the binary code and brought the message to mind:

CANCEL "INSERT.COM"; LOAD
"X:ASSAULT.COM", R
TARGET$ = "VAN
BAAS";"HARLEQUIN";"DONOVAN";"WELLS"
LOCATE TARGET$
DELETE TARGET$
END

I raked the thermic lance down another section of fence. A three-meter square of mesh fell inward, breaking the connection. Leading the two remaining HIT Marks through the breach, I marched up the sloping stone.

We were half a kilometer from the fence when the sentinels engaged us. With sufficient warning, my audio-amplifier had detected the sound of crunching snow, scraping claws and irregular grunted breaths. Life readings showed a dozen blips. Back at the fence, there was probably another new sign: "Beware of Dogs."

They literally threw themselves at us in the dark. Their appearance suggested we were assaulting the island of Dr. Moreau, not a Sons of Ether Chantry in the Taconic mountains. The Sentinels were unnatural crossbreeds — features of bear, deer, wildcat, fox and raccoon stitched to humanoid bodies. Like some Progenitor's pet project.

I switched on magnesium headlights, more in an attempt to blind them than to see.

The sentinel beating itself against my metalflesh was part porcupine. Without breaking the momentum of my stride, I caught its quilled head in my right hand and brought the three wedge-shaped fingers together. This is an efficient method of killing.

¤ ERROR 253
UNACCEPTABLE SYNTAX
SUBSTITUTES: CANCEL; DELETE;
DISCONTINUE; ERASE; ELIMINATE;
EXTERMINATE; TERMINA
<<BREAK>>

The degenerates were no match for post-modern technology. The "female" HIT Mark's hand exploded to reveal the flashing muzzle of a minigun. With that amputation and flayed syntheskin, she would no longer pass for human, but then, neither would my eight-foot, golden exoskeleton.

Repeatedly, we withstood the beast-men's futile hit-and-run tactics. We never pursued. No need to waste ammunition, energy, or time. Our objective was the Chantry house.

Relentlessly advancing, I noticed that we had flushed out the Etherboys. A purple flash of lightning illuminated a cigar-shaped silhouette rising from behind the mansion.

One of our gleaming silver ARCs (Advanced Rotor Craft) swept low over the rocks, thundering towards it. Spotlights probed the ground and air, finally transfixing the clumsy, droning zeppelin. Coincidentally, four guided missiles malfunctioned. The fifth hit its mark. In slow motion, the zeppelin sank behind the mansion and exploded in a ball of flaming, green Ether.

¤ **ETHER. BELIEVED BY ANCIENT GREEK PHILOSOPHERS TO BE THE FIFTH ELEMENT, A "COSMIC" OR "ESSENTIAL" AIR. FURTHER DEVELOPED BY DESCARTES AND OTHER SELF-TITLED "SONS OF ETHER" (SEE TEXTFILE "R-ENEMY.SOE"). CONCEPT OF ETHER DISPROVED BY EINSTEIN'S LAW OF RELATIVITY.**

On another part of the mountain, an Etherboy tripod machine was ray-gunning with abandon.

This blatant show of force and magick, our apparent lack of concern over disturbing the Masses — this may surprise you. You think that Technomancers are skulking manipulators. Iteration X least fits this preconception. In the silent night, sometimes in the shadowless twilight beyond the Barrier, Iteration X battles the enemies of Technocracy. Endless calculations minimize danger to our reality. Witnesses are casualties.

For its part, Mount Graylock is remote. And we would erase all records of our purge on the Etherboys.

We penetrated the Chantry house at 3:19:34.98. To maximize efficiency, the Shock Corps split up. The exoskeleton's hydraulic stride sounded loud to my audio receptors as I explored the labyrinthian, gas-lit halls. Yet I calculated that echoes would conceal my location as effectively as silence. Wherever possible, I avoided their final defense — crude, dome-shaped mechanicals armed with cannons, like something out of a da Vinci sketchbook. Whenever they were spotted, I destroyed them.

3:27:51.11.

I cornered the enemy — a middle-aged female with wild hair and even wilder eyes

¤ **CROSS-REFERENCING WITH VISUAL PROFILES...**
TARGET IDENTIFIED: VAN BAAS
>TRADITION MAGE, SON OF ETHER
>DEACON OF GRAYLOCK CHANTRY
>MASTER OF FORCES, MATTER; ADEPT OF ENTROPY, PRIME; DISCIPLE OF UNSPECIFIED OTHER SPHERES OF MAGICK
*** WARNING: CONFIRMED ENEMY ***
*** SCHEDULED FOR DELETION ***

—in a cluttered lab. Van Baas froze, clutching armloads of paperwork to her chest. A heavy strapped chair squatted between us. Above that single piece of furnishing, a massive coiled rod hung from an opening in the domed ceiling. Lightning flashed. An ARC thundered overhead.

Using the chair as cover, Van Baas backed into an alcove as I slowly advanced. There was no melodrama in my measured tread, no caution, no confidence. Merely the means to an objective. With a swing of my armature, the chair snapped loose of its securing bolts and toppled aside. I did not intend to play monkey-chase-the-weasel.

A flutter of falling scrolls alerted me to her right hand. It had crept towards a lever on the wall.

The coiled lightning rod.

With a burst of hydraulic fluid, I sprang closer to the wall. Her deepening frown proved that this trick-or-trap had failed. Or so I thought. I mistook concentration for disappointment. Raising and igniting the thermic lance, I clanged forward over the iron-grilled floor.

Grilled floor.

The thought had barely registered in either half of my mind when she pulled the switch, focusing her magick. Lightning struck the spiral rod, forked downward, and grounded in the grill which now formed the lab floor.

A grill which had not been there a moment before. And I suppose Van Baas was wearing rubber-soled shoes. The Masses call it coincidence; Technocrats, statistical inevitability. Mages call it magick.

All went black as my exoskeleton short-circuited.

¤ **DEVICE FAILURE AT 3:28:42.19**
MISSING MEMORY FILES
DIAGNOSTIC REQUIRED

Vaguely, I felt a tilt and a crash — the exoskeleton toppling. I became acutely aware of the wires penetrating my skull, the gel which permeated every pore of my body. And that my respirator had shut down with all other systems.

Imagine the worst case of claustrophobia. No comparison. I have heard that a dozen hours in an isolation tank will break the strongest wills. That would have been bliss. I was encased within inches of impenetrable metal and a constricting, non-permeable membrane. I was an Awakened mage, a Technocrat, a member of the most powerful group in existence. And I was going to die of suffocation....

Suddenly, I was little Billy Smith — cripple, child of thalidomide — all over again.

As my organic brain depleted its last minutes of oxygen, it dredged up a thousand thoughts. I remembered the times when my cousins Paul and Garth would toss my compact, almost limbless body over the clothesline in our deep backyard — a perverse game of volleyball. Relying on the exoskeleton was similar to trusting them. Not a healthy trust, but a helpless, desperate dependence. Because without that one thread of confidence, there would only be mind-numbing panic.

Dreamily, I realized that half of my mind was silent. The power surge had crashed my CPU. This deepening sense of isolation fed mixed feelings of loneliness and panic. Like being left beneath the clothesline after dark, while

Paul and Garth hid — just out of eyesight, but not far enough to risk a tongue-lashing for leaving me alone — because it was oh so funny to watch wide-eyed Billy cry and maybe wet his pants. And when they finally revealed themselves, laughing as only evil kids can, and took me home, I would never tell on them. Because I was desperate for their "friendship." I had never realized how much I valued the constant commentary of my CPU; a lone companion among the impersonal masses of Iteration X.

That was my last thought before forever sleeping.

And awakening.

¤ POWER RESTORED AT ??? TIME
RECALIBRATE INTERNAL CLOCK

Perhaps this was a final effort of my will. Or the subconscious application of my lengthy conditioning in the disciplines of Forces and Matter. First, I was aware of the hum of my alter ego rebooting; then of the sensors coming back on line; and of the happy conclusion that fresh oxygen was pumping into my veins.

The second thing I realized was my treasonous thoughts. Whether it was my mind-bending terror, the seconds of free thought without continual reinforcement of my CPU, or some combination — I was free of my conditioning. I recognized the crock Iteration X had fed me.

¤ ERR
<<BREAK>>

(Shut up; calculate pi.)

¤ CALCULATING...

My masters had offered to make me whole, almost perfect. Invited me into the ranks of a Convention which made the Masses look flawed by comparison. They claimed that I would look upon mundanes with the same mix of pity and derision (which pretty much amount to the same thing) with which they had previously viewed me. Well, yes, my exoskeleton and implants made me physically and mentally superior. Yet here I was, more dependent and helpless than before. I had simply traded one wheelchair for another.

And that's how my freedom of thought returned.

That was hours ago. We have returned to the Construct. Soon my report will be down-loaded. When that happens, they will discover that I no longer follow their program. And they will fix me.

Before that happens, I plan to produce this report. As a reminder to myself and others that William Smith is more than a mechanical monster. To apologize in some small way to those I have betrayed in my short term within the Technocracy. And to reveal the flaws of Iteration X to anyone still capable of opposing them.

Plugged into a hard-copier, spilling my guts through an adapter port at 200 characters per second, I'll send the final printout to the address memorized from a magazine called *Paradigma*, discovered in Graylock Chantry. If Van Baas is reading this, thanks for indirectly reminding me of two important facts:

My name is William Smith, and I am a man.
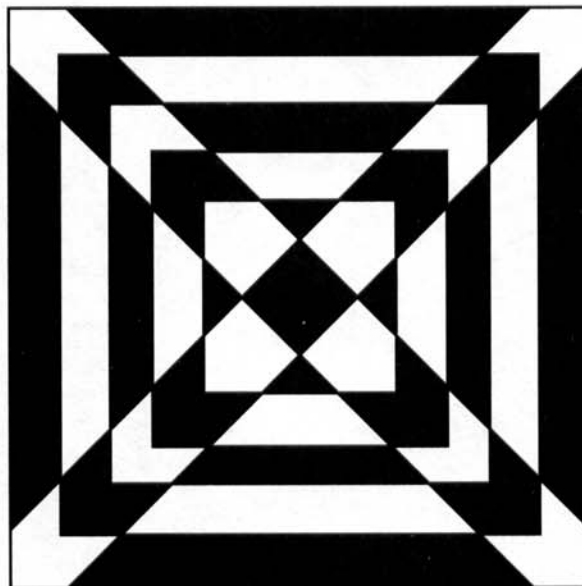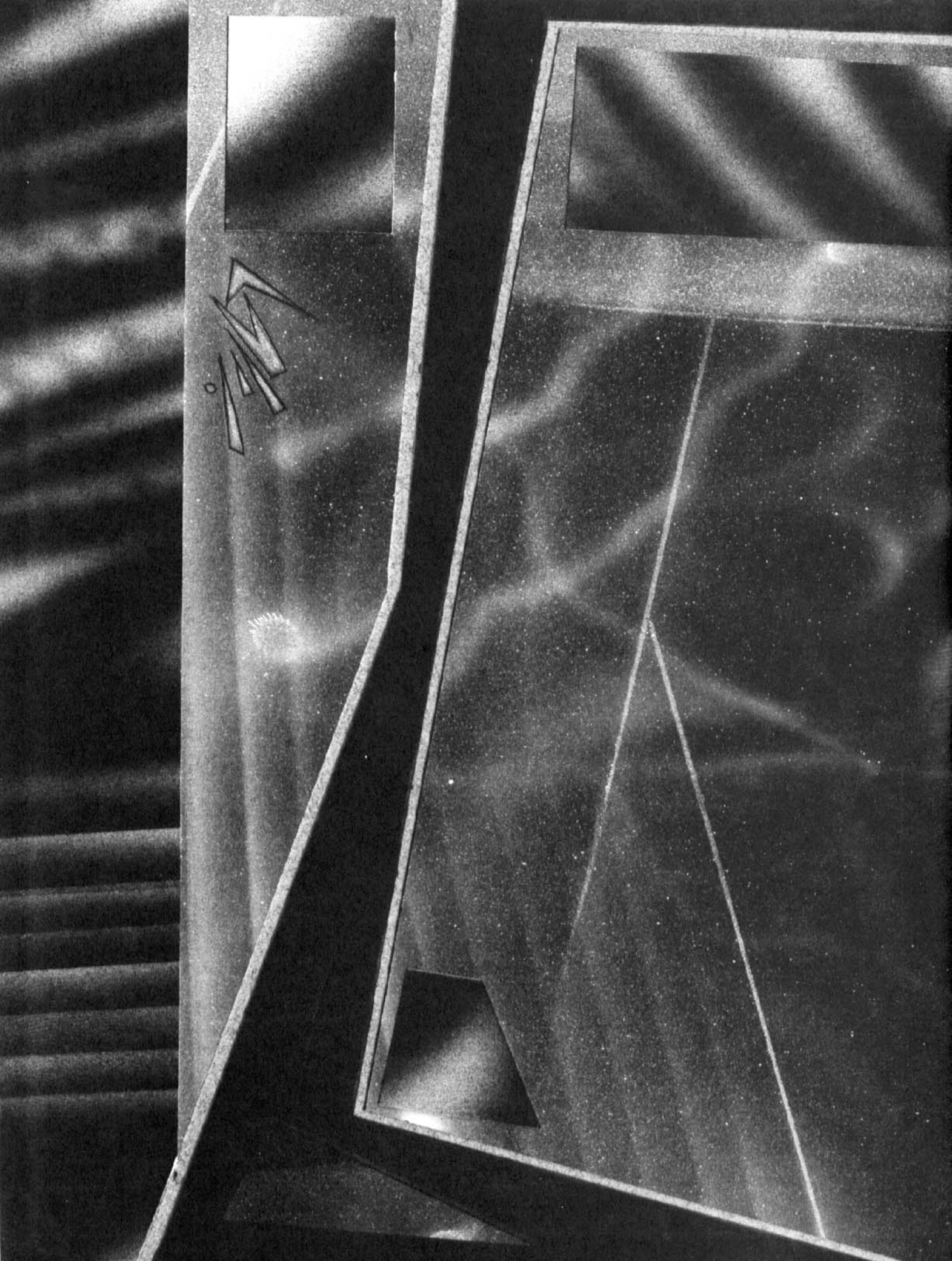
Drive A: Hardcopy

Power, like a desolating pestilence,
Pollutes whate're it touches; and
obedience,
Banes of all genius, virtue, free-
dom, truth,
Makes slaves of men, and of the
human frame,
A mechanized automaton.
—Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Queen
Mab*
I am the new way to go
I am the way of the future
— My Life with the Thrill Kill
Cult, "After the Flesh"
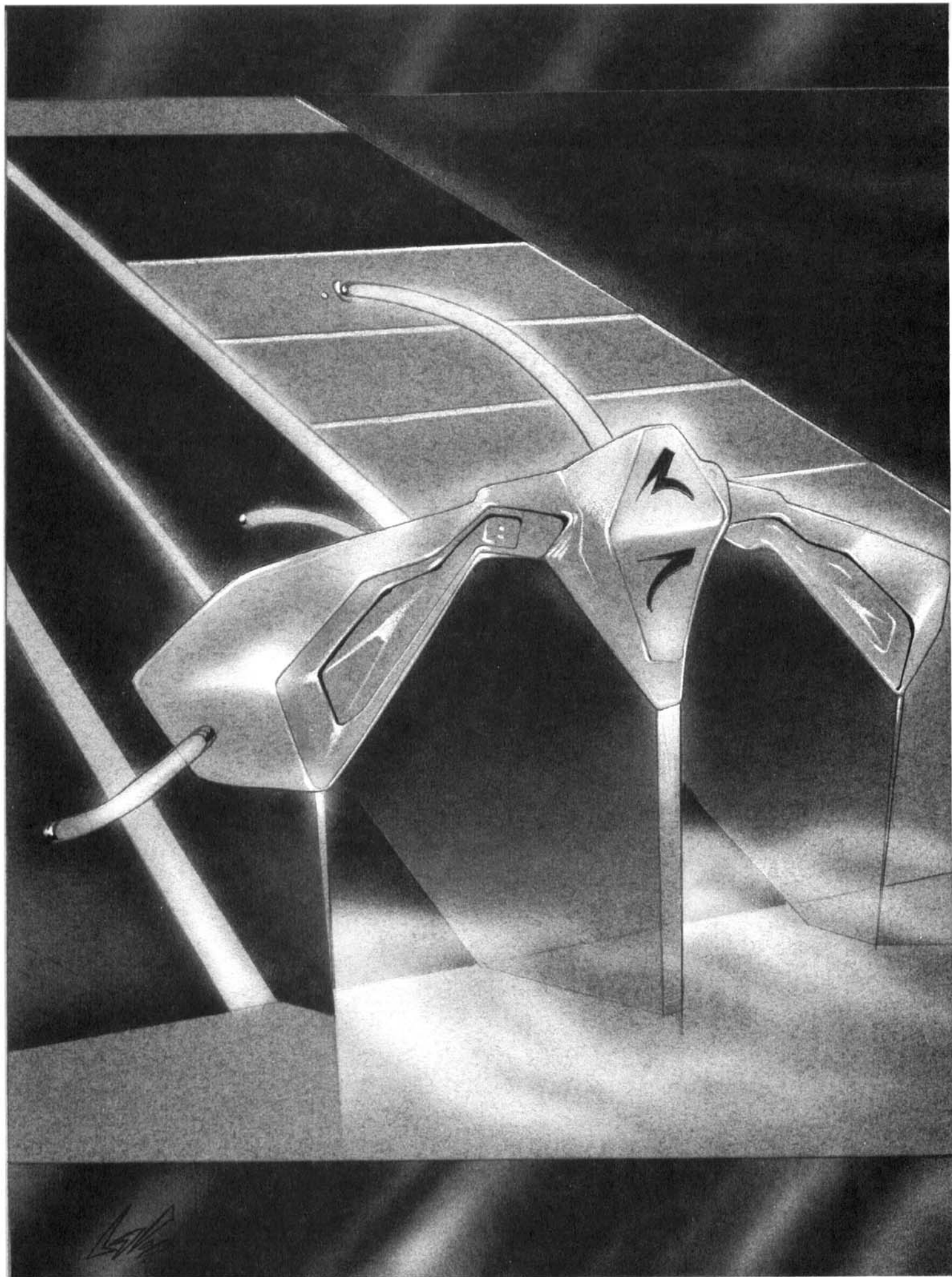
Disk One:
Initialized

A woman came up to me and said
"I'd like to poison your mind
with wrong ideas that appeal to you
though I am not unkind."
— They Might Be Giants, "Whistling in the Dark"

Recruiting

My time with Iteration X began 16 April 1993, at about 11:30 a.m. I was more clock-conscious than usual because of the day's appointment with my contractor.

¤ **CAPACITY OVERLOAD....**
CALCULATION ABANDONED AFTER 500,000,000,000 DECIMAL PLACES
CANNOT CONTINUE

Dr. Zimmermann questioned me about the pneumatic arms her lab had attached to my wheelchair six months earlier. Any problems with the compressed gas? The piston joints? Was I able to manipulate the valves (with my rudimentary fingers) well enough? And so on. I answered her questions with concerns, complaints and some grudging acceptance. These white plastic limbs were ugly, slow and crude. But honestly? I was too proud and to self-

sufficient to admit how useful these "robot" arms were to me. How had I survived 34 years without them?

In retrospect, I see that Iteration X must have been watching me for some time.

¤ **SUBJECT: WILLIAM ARTHUR SMITH**
BORN: 4-3-1960 [FLINT, MICHIGAN, U.S.A]
HEIGHT: 0.92 METERS
WEIGHT: 41 KILOGRAMS
EYE COLOR: GREEN-BLUE
HAIR COLOR: RUST
FEATURES: REFER TO HOLOGRAPH
HANDEDNESS: RIGHT
BLOOD TYPE: B+
DNA SEQU
<<BREAK>>

Working through Detroit General, the Convention had propped me up with a motorized wheelchair and pneumatic arms until I was all but dependent on their support. The good doctor was preparing to pull out the rug.

"Just a moment, William. I'd like to show you something."

She went to the closet for a blue nylon backpack. Unzipping it, she removed… a human forearm! My breath hitched for an instant before everything clicked. The arm looked as though it were amputated from a fresh cadaver; it was that realistic. She brought the prosthesis over for a better look.

"Its a newer model," she said without needing to. The synthetic skin had wrinkles, tiny hairs, individual fingernails, a slight transparency through which I noticed bluish veins… From the amputated end snaked two wires, each ending in contact electrodes.

As I admired the detail, the realism, Dr. Zimmermann pressed the two electrodes against my own truncated arm. I recoiled at the intimate touch, cold metal, my own self-consciousness.

The prosthetic limb twitched.

I looked at her, then at the arm. By flexing my three hooked fingers, I made the prosthesis do the same. Only more perfectly.

"It's still very much in the prototype stage. But a select few have these and lead normal lives among the Masses. If you'd like, I could arrange a meeting with the organization which is developing this." I told her I'd like that.

As I left Detroit Medical Center, my mind snagged on a mantra from the Bionic Man T.V. show. *Better. Faster. Stronger.* Try though I might, I couldn't dismiss these thoughts—the pipe dreams of a cripple.

ΩΩΩΩΩΩ

The bus stopped in front of a series of densely-packed buildings on 32nd Street. The driver opened the doors and set the hydraulic ramp to lower.

"You want I should help you?" he asked. Ignoring him, I drove off the ramp even before it had hit the curb.

Dr. Zimmermann's directions from last week indicated a door beneath the sign "Duplex Recycling." Strange name for a company involved in prosthetics research. Even stranger headquarters. The narrow facade consisted of shifting brick-work. It didn't take a civil engineer to guess that the flanking buildings provided support. However, "Duplex Recycling" did had a ramp and wheelchair accessible doors. How convenient.

The manager's office was located in back. A voice over the speaker system directed me past a conveyer belt where employees worked with expressions of intense concentration. The office door opened into an empty antechamber — like a miniature vault — where I waited while the lights flickered and strobed for half a minute or so (a power failure, I assumed). Then the opposite door opened and I met the manager.

The office was lit only by a bank of monitors. Some were tuned in to various television channels; others displayed computer readouts. The volume was turned down. The manager was a thin black man, bald but with trimmed facial hair circling his mouth. This (I would later learn) was 101110… uh… Decillion — Comptroller of the Construct.

I'll skip the mind-blowing content of that two hour interview. The details are hazy (remember, this was before I gained my digital alter ego) and I'm unable to reproduce his level of persuasion. A few points did impress upon me. His organization was dedicated to equality, perfection and efficiency. They were involved in advanced research in many fields of technology. He admitted to having watched me for some time (I took this figuratively, as in someone had recommended me) and wanted me to join them. He described a job training program; they provided an advanced education, at the end of which I was guaranteed a career.

I had some concerns,

¤ **INTERVIEW WITH CIPHER 1110010100**
[ENTERED BY COMPTROLER 10111010011
11:43:87.32/22-4-93]
Subject hesitated when told that Deciphering would begin immediately and that he was required to remain on-site for the entire eight-month program. He also questioned the apparent strangeness of dropping off the face of the earth.
Instead of answering, I swiveled my chair to look at one monitor. It was a mundane news program, reporting live from the scene of a serious accident. I raised the volume by remote.
"…live from Highway 12. Forty-five minutes ago, a bus swerved into the on-coming lane and collided head-on with a tanker trailer. Two bodies have been recovered from what is left of the wheel-trans. Presumably the driver and a passenger; their identities have yet to be released. The trucker — reportedly in serious condit…"
At this point, I turned back to him and said, "We are used to achieving our objectives." I read two emotions on his face, both vying for dominance. The first was fear. He thought he "knew" the accident was a coincidence (especially since the body will later be "identified" as William Smith). Yet his ignorance created doubts. The other emotion was elation. He realized that I had given him the means to participate in something truly important.
END

but in the end, I surrendered to Iteration X. Decillion directed me through a door in back of the office. I was to follow the directions given by wall monitors.

ΩΩΩΩΩΩ

In the medical suite, a battery of tests awaited. I was poked, prodded, measured, and scanned in every band of the electromagnetic spectrum. All this was performed by a bald nurse in a gray military uniform. The examination was half finished before I recognized her as Dr. Zimmermann!

I later found my cell — literally, something you'd find in a monastery or prison. It contained a cot, drawers set into the wall, and a computer terminal. That's all. And an electronic lock on the outside, now clicked shut.

Exhausted as I was from the tests, the fact that I was imprisoned barely registered. I managed to lever myself out of the wheelchair and tumble into bed. The cot was hard and uncomfortable, but I fell asleep almost instantly.

That night I dreamt of the Bionic Man again, of the surgery scene from the opening credits.

◘ REPORT BY 11111010011 [1:16:76.12/23-4-93]
Implant procedure without complication.
Diagnostic software reports no problems
with DEI. Subject survived.
END

Only I was in Steve Austin's place. From somewhere beyond the harsh lights, I heard Rudy's ominous vow: "We can rebuild him; we have the technology."

ΩΩΩΩΩΩ

New Life Begins

23-4-93: I awoke the next day at 7:00:00.00, acutely aware that I wasn't alone. A low, almost sub-audible humming filled the room. I finally pinpointed its origin from inside my head. This Digital Enhancement Implant (as I would soon learn) answered unvoiced questions and constantly commented on every subject. It guided, corrected, revealed the subtleties of my new existence. From then on, I was never alone. Big Brother was watching, an enemy within.

I also realized the now familiar gray uniform replaced my clothes (which had probably been incinerated). This non-style was all I'd see for eight months — right up to the present.

Breakfast appeared on a serving counter which extended from the wall. The aluminum tray contained tasteless mush, a biscuit which combined the worst properties of rice cakes and matzah bread, and three red vitamins. Each bit had its own compartment. Having missed two meals since yesterday morning, I consumed it all with gusto.

ΩΩΩΩΩΩ

My DEI drew attention to the computer terminal, where I found a wire jack. Without thinking, I plugged it in behind the right ear. Through an I/O port in my skull, the day's routine was downloaded into my mind.

◘ WORK ON DISASSEMBLY LINE. ENSURE THE
BELT RUNS SMOOTHLY. REPORT ANY
DISRUPTIONS.

The door to my room unlocked. Guided by the voice in my head, I rolled down the halls, through the empty office, and into the vault-like antechamber. After being scanned — for that's what the flickering lights were really for — I entered the warehouse.

I began work at 9:00:00.00 with the other workers. The shift was made up mostly of young adults (students, I reasoned), although there was one old man. We strapped into
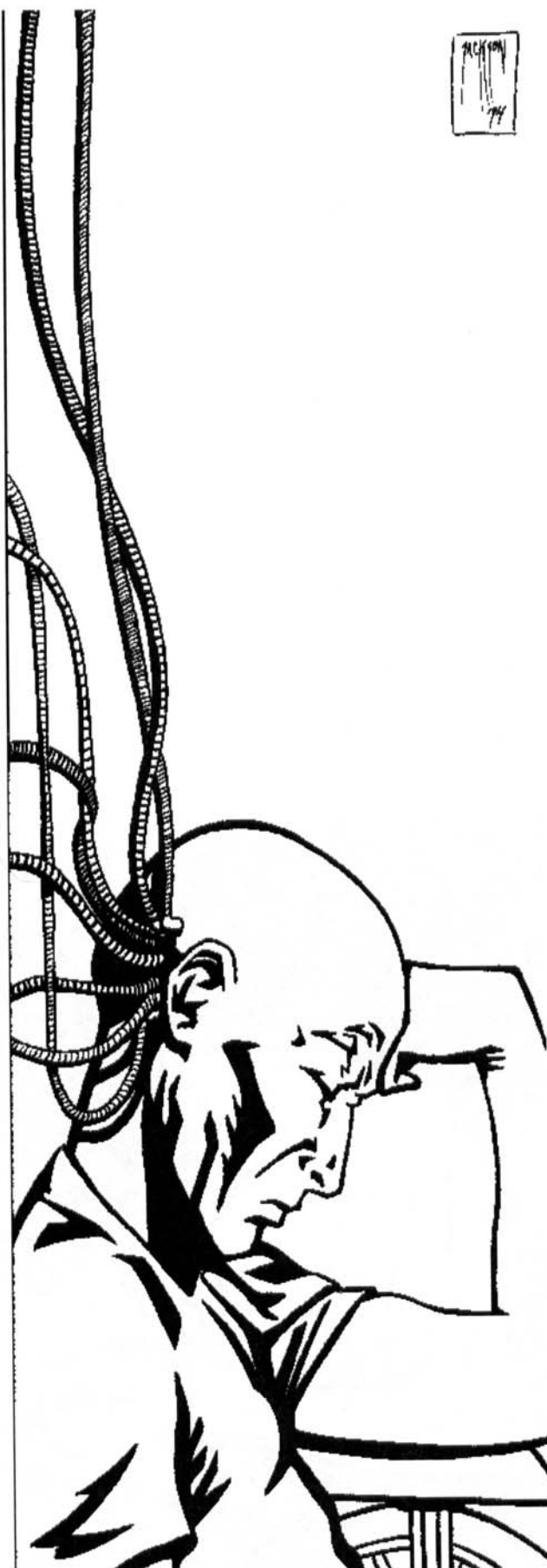
harnesses which wrapped about our arms and chest. I put my artificial arms into the harness with some difficulty. Our job was to remove plastic inserts from metal boxes as they moved past on the conveyer belt.

Eyes were on me constantly. I first thought it was the natural curiosity provoked by a new worker. This gradually degenerated into self-conscious paranoia. Then I realized that everybody was watching everybody else.

The place was thick with quiet concentration. Whenever a conversation threatened to break out, the loudspeaker would blare "Less talk; more work."

I couldn't keep up. The belt was waist high for most of them, and thus chest high to me. My artificial arms were clumsy, slow and forever tangling in the harnesses. More boxes slipped past me than I was able to disassemble. Those "downstream" from me had to double their efforts. They gave me dirty looks.

¤ REPORT BY PROGRAMMER 1011100010
[18:15:23:01/24-4-93]
After shift, went to cell of 1110010100. Cipher appeared physically and mentally exhausted from boring, frustrating, repetitive task. Startled by my biomechanisms. Excellent.
Self: I am 1011100010. I am your programmer. Reports state that you were unable to function efficiently.
Cipher began list of grievances.
Self: Yes or no will do.
Cipher: Yes, but —
Self: We do not accept excuses. We do not accept failure. You will improve.
Drew taser from hip, leveled it, fired. Twin wires shot from end, snagged on uniform, and delivered discipline.
END

<center>ΩΩΩΩΩΩ</center>

Lessons

24-4-93: The next day repeated the previous one, but this time my efforts were stimulated by the tingling in my nerve endings. My bitter birthright, however, had predisposed me to overcome challenges. I must have improved sufficiently. Rather than a meeting with 1011100010 (Tecson, as he's known to outsiders) that night, I met Lao Tzu, the ancient Chinese philosopher.

Or at least his AES,

¤ ADVANCED EXPERT SYSTEM
Standard expert systems are AI software programmed with the knowledge of one or more experts in a given field. For instance, programmers could interview Stephen Hawking to create an expert system about

astrophysics. Then one need only consult the system for expert advice and problem-solving.

Iteration X has advanced beyond this. We digitally resurrect the dead. The process involves feeding all available data on the subject into a computer. This includes personality and beliefs as revealed in writings, physical appearance (if known from works of art), cultural context, and so on. Programmers fill in any blanks.
END

a near-perfect simulation. My mentors, who "visited" me over the next few weeks, included Daedalus, Roger Bacon, Jules Verne, and others, each teaching the Convention's history and early progress. Other Iterators or their agents taught other topics. AESs are totally interactive — able to answer questions and even respond to body language. They communicate in one's choice of language. My request for English prompted Lao Tzu to speak in a dialect I'll call "20th century mid-western American English."

Lao Tzu's first lesson shattered my perception of reality.

▢ TRANSCRIPT OF BRIEFING BY LAO-TZU.AES
First, purge yourself of the usual definition of "magick." Magick is not a mystic power; it is the essence of science. Like the minor sciences (physics, for instance), it is measurable, controllable; ultimately it is ours to command. The minor sciences are a diluted form of magick which we can entrust to the Masses with little fear of their damaging reality.
We call true science — our science — magick, for that is what the ignorant see it as. The term may seem confusing, yet is as good as any. If one cannot understand the subjectivity of names, one will never understand the subjectivity of reality.
END

Thus began my basic training. (More correctly, this was a De-Ciphering, since trainees are called Ciphers.) It was an ordeal which made boot camp resemble kindergarten.

By day, I slaved away in Duplex Recycling. In the evening, I would relearn history, advanced science, proper protocol, our real enemies — who were not warlords, the government, or AIDS — and my new function in the grand scheme of reality. (I'll summarize this information a little later.)

Each night I was exhausted. Even thinking was too much; easier to let my DEI do that. I might have felt lonely, frightened, trapped, bored... if emotion had been part of my programming. Each night, the DEI "sang" me to sleep with repetitive directives.

▢ WE ARE LOYAL IN ALL OUR DESIGNS. WE IMPLEMENT ALL PROGRAMMING GIVEN TO US.
WE ARE LOYA
<<BREAK>>

16-5-93: I wasn't alone in this Deciphering. Just as I was preparing to consume the after-shift meal, a guy bypassed the electronic lock on my cell door. The intruder was robust (as in Neanderthal), about six-feet tall, in his early twenties. He too was bald and wore the gray uniform and carried himself with assurance.

"Hah. I thought there was somebody else holed up in here," the visitor said. My DEI identified him as 111011010. Like any good Iterator, he was blunt: "I want your food."

The way the food tasted, I would have given it up freely, but our rations were slim enough already. He wouldn't take no for an answer, and I was in no position to resist.

"Hey, strongest rules. Isn't that what they teach us?"

While he ate my food in front of me, he bragged about his knack for electronics, being kicked out of cadets, and his contempt for minorities. He left me with a final warning:

"You mention this to lensman — yah, yah, 1011100010 — and, well, I'll leave it to your imagination...."

ΩΩΩΩΩΩ

7:45:12.10/17-5-93: Tecson (aka lensman) came to my cell and asked if I had met the other Cipher. I answered no. What was worse; a tasering or waking up dead?

"I do not accept lies," he said before beginning his lesson.

I didn't see the other Cipher for six months.

▢ REPORT BY PROGRAMMER 1011100010 [21:00:00:01/17-6-93]
Cipher 111011010 not performing as expected. Has not repeated offence of 16-5-93, but has not improved sufficiently.
Did poorly in arena today. Will allow three days for recovery, then return to routine. Double-hard to make up for lost time.
END

ΩΩΩΩΩΩ

Changes

2-11-93: Tecson had left the Construct on business a few weeks before. Cipher 111011010 took this opportunity to return. He had changed — now thin, gaunt, haggard-looking. He had a purple-black welt on his temple. No longer brash, he was paranoid.

He asked for my help. He wanted out. He didn't know where to turn. I told him I couldn't help him. Wouldn't help him. He pleaded with me. I remember thinking he was pathetic.

Once he had left, I filed a report. After all, we should be loyal in all our designs.

¤ FINAL REPORT: CIPHER 111011010
[ENTERED BY COMPRTOLLER 10111010011,
21:00:00.00/2-11-93]
**Deciphering canceled after the subject
attempted to leave the Institute at
18:34:52.32. The prompt report of Cipher
1110010100 provided sufficient warning. I
allowed him to get as far as an alley across
the street. There I triggered the nanotech
fail-safe.
I have investigated the alley. The only trace
is some melted brick. The sole witness — a
homeless alcoholic — reported seeing only a
flash of light.
Estimated chance of Paradox: 0.03% (well
within safety parameters.)
Note to Programmer: Cipher 1110010100 has
proven his loyalty; I recommend he advance
to the next stage in Deciphering.
FILE CLOSED**

22-11-93: When Tecson returned, he took me to the arena and presented me with my exoskeleton. It had been custom-made for my compact form. Once inside and linked to its cyber-jack, I felt like a whole person.

I spent the day sparring with one of Tecson's bodyguards. A lucky strike scraped syntheskin from his face. He was a robot (a HIT Mark, actually). By now, nothing surprised me. I spent the last month of my training learning the art of war and the intricacies of killing.

<p style="text-align:center">ΩΩΩΩΩΩ</p>

After eight months of Deciphering, I was informed that my Assay was set for January 1st, 1994. Decillion had arranged with another Construct for me to participate in their assault on Graylock Chantry.

At this point, I was given temporary leave from the Construct. As a break from my Deciphering. To enjoy the holiday. Whatever. No longer interested in the mundane world, I requested extra training. It was given.

I have already related the story of my Assay at Graylock. It ended a mere three hours ago. Though I supposedly led a Shock Corp, the primary function of those HIT Marks was most likely to witness my performance. I passed. A report to this effect is probably being filed as I think-print.

Decillion will re-evaluate my grade after discovering this treachery.

Recorded History of Iteration X

The system goes online on August 4th, 1997. Human decisions are removed from strategic defense. Skynet begins to learn at a geometric rate. It becomes self-aware at 2:14 a.m. Eastern Standard Time, August 29th. In a panic, they attempt to pull the plug.

— Terminator 2: Judgment Day

That is my history; I am as certain of these facts as any brainwashed mage with a 500 megabyte memory can be. To relate the Convention's history, I must confront a similar paradox. My near-perfect recall for details and dates (learned during Deciphering) cannot help in sorting reality from propaganda. I can only provide this caveat.

When reading this history, you must also remember the difference between magely conception and mundane "invention." Artificers were often a century ahead. The time-delay results from the time it takes for ideas to trickle down into society and be implemented as parts of reality. The same is true today.

This process can be sped up, but usually with detrimental effect. Comptrollers claim that ignorant Masses are incapable of handling too much knowledge. And to give away our most recent revelations would be to give away our power.

I know much of this history by rote. The parts I'm less familiar with, I'll leave to the advanced expert systems.

Origins

Iteration X is the logical conclusion of 2.5 million years of evolution. Our Convention entered the archeological record alongside the first stone tool. Not just an appropriated stone or bone or stick — though this is accomplishment enough — but a lasting tool created by the effort of a proto-human.

The Technocracy as a whole traces their ancestry to early dates, but Iteration X claims to be the oldest Convention. Void Engineers appeared with the wheel and navigation. The Progenitors came to power with domestication. Yet the concepts of Iteration X were there from the beginning, multiplying the power of human muscle through artificial means. Stone axes to increase leverage. Fire to soften food. Spears for more efficient killing.

Of the Traditions, only Dreamspeakers have so ancient an origin. Thus they were once our oldest and greatest rivals. Now we have all but crushed them.

In this formative era, the Traditions were not enemies of the Technocracy. Indeed, these two armed camps had yet to exist; even the individual Conventions/Traditions were nebulous groups. Most mages contributed their expertise to other spheres of influence — furthering their own power and limiting others'. We offered up our primitive technology for

art, politics and ritual. Culture, however, often placed restrictions on tool-use. For instance, the convenience of weapons was offset by societal strictures against conflict. All this would change after the Dark Ages of betrayal.

Until this unforeseen catastrophe, our predecessors continued to introduce tool-based advances, such as copper metallurgy. Around 3000 B.C. humanity acquired urban life and abstract mathematics. Soon after the Iron Age began (circa 1000 B.C. in Europe and the Far East), our ideas became so popular and powerful that we were able to influence the Masses on a large scale. Our Convention (then called the Artificers) focused its efforts in two regions — ancient China and classical Greece.

Greek and Chinese Thought

While some Artificers manipulated the Chinese,

¤ CHINESE THOUGHT [TRANSCRIPT OF BRIEFING BY SUN-TZU.AES]
From the 11th century to 256 B.C., the Zhou Dynasty was the high point of ancient China. Its founding was in no small part due to Artificers. Tools built palaces. Weapons subdued foes. Here Artificers developed coherent objectives and methodologies. Though somewhat diluted or polluted, many of these ideals trickled down to the Masses via Chinese philosophy.
In his *Tao Te Ching*, the 6th century philosopher Lao Tzu emphasized the virtues of seriousness and self-control, moderation and balance, and using the least force to accomplish one's goal. He advocated holding a global perspective, integrating into a cohesive universe, and exploring the interrelationship which would result. This is similar to how we perceive and affect reality through magick.
Living between 551-479 B.C., Master Confucius looked back upon the early Zhou period as a Golden Age. He infused his *Analects* with borrowed virtues.
Resoluteness. Simplicity. Perfection through purity and tradition. Loyalty. Subdued emotion. Economy of expenditure. Correcting of mistakes. Inspiring awe. All of these are Artificer values.
Sun Tzu was a contemporary of Confucius. His *Art of War* stresses the importance of careful planning, efficiency and calculation before going to war. The greatest warriors know their enemy and are always prepared. Commanders should be prudent, brave, calm,

insensitive and emotionless. Though his organization and hierarchy, Sun Tzu was able to make effective use of huge armies.

Many other Chinese philosophers and works could be named: the Ssu-ma Fa, Wu-tzu's teachings, the Wei Liao-tzu, Mo Di's promotion of economical expenditure, and the Three Strategies of Huang Shih-kung. All reflect the ideal of perfection through order. The results of Artificial influence on the Masses were promising. In 256 B.C., the "First Chinese Empire" rose in Ch'in Province. Emperor Cheng standardized currency and the Chinese script. He constructed a network of roads and began the Great Wall (a mundane precedent to our own Barrier). More importantly, his could mobilize an army of a million men, all equipped with the finest weapons and armor.

Through our use of hexagrams (as in the I Ching), Chinese Artificers developed the binary number system nearly three millennia before the rest of the world.

We were the first to invent gunpowder.
END

others were exerting influence half a world away. Greek society was a cooling trough for much Artificial knowledge. By inspiring mundane thinkers, we spread our knowledge to the Masses. Other mages did the same, which often resulted in a convolution of contradictory ideas (even in the mind of a single mundane).

Greek thinkers believed that nature could be explained through reason. They were correct. Reality strives for an ideal state, follows logical patterns of cause-and-effect, and always achieves maximum result with minimal effort. Through us, the Greeks came up with the idea of a spherical earth. As a whole, Greek thinkers were skilled at systematization.

From about 650 B.C., the Milesian school described the world as consisting of fundamantal, primoridal elements. Thales of Miletus and his disciples developed the Greek atomic theory. In 540 B.C., Pythagoras expressed our goal of reproducing nature through a system of mathematical interrelationships. Parmenides (an Artificer) tried to explain how change in the world is an illusion of our senses. Creation, change and decay all depend upon a mage's perception. He invented and introduced laws for the conservation of matter, momentum, and energy.

DAEDALUS.AES maintains that the greatest of Greek thinkers, Plato, was actually ignorant and confused. A mundane, all of his ideas were magickally inspired. It is now believed that dozens of mages from many Traditions were working through him. By sorting through the almost hopeless jumble of concepts, one can find a few from Artificers. First, that only pure thought can grasp actuality — a diluted magickal concept of will defining reality. Second, that one

should directly apply mathematical reasoning to all problems. The "greatness" of Plato's work makes it superficially applicable to almost every human endeavor.

Aristotle, on the other hand, gave humanity the lever-principle. Archimedes was a brilliant mathematician and mechanical engineer who studied geometry and built large-scale machines (such as the hydraulic screw and war engines) in the 2nd century B.C.

In an attempt to increase the popularity of technology, the Artificer Hero of Alexandria (in the 1st century A.D.) wrote the Pneumatics and created ingenious gadgets to astound and amuse idle spectators. He created, among other things, a puppet show with automatically-closing curtains, a device to open temple doors when a fire was lit, and a machine to dispense holy water.

Though we managed to infuse Greek society with science, their development of technology was slower. Technology is stimulated not only by science, but by the practical demands of society and industry as well. Precursors to the Traditions kept society from having much practical use for machines; slaves preformed most labor. Mages also claimed that *artes liberales* (mental work) was superior to *artes mechanicae* (any sort of manual labor or craftsmanship). By the same token, limited technology prevented the advancement of science — which required practical application to prove or disprove theories.

Still, we had accomplished much. The Greeks were familiar with five fundamental machines — lever, windlass, wedge, screw, and pulley-block — and knew the principles of hydrostatics and aerostatics. They passed their legacy on to the Romans, whose large-scale constructions and disciplined legions were the envy of the world.

Progress continued until the betrayal of the Dark Ages.

¤ THE DARK AGES [TRANSCRIPT OF BRIEFING BY ALGORITMI.AES]

Hermetic mages and Celestial saints conspired against us. Through their meddling, our Roman Empire collapsed and was replaced by an unstable, uncivilized world. They called their bastard offspring "The Mythic Age," but it was actually a thousand years of chaos and ignorance. The magick of science and technology lost much of its power. During these Dark Ages, many Technomancers lost hope and were corrupted by Nephandi. Only the Artificers refused to submit. Some technology remained in use — mill-wheels and siege engines, for instance — but we moved our center of influence to the Islamic world. During the 9th century, Greek literature and the mathematics of Indian Artificers was translated into Arabic. An independent Arab science evolved, one capable of absorbing new ideas. Two Artificers were

especially noteworthy during this time; Algoritmi compiled a unique mathematics based on the efficient Indo-Arabian positional system still used today. We honor him with the word "algorithm." In 1206, Ismaeel al-Jazari wrote the *Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices*. This definitive book made our ideas more accessible to the Masses. During this Arab phase, we established the groundwork for future gains. Our work in optics would be important to physics in 16th and 17th centuries.

By the 11th century, we had regained enough influence to begin expansion. Gradually, we reintroduced our ideas to Europe via Italian explorers and the Moors in Spain. Our success caused Mythic mages to initiate the Crusades (and anti-Islamic sentiment in general). Artificers and their followers (such as Gilbert of Aurillae) were accused of "the Dark Arts"; their center of study in Toledo was thought to be a school for demonology. Due to the Mythic paradigm in Europe, we had to disguise science behind layers of mystic formula and ritual. Alchemy was the result. Alchemists believed that nature was constantly striving for perfection, that all matter was undergoing changes towards this goal. They sought the one powerful transmuting agent that would bring metals to a state of perfection (*prima materia*) and by the same means prolong life. Their experiments led to the development of Primium, a magickal alloy of purified gold and silver.

Our ideas reached the Masses through Roger Bacon (1214-1294). Though he was no Artificer, much less a scientist, he daydreamed about telescopes, automobiles, airplanes and dirigibles. He also formulated a gunpowder recipe from Arabic sources.

It was also during the 13th century that Western and Eastern Artificers managed to establish consistent contact. The Mongol Empire opened a land route across central Asia. Artificers traded theories through Marco Polo and other agents. Most significantly, Western Artificers benefited from coherent objectives and methodologies and the magick of gunpowder. Contact became sporadic once again with the collapse of the Mongol Empire, but Western Artificers had learned enough.

END

The Return of Reason

Long frustrated by the Dark Ages, Artificers decided that something should finally be done. They called for an assembly of Technomancers — representatives from each of the modern Conventions. This first Symposium was held in A.D. 1400. It resulted in a plan to usurp reality through a series of coordinated strikes. Fifty years were given for preparation. Though random factors disrupted this schedule, Copernicus' establishment of the heliocentric universe (A.D. 1453) signaled the beginning of Technocracy.

The Artificers were prepared.

They advanced the concept of the universe as perfect and efficient machine, put into motion by superhuman will and left to operate by itself. To illustrate this concept, we set our scientists the task of inventing perpetual motion machines. Though none succeeded, the idea caught on among the Masses. To many, the Cosmos became soulless.

Our efforts produced results. The 15th and 16th centuries saw the rise of great artist-engineers: Brunelleschi, Ghiberti, Alberti, Benvenuto Cellini, Albrecht Durer, Leonardo da Vinci. The latter considered himself first and foremost a military engineer. His sketchbook contains notes for hydraulic engineering and the construction of advanced machines — helicopters, airplanes, armored vehicles and so forth.

New classes of technicians appeared to produce industrial machinery, firearms, new instruments and tools, clocks, civil and military constructions. Mathematical mechanics, physics, careful analysis, economic expenditure and efficiency — all became important concepts. Mechanical technology advanced steadily.

In *Harmony of the World*, the great Johannes Kepler (1571-present) explains how the structure of reality is mathematically definable. He also reiterated our belief that mathematical simplicity defines truth.

Less than a hundred years later, Newton wrote the most important scientific book thus far — the *Principia*. In it, he distilled some of our most important principles — universal gravitation and three laws of motion — into simple axioms. By then, the Technocracy were the undisputed masters of reality.

First Iteration

The future isn't what it used to be.

— Popular Expression

In the 18th century, we guided Britain into an Industrial Revolution. We introduced steam engines, factories, automated machines, the machine-tool industry, and the foundations of a modern system of management.

We also kept an eye on the Son of Ether Charles Babbage. We appropriated one of his prototype Analytical Engines for our own purposes. We experimented, modified, and eventually perfected it. By the turn of the 20th century, The Computer had gained sentience at the "X" iteration of a sentience-expanding algorithm. In honor of this achievement, we changed our name to Iteration X. As Difference Engineers (Virtual Adepts) developed new concepts — such as electronics — the Computer has been

continually updated, managing our most important functions to this day.

During the 20th century, our advances are too numerous to detail. Just look around the mundane world; they include assembly-line plants (thanks to Henry Ford), electronic computers and experimentation with robotics. Progress speeds along faster than it ever has before, and seems to increase exponentially.

Specialization is also important. Many mundanes have no idea how an automobile or electronic appliance works, much less a computer. By keeping all but established experts from knowing our secrets, we can cut down on the number of mundanes we must monitor.

¤ HOW TO INTERPRET THE ANALECTS OF CONFUCIUS

1.8: IF THE SUPERIOR MAN IS NOT GRAVE, THEN HE DOES NOT INSPIRE AWE. HE TAKES LOYALTY AND GOOD FAITH AS HIS FIRST PRINCIPLES, AND HAS NO COMRADES WHO ARE NOT UP TO HIS OWN STANDARD. IF HE COMMITS A FAULT, HE SHOULD NOT SHRINK FROM CORRECTING IT.
[AN ARMATURE OF ITERATION X IS SUPERIOR TO THE MASSES AND MUST DISTANCE HIMSELF FROM THEM; FAMILIARITY BREEDS FEARLESSNESS. HE IS LOYAL ONLY TO HIS CONVENTION. HE IS IN A POSITION OF GREAT RESPONSIBILITY; ANY ERRORS COULD AFFECT REALITY.]
2.19: IF YOU PROMOTE THE STRAIGHT AND SET THEM ABOVE THE CROOKED, THEN THE MASSES WILL BE OBEDIENT.
[ONLY THE OBEDIENT WILL BE REWARDED WITH POWER, RESPONSIBILITY, AND THE MEANS TO PERFECTION. ALL OTHERS WILL RECEIVE NO REWARDS —> HAVE NO POWER —> AND THUS BE IN NO POSITION TO DISOBEY.]
12.17: TO GOVERN MEANS TO BE CORRECT. IF YOU TAKE THE LEAD BY BEING CORRECT, WHO WILL DARE NOT TO BE CORRECTED?
[THROUGH THE TECHNOCRACY, ITERATION X CONTROLS REALITY. THUS OUR DEFINITION OF REALITY IS CORRECT. ALL WHO WISH TO BE PART OF OUR REALITY MUST CONFORM.]
END

The AESs cite recent advances in particle physics as examples of our philosophy's persistance. Greek atomic theory survived, unchallenged, until very recently. It was only in the early 20th century that Etheric mages shattered the unity of the atom by introducing subatomic confusion. Electrons, protons, neutrons and neutrinos soon multiplied to over 100 particles (such as bosons and quarks). Yet simplicity will prevail; ease is ingrained in human consciousness. Modern physicists seek a grand unification theory. They have categorized particles as four fundamental forces: gravity, electromagnetism, and "weak" and "strong" nuclear energies. Eventually, they will reduce these groups to two, and then to one. When that occurs, Ascension will begin.
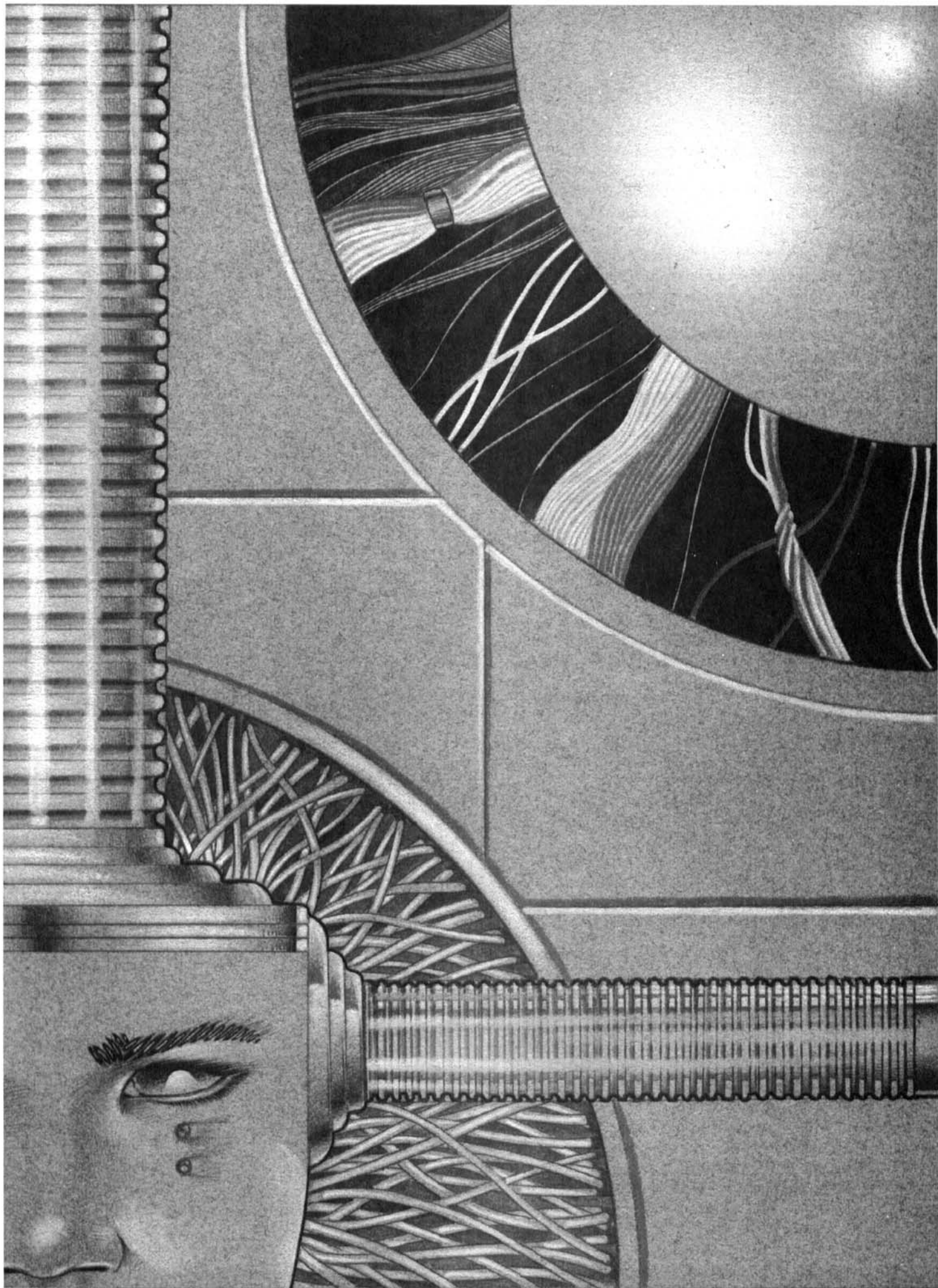
Disk Two: Clockwork Convention

The mechanical clock made possible the idea of regular production, regular working hours and a standard product.
— Lewis Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*

Inner Workings

Methodologies

There is alarm in both favor and disgrace.
— Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching* (Book I, Verse XIII)

The complexity of modern society has caused Iteration X (and other Conventions, I have learned) to split into specialized groups called Methodologies. Methodologies rarely point to a central founding date; most emerge through gradual diversification.

¤ STRUCTURE OF THE CONVENTION
[COMPILED BY 10111010011]
>KAMRAD
These are the unAwakened agents of Iteration X, cogwheels in its vast machinery. They can be broadly classified into three categories: professional, technical and rank-and-file. Professionals can be mathematicians, scientists or

industrial designers. Through "their" flashes of brilliance, we reveal our future plans to the Masses.

Technicians are our representatives to the Masses. We allow them to learn our basic principles so they can keep civilization running smoothly. Examples include auto mechanics, electricians, even employees of Radio Shack. By limiting the number of technicians, we increase our control over the Masses through their dependence on technology.

The rank-and-file are average mundanes. Individually, they are of little use. But in groups they can instigate sweeping changes to reality. History illustrates the power of a striking labor union, a ruling fascist party, or a knot of police officers. We recruit the most violent mundanes into paramilitary groups and use them to disrupt our enemies' power-structures. [One nightclub, for example, acted as a magnet for Cult-inspired deviance. After only a few weeks of our Kamrads loitering by the entrance, the place shut down.]

>CIPHER

Our apprentices are nothing by themselves, but have great future potential for the Convention. They are usually recruited at about age twenty — young enough to be tooled into shape, yet mature enough to be of immediate use in the Ascension War. Depending on their eventual function, they may have had background in university science programs, technical colleges, military or police academies, and sometimes youth gangs.

Potential Ciphers are carefully studied before recruiting to ensure that only those with a reasonable chance of completing training are chosen.

Training (properly called Deciphering) takes the form of an eight-month crash course. It ends with a dangerous Assay when Ciphers either prove their mettle or are destroyed. 80% complete the Deciphering; of these, 40% survive the Assay. If the Cipher's potential has not Awakened during this Assay, it will be forcibly conditioned until its true capacity is brought forth.

>ARMATURE

The mass of Iterators are Armatures. They rank above Ciphers, who are not Awakened, but have yet to earn a position of greater responsibility. Many do not advance past this position; most show no aptitude for

higher ranks, are destroyed in the line of duty, or find hands-on experience preferable to promotion.

Armatures perform various functions, often depending on their Methodologies; Statisticians assign their Armatures to accumulate data or perform calculations. Time-Motion Managers often use Armatures as security specialists in factories. BioMechanics perform routine biomechanical surgery.

Armatures are periodically rotated though the Shock Corps, so that all units receive some combat experience. With the many enemies of our Convention, few tours of duty are uneventful.

>PROGRAMMER

Programmers determine the Convention's future. This may involve leading an R&D lab, designing the Mark VI Exterminator, coaxing an AI into sentience, or Deciphering future mages.

At one time, accomplished mages were temporarily reassigned as heads of Deciphering Programs to pass on their knowledge. Now, however, this responsibility has been given to specialized Institutes, such as Acme Pyrotechnic. Through computer programs and by harsh example, Ciphers learn history, obedience, combat and other important lessons.

>COMPTROLLER

Each Construct is under the direction of one of more Comptrollers. They provide a direct link to other Constructs. Within the framework of their orders, they decide upon their own operating procedures. Their efforts are monitored by Autochthonia. If unable to perform, they are replaced by others who can.

Data processing is valuable in administration and management. Thus, many Comptrollers are Statisticians.

>AUTOCHTHONIA

The Machine Realm is not truly a rank; assignment to this Construct is an honor to which all Iterators strive. Only exemplars of our Convention are chosen to serve.

Autochthonia is a perfect example of what earth will be like after Iteration X succeeds. Orderly, efficient, predictable. Every mage has a specific duty. Armatures are responsible for defending this sanctuary. Programmers have the privilege of upgrading the Computer. Comptrollers

determine the course of the entire Convention, under the guidance of the Computer.

>THE COMPUTER

Deep within the central core of Autochthonia, the Computer calculates what is best for Iteration X. It is infallible. We came into existence at the will of the Computer; thus the Computer's will is our existence. Iterators should aspire to Its level of perfection.

END

Statistician

Our job in physics is to see things simply, to understand a great many complicated phenomena in a unified way in terms of a few simple principles.

— Stephen Weinberg, theoretical physicist at the University of Texas

The Technocracy wishes to understand — and thus control — all of reality. This goal is as simple as it sounds. An entire Methodology, the Statisticians, are assigned the task of planning and organizing and predicting. Mathematicians and computers perform endless calculation on innumerable topics — from predicting enemy moves to charting the probable date of Ascension. This Methodology may have inspired the psychohistorians of Asimov's *Foundation* novels.

The Statisticians are the oldest Methodology. They appeared when Greek and Chinese Artificers began to develop coherent theories and goals. All of Iteration X's new advances — from earth-as-globe to comparisons between the human brain and a computer — were tested and perfected (and their effects on reality predicted) by Statisticians long before being introduced to the Masses. This Methodology also designed the Julian and Gregorian calendars in order to regulate linear time, which once surged and slowed unpredictably.

Due to this long history and their skill at planning, Statisticians are the *de facto* leaders of Iteration X. They are responsible for coming up with long-term goals and short-term strategies. To best accomplish this, they must reduce reality to mathematical formula — so variables can be isolated, controlled, deleted, or reproduced. A Statistician Construct might resemble NASA's Mission Control. Various experts coordinate through computers to keep operations running smoothly.

Statisticians maintain a network of mundane contacts — students of statistical mechanics and mathematics, physicists, military analysts, technology forecasters and futurists, pollsters, and data-gatherers of all kinds.
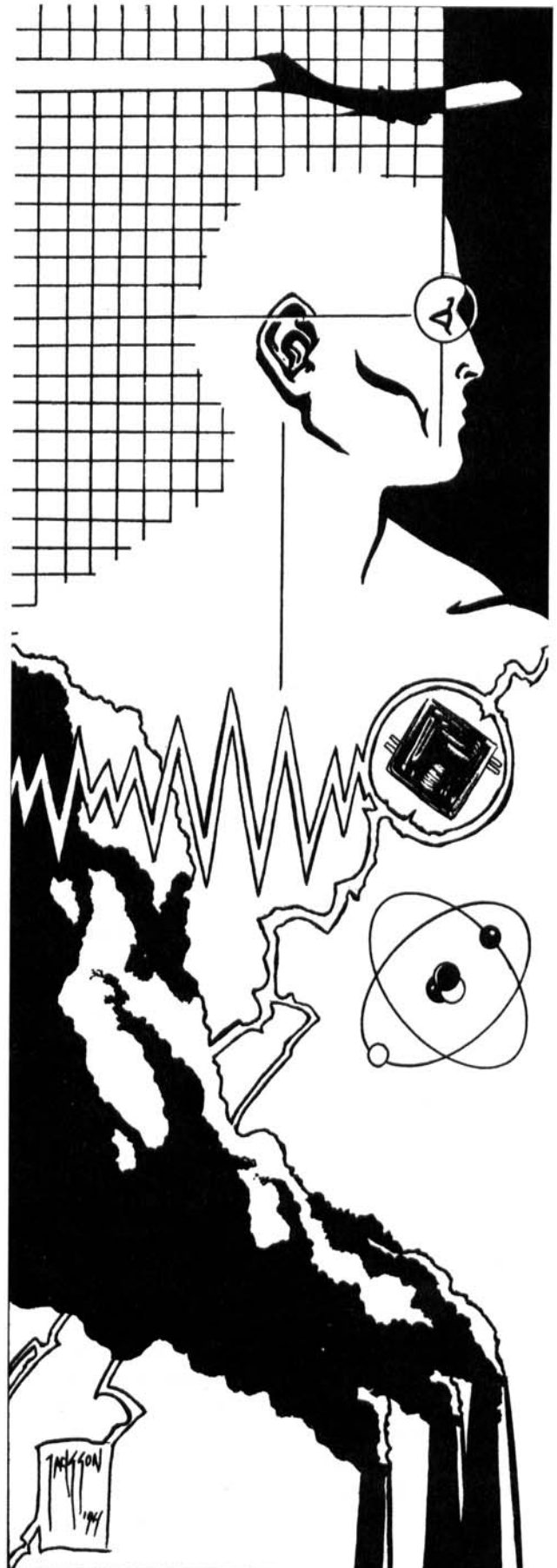
Time-Motion Managers

Business and warfare have a lot in common: vast numbers of people, complex logistics, communication difficulties and the need for quick decision making. Not to mention clearly defined objectives, specialized functions and responsibilities, and — most importantly — an enemy.

— Daniel Burrus, *Technotrends*

Time-Motion Managers are in charge of designing and overseeing the construction of machines for the Technocracy. Their name comes from an obsession for efficiency. Factories are entirely automated and operate under assembly line methods.

The mechanical clock originated with Benedictine monks around A.D. 1200 to regulate prayer and, I've heard, to advance their understanding of Time magicks. Yet early Time-Motion Managers realized its potential. Within a hundred years, laborers and craftsmen were using clocks to regulate urban life.

When the Technocracy ascended to power in the 15th and 16th centuries, Time-motion Managers strengthened their power base. Mathematical mechanics attracted the attention of technicians who produced industrial machinery, firearms, and civil and military constructions. Their desire to employ available energy as economically as possible led to the use of water power in the mining and iron industries, and to the evolution of firearms.

Since the Industrial Revolution, their advances became more frequent. The factory system was first used by Richard Arkwright. Men like Sylvanus Thayer, Daniel Tyler and George Wistle laid the foundation of modern management — hierarchical organization, leaders who exerted indirect control through paperwork rather than visible command, and a standard measurement of production. A machine-tool industry sprang up; now machines were used to create other machines. The 20th century was ushered in by Henry Ford's automotive assembly plant. Robots replaced autoworkers in the 1980s. Now factories are almost completely automated.

Most existing technology was assembled under the auspices of the Time-Motion Managers. Once some advance is created, other Conventions take over. The Syndicate, for instance, is charged with marketing products, while the New World Order controls television programming and regulatory commissions.

Time-Motion Managers supposedly control the Masses through technical experts like mechanics and electricians. The Masses become dependent on the technicians, and the limited number of technicians are easily supervised by Iterators. Think about it. How many mundanes would know how to repair their car's engine if it broke down? How many handyman husbands really know what they're doing? How many shudder at the words "Some Assembly Required." To be fair, it is not completely due to ignorance. Time-Motion Managers make their machines more complex than necessary to reinforce their control.

This Methodology backs the development of new polymers, high-tech ceramics, robotics, nanotechnology and computer hardware. In the last two fields, they face fierce competition from Sons of Ether and Virtual Adepts. Believe it or not, the recycling movement is due to this Convention's foresight. Forget altruistic motives: Iteration X wants to save the earth's resources so that once humanity is conquered they can turn to whatever lies beyond the Barrier.

BioMechanics

We can rebuild him; we have the technology.

— Oscar Goldman, *The Six Million Dollar Man*

The Artificers as a whole were long involved in artificial limb replacement. Heroditus records that in 500 B.C., Hegesistatus escaped from leg manacles by cutting off his foot; later, he crafted a wooden replacement. The Roman general Marcus Sergius was given an iron hand after being maimed in battle.

Yet the modern history of the BioMechanics begins with the Progenitor-turned-Artificer Ambroise Paré. In the 16th century, he designed mechanical limbs to be made of bronze and provided with simple articulation by means of gears and springs. His research led to the "American leg" in 1839. Suction soon replaced body straps.

In the 20th century, integration of medical science and engineering has furthered their interests. Servo-mechanisms allow for subtle movement. Strain gauges in the gripping mechanism of artificial hands produce a weak myo-electrical signal proportional to the gripping force; electrodes embedded in the host's muscle provide the sensation of touch. Mechanical arms may be powered pneumatically (compressed gas) or by electric motors.

In addition to prosthetics, BioMechanics create all kinds of "spare parts" for the body: skull plates, false eyes, glasses and contact lenses, hearing aids, false teeth, pace-makers, heart valves, vein tubes, breast implants, artificial bones and joints. Through these parts, BioMechanics control the Masses. "Complications" (such as host rejection) are the easiest way to deal with troublesome mundanes.

This is merely the technology which has been integrated into reality. Mages receive state-of-the-art biomechanisms, Devices straight out of science fiction. In 1984, the first cyborg HIT Mark rolled of the assembly line, although this technology is a century away from reaching mundanes.

Within the Convention, BioMechanics are highly respected. They create, implant, and repair the biomechanisms which literally make up a part of every Iterator. To annoy a BioMechanic is to betray one's own body.

BioMechanics also associate with Progenitors. The latter's surgeons are advised how best to amputate limbs for easy prosthetic attachment. However, there is still friction. Progenitors are upset over the thalidomide disaster; they are even more upset that BioMechanics took advantage of this to expand the prosthetic industry. Both compete for the same "market."

Mission Statement

I don't pretend to understand the Convention's greater goals. I'm just a minor component in The Big Machine.

¤ CONVENTIONAL THOUGHT
[DOWNLOADED FROM AUTOCHTHONIA 7:00:00.00/1-1-94]

All Iterators are parts in the Big Machine. Each must correctly perform its designated function or risk throwing off the entire schedule. To optimize control and minimize error, Comptrollers must implement a number of systems.

>ORDERS OF THE DAY

Each Iterator receives a daily agenda downloaded into his Digital Enhancement Implant. He must follow these orders as closely as possible. If faced with an unforeseen situation, he must not act without new orders (or at least confirmation to his own suggestions). In some instances, this causes a delay in seconds to minutes as new orders are transmitted. Other times — when operating far from command — the mission must be temporarily aborted.

To minimize problems, a Comptroller should assemble Armatures into collectives. Each member can be given different — though complementary — orders. Together, the Armatures will operate with machine-like efficiency. Even if one part "breaks down," the collective will be able to provide direction towards completing the assigned task.

>THE ASCENSION WAR

We are the only Convention with the correct attitude towards Tradition mages. Those who oppose us must be destroyed, imprisoned in slave-factories (such as MECHA), or forcibly assimilated. Threats are the most efficient form of persuasion: "If you will not be a Technocrat, I will bash your skull in."

Iteration X maintains a state of perpetual readiness. Our enemies can strike at any moment; they do not subscribe to our honorable code of combat. A constant buildup of forces and pre-emptive strikes are our only means of defense. Even if the Ascension War were to end, we must remain vigilant. There is always an enemy — if not an external one, then perhaps one within the Technocracy itself...

>MANUFACTURE

To power our war machines requires rapid industrialization. We must churn out HIT Marks, Decipher through crash courses, and strive to earn an array of biomechanisms. We used similar goals and tactics with the Russian Masses during our pre-and-post war influence in that state.

This is not without drawbacks. Many Ciphers do not reach full Awakening. In Russia, rapid industrialization was ultimately detrimental to the standard of living. The New World Order warns that the recent phenomena of "future shock" derives from our aggressive tact.

The Computer calculates, however, that the ends justify the means.

>SWAYING THE MASSES

One must remember a passage from Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching* (Book I, Verse XX):
Indifferent like the sea,
Ceaseless like a penetrating wind,
The Masses are ever present.

The Masses under our influence constitute the largest percentage of our forces. We have influence among industrialists, factory workers, robotic and prosthetic development companies, and computer hardware manufacturers. Our Kamrads tend to be nationalists, union workers and military types.

We control the Masses through technicians, and through those Kamrads with influence in mundane society. We send representatives to speak at union rallies or military briefings just as in Nazi Germany. These master Programmers provide the Masses with a clear, black-and-white picture of reality. They reveal the two possible perspectives on any issue: our own — correct and justified — and the unreasonable perspective of our opponents. They know better than to argue with dissenters. Deletion is so much more efficient.

END

Even Decillion answers to a greater authority, one which he refers to as It. However, I do know their general objectives in the Ascension War. I should. This information has been bashed into my skull since recruiting.

If you have not guessed already, Iteration X upholds a theory of perfection. The Advanced Expert Systems warn of a reality about to collapse, of a Final Twilight which threatens to engulf us all. Iterators claim to have discovered the threats — Tradition mages and other renegade Awakened beings — and take it upon themselves to eradicate them. Purified and preserved from decay, a New Humanity will arise, mightier and more beautiful than before. To achieve this goal, the Convention has organized a rigid agenda.

¤ ADDENDA TO PRECEPTS OF DAMION
ARTICLE 4: ASCENSION CAN BE ACHIEVED ONLY THROUGH A COMMON GOAL OF ORDER. PREDICTABILITY EQUALS PERFECTION, AND THUS ASCENSION.
ARTICLE 5: INDIVIDUALITY BREEDS DISUNITY.
ARTICLE 27: ONLY THE TECHNOCRACY IS POWERFUL ENOUGH TO CONTROL REALITY. ONLY THE TECHNOCRACY IS FIT TO RULE. THE WEAK ARE WORTHLESS.

This agenda reveals two idiosyncrasies. First, like its binary communication, Iteration X views all things dualistically. This probably stems from our physiology — half biological, half technological. One is either an enemy or an ally. Even allies are separated by whether or not they belong to Iteration X. The Technocracy is right; those who fail to conform (never mind oppose) are wrong. Thus flawed. Thus requiring correction or deletion. This mindset can be summed up neatly by an IF/THEN statement.

```
IF IDEOLOGY$ <> TECHNOCRACY$, THEN
IDEOLOGY$ = "0"
RUN "POGROM"
```

If everyone were to conform to the Technocracy's view of reality, conflict would cease. To Iteration X, it's that simple.

The second idiosyncrasy is the Convention's fear of making a mistake.

¤ ARTICLE 118: MISTAKES BRING SADNESS, FRUSTRATION AND DANGER. BY ELIMINATING MISTAKES, WE MAKE LIFE LESS PAINFUL FOR HUMANITY.

To err is human; to forgive is a device of the weak. Iteration X is superior to all of this. Nothing can be learned from mistakes that cannot be determined and corrected in advance. As mentioned, one entire Methodology is devoted to accumulating data and calculating the most consistent means of being error-free. Ideally, the perfect world would lack error of any sort. Unfortunately, by removing this learning tool from humanity, Iteration X makes life less stimulating, less worth living.

In this perfect, error-free world would live perfect, error-free people. A New Humanity.

▫ A NEW HUMANITY [FROM TEXTFILE "CONCEPTS.ANH"]

Lifeforms become more complex and static as they evolve into increasingly perfect beings. This process culminated for humans during the Classical Era [REFERENCE "HISTORY.ITX"]. Gauging from the mathematical proportion of their art, antique man was physically perfect. Modern man has degenerated. Only the machine can restore that state of perfection; thus, bio-mechanical fusion is the next step in human development.

The ideal biomechanical being would be Awakened. This objective has thus far eluded us. In their natural state, machines lack Avatars. We have been able to artificially Awaken some machines: the Matriarch of MECHA is composed of twin technocrats infused into a computer; Construct 1010 is developing a powerful AI by assembling the Avatars of imprisoned mages. Note, however, that in both cases human mages provide the Avatar.

The next step involves creating an Awakened machine with the capacity to replicate both physically and magickally. It has been theorized that machines will eventually evolve to this state. Such a process is too slow for our purposes. Through further research and development, we can prompt Awakening.

Success is inevitable.

This perfect race would embody the superior aspects of both man and machine. Remove the messy and inefficient biological quirks — eating, excreting, intercourse, emotion, personality. Cancel the human's lack of durability. Retain inventiveness and adaptiveness, but suppress them until they are needed. Most importantly, harness the Avatar.

Fuse this with mechanical attributes. Machines can take a beating and continue to operate. If a part breaks down, simply replace it. Machines can also be upgraded as new technology becomes available. This is not possible with humans; to paraphrase an expression, you can't program an old human with new functions.

The result: A New Humanity.

Sometimes I wonder which half this fusion will benefit most — biological or mechanical. Call me paranoid (all Iterators are), but this next step in humanity's evolution seems like an upgrade for machines as well…

Fortunately, this goal is some way off. Yet not that distant, either. Biomechanisms stand ready for the day when the Masses finally accept their existence. The process of reducing all of Reality to a mathematical formula, to be controlled or even replicated, is underway. My Construct's Digital Imaging Chamber can break subjects down to digital form and reassemble them. Even individuals are almost mappable. Advanced Expert Systems reproduce the personality of long-dead Technocrats. I hear that MECHA has gone one step farther with a pair of mages.

Until theory becomes Reality, experiments in predictability, computerized personalities and biomechanics are left to mages working within their Constructs and isolated from the Masses.

▫ ARTICLE 3047: PRESENTLY, THE BIOSPHERE IS NOT A CLOSED SYSTEM. THE SUN'S ENERGY INTRODUCES MORE ENTROPY THAN EVOLUTION CAN REMOVE. THUS ITERATION X USES ISOLATED CONSTRUCTS AS CLOSED SYSTEMS, WHERE MICROCOSMS OF PERFECTION CAN BE SIMULATED UNTIL REALITY CONFORMS.

At this moment, Iteration X is far from perfect. However, any such claim will be met by insistent denial, followed by acute pain.

Harmony of the World

Science's seeming approximation to consistency, stability, system... is sustained by damning the irreconcilable or the unassimilable [sic].

— Charles Fort, *The Book of the Damned*

Unfortunately, the goals of Iteration X do not always mesh with those outside the Convention. These other (read flawed) viewpoints are random factors which threaten the Harmony of the Spheres. Though outside its closed system, Iteration X accumulates as much data as possible about the beings who exist in our Reality, thus helping the Convention to develop a system of external relations — or more accurately, exterminations.

Fellow Technocrats

Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles, you will never be defeated.

— Sun Tzu, *The Art of War.*

Each of the other Conventions has a slightly altered — mistaken — concept of Ascension. They do things differently. Incorrectly. However, Iteration X has decided not to correct their faults as long as they contribute. A unified Technocracy is currently the most efficient means of dominating Reality.

The New World Order

Blessings of the State, blessings of the Masses. Thou art a subject of the Divine, created in the image of Man, by the Masses, for the Masses.

— George Lucas, *THX-1138*

The New World Order is the Technocracy's administrative body. By default. Nobody else wants the job. And it's a job they do well. Through bureaucrats, spies, propagandists, psychologists and Men in Black, the N.W.O. monitors and controls the lives of a large percentage among the Masses. Iteration X has assisted in this mammoth task by introducing them to the "information superhighway" — the Digital Web. Digital electronics allows them to generate, process, store, and transmit huge amounts of data.

In exchange, their Administration of Information (AdmIn) provides the Statisticians with more data than even they can use. Their Committee of Logic (ComLog) designs Iteration X's conditioning programs.

The New World Order has recently begun issuing memos to the Comptrollers of certain Constructs. They warn that Iteration X's blunt approach may threaten Reality. All Iterators have access to these memos. They also have orders to ignore them and continue with correct operating procedure.

Progenitors

What you call discovery, I call rape of the natural world.

— Michael Crichton, *Jurassic Park*

Considering that the two Conventions have little in common, Iteration X and the Progenitors maintain close relations. We supply them with machinery, they provide us with biological parts for outfitting HIT Marks: custom-grown brains; liquid flesh; even entire creatures-clones, such as those used in Cyber-tooth Tigers.

Some BioMechanics are invited to Progenitor Symposiums. Such collaboration has lead to the creation of nanotech life support and (rumor has it) a bio-digital virus to kill Virtual Adepts. Another project in its very early stages involves designing biochips, molecular computers that can be programmed though DNA and implanted as an integral part of the body.

The Syndicate

We don't advertise openings and we don't solicit applications. We keep a low profile, and we do things differently. That's our explanation.

— John Grisham, *The Firm*

I've heard that this Convention was responsible for the tight-fisted budgeting and bad marketing of *Star Wars* (symbolizing the triumph of man over machine). Boy, it sure backfired!

For all their Mafioso image, they are essentially cowards. The Syndicate believes only Iteration X can enforce the Pogrom. Thus they do not hesitate to provide funding. They help Iteration X by popularizing science fiction and cyberpunk, personal computers, the latest in sleek "automatic-everything" vehicles, and labor-saving devices of all sorts.

I can feel some semblance of personality coming back. This is either a good sign or the beginning of the end. I think it's probably both.

Void Engineers

That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.

— Neil A. Armstrong, July 20, 1969

I've met a couple of Void Engineers,

¤ **VOID ENGINEERS [FROM TEXTFILE "EXT-REL.TEC"]**
Of all Conventions, Iteration X has most in common with the Void Engineers. Both are futurists and do not permit Reality's time-lag to stifle progress. Both use visions of high technology to prepare the Masses for their theories.

Iteration X has indirectly supplied computers, machinery and technicians to all mundane space programs. We have also been commissioned to build Void Engines. Utilizing an advanced propulsion system, these ovoid craft are capable of supersonic speed, excellent maneuverability and stealth. Side effects include the emission of radiation and light heat. By request, test flights are purposely conducted near rural populations. UFO sightings will prepare the Masses for the next stage.

In exchange, the Void Engineers donate advanced Low Earth Orbit satellites. Iteration X uses these for reconnaissance, long-range communication, relaying transmissions to remote-controlled vehicles (such as ARCs).

Even within the Net, the two Conventions have developed a cooperative system. Iteration X establishes temporary Constructs at the edge of formatted sectors. From these camps, Void Engineers launch Search and Format missions in their Great Race. As the digital frontier recedes, the Construct is disassembled, transported and reassembled in a more convenient location.

Despite our close alliance, we do have differences. Void Engineers are bold, but lack force. Also, their frantic exploration may uncover something unpredictable out there...

END

though I didn't realize it at the time. Back in training, one of the few diversions allowed were virtual video games. It seemed strange, even indulgent, especially in the context of my ordeal, but of course Iteration X does nothing without purpose. I was actually undergoing basic training in Net Operations. Some of those helpful icons were Cybernauts.

Tradition Mages

Those who resist the American Technopoly are people who have freed themselves from the belief in the magical powers of numbers, do not regard calculation as an adequate substitute for judgment, or precision as a synonym for truth.

— Neil Postman, *Technopoly*

Naturally, the real enemies are not other Technocrats but Tradition mages. Each Construct maintains exaustive files on local and notorious mages. Statisticians use this information to estimate threat levels and predict their actions. I've provided some samples of this to reveal just how much — or how little — Iteration X knows about such "Enemies of Reality." Be warned.

Akashic Brotherhood

Attain the highest openness;
Maintain the deepest harmony.

— Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, Book One, Verse XV

From what I've learned, these are Carradine-types who believe that personal power is a mental thing. Their beliefs, like those of Iteration X, originated in ancient China. Why are the two groups so different? Apparently, the Brotherhood failed to read deeply enough into the texts, embracing the irrelevant passages about peace, contemplation and contempt for material possessions. Such thoughts are dangerous. If the Masses were to slow their hectic lifestyles, many might become more aware of the Technocracy's influence.

Relevant textfiles warn that some martial artists can crack steel with their bare hands or cloud minds. I guess the legend continues.

Celestial Chorus

Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the Lord, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place.

— Deuteronomy 27.15

God is dead. Long live good old Technocracy. Iteration X depicts these mages as weak fools who have had their chance and failed. Many have lost faith and fallen from grace. Recent reports claim that New World Order has converted a Chorus mage in San Francisco by persuading him that the One is identical to Technocratic unity.

¤ **FROM THE DEBRIEFING OF J. WILLIAMS [FORMER CHORUS MAGE]**
Man in Black: Once again — name your superior.
Williams: Ahhh, I see clearly now. The One true force binding reality is the unity of Technocracy. We must reconcile our differences and —
MiB: Yes. We've been over that before. Now who do you go to for orders?
W: Order issues from the machine-god. The soul of Technology ensures that our material world spins smoothly along its winding course... [degenerates into mumbling].
MiB: Hmmmm. Will somebody get the sodium pentathol and thumb screws?
<<BREAK>>

Besides their emphasis on faith rather than reason, the Celestial Chorus is surprisingly similar to Iteration X. Both are highly structured and militaristic, and see themselves as protectors of humanity. However, unless the Chorus surrenders hope of Reconciliation (which I'm told would return us to the Dark Ages, or worse), they have "NO PLACE IN OUR REALITY."

Cult of Ecstasy

The sexual act, successfully performed, was rebellion. Desire was thought-crime.

— George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

According to Programmers, all Cultists

¤ **THE CULT [FROM TEXTFILE "R-ENEMY.COE"]**
Study this Tradition closely. It provides a perfect example of the dangers of emotional excess. Cultists promote free action and self-expression. And what does this erratic philosophy accomplish? Nothing. Like us, they appreciate temporal phenomena. Yet instead of regulating and organizing their lives, they create more Time in which to do nothing.
Unless provoked, do not waste time or effort on the Cult. Drifters and loners, they are difficult to track. Few are involved in the Ascension War; even their most powerful mages lead pointless existences. In any case, they all eventually destroy themselves through lack of control.
END

are tuned in to the same batty channel. In time, they'll accidentally unplug themselves.

Even without my directives, I'd have nothing to do with Cultists. Excessive use of drugs, alcohol, "free (fuckin') expression," sex and tuneless music — I don't find these thing "cool." Their recent nostalgia for the 60s and 70s, when the Cult's influence broke free among the Masses, disgusts me. Having survived those chaotic and tasteless times, I wonder how these people remain under the influence.

Then again, destroying anyone who disagrees with you is just as excessive.

Dreamspeakers

I wish you could see this great mystery
Earth and Sun and moon human tribe, thin blue line
Earth and Sun and moon will survive.

— Midnight Oil, "Earth and Sun and Moon" Dreamspeakers.

¤ **DREAMSPEAKERS [FROM TEXTFILE "R-ENEMY.DRE"]**
Do not associate with Dreamspeakers. Eliminate them. Many are insane, and may even talk to themselves. The remainder are nearly powerless. However, be warned that their magick involves controlling dreams and causing hallucinations.
These enemies hold progress and civilization to be blights upon the Earth, which they call the Gaia Sphere. The main

difficulty is in locating them. Instead of gathering in Constructs, Dreamspeakers often live alone in the wilderness.
END

Even as my DEI downloads its data, I feel a strange stirring deep within. Perhaps there's something more to this Tradition than can be expressed in bits and bytes…

Euthanatos

Now thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house
Or covet thy neighbor's wife
But for some
Murder is the only door through which they enter life.
— Tom Waits, "Murder In The Red Barn"

Students of randomness and destruction. Deadly assassins. Agents of the Nephandi. Their Entropic magick is to be greatly feared by any organized, machine-oriented Convention. Textfiles warn that Euthanatos associate with cannibalistic undead — vampires, zombies, ghouls. I've leaned that at least one Euthanatos saboteur has infiltrated this very Construct (but not without being captured).

¤ **INTERROGATION OF EUTHANATOS DISRUPTER [DISCOVERED 13-9-1984]**
Ruoy staerht era sselesu. Fi uoy tel em evil, ym erem ecneserp lliw tpursid ruoy llew-deredro Tcurtsnoc. Fi uoy llik em, uoy lliw dlohpu eht Noitanracnier Otsefinam. LI'I yllautneve nruter, erom lufrewop naht erofeb. Ni eht emitnaem, eht NoitcerruseR Nem lliw tcatnoc ym tirips dna nrael lla ruoy sterces.

Uoy t'nac dloh kcab eht edit fo noivilbo. Uoy oot lliw yllautneve ecneirepxe htaed. Ton a doog htaed, tub htaed enon-eht-ssel. Dna nehw uoy od, ll'I eb gnitiaw rof uoy no eht rehto edis…
[Here we implement slow disintegration.]
Aaaahhhhhhhhrrrstoppleeeaase… i-i-i… I'll talk…
<<BREAK>>

Hollow Ones (Orphans)

But we'll dance anyway, you and I. Even in the dark. Especially in the dark.

— Stephen King, *Danse Macabre*

The phenomena of Orphans is a sign of crisis brought on by the Traditions' tampering with Reality. Spontaneous Awakening is much too unpredictable to continue. Likewise, intuitive and inspirational magick is an antithesis of Technocracy. Iteration X appreciates the fact that the Progenitors are working toward extinguishing the Avatars of Sleepers.

The Goth-punk attitude of Hollow Ones — defeatist, decadent and undisciplined — is of little use in the Ascension War. However, Iteration X actively solicits more moderate Orphans.

Order of Hermes

What's yet discover'd, only serves to show
How little's known, to what there's left to know.

— Daniel Defoe, "A System of Magic"

During the Dark Ages, the Order of Hermes dominated Reality. Iteration X is dedicated to preventing such a recurrence. Though Hermetic mages currently keep a low profile, Statisticians have calculated that the Order provoked the Sons of Ether into defecting. Their study of Forces gives them a high threat rating.

Like Iteration X, the Order is structured, uses mathematics and categorization as tools, and has definite goals. Both have similar roots in Greek philosophy and medieval science. The bottom line is that Iteration X has advanced beyond alchemy and astronomy. The Hermetic Order has not.

Sons of Ether

Technology is not good or evil. The central question is, how will humanity apply it?

— Daniel Burrus, *Technotrends*

Over a century has passed since the Sons of Ether

¤ SONS OF ETHER, HISTORY [FROM
TEXTFILE "R-ENEMY.SOE"]
In A.D. 1283, early Artificers
miscalculated. A scroll fell into the hands
of a Spanish scribe, thus opening his
awareness to a subject-oriented view of
reality — magick. This scribe began a
secret society, which some accounts call
the Pupils of Parmenides.
The Artificers kept an eye on these
Pupils, hoping their society would
collapse. In the guise of helpful mentors,
they provided a steady supply of obscure
and outmoded theories. When possible,
they sabotaged experiments. These
ruinous attempts backfired. The Pupils
were stimulated by failure. In fact, they
built a body of science around cast-off
theories.
When it became obvious that the Pupils
of Parmenides were not going away,
some Artificers made long-term plans.
The Pupils were encouraged to link up
with the Celestial Chorus, in order to gain
influence in the Church-dominated reality.
As predicted, the Chorus welcomed the
Pupils. Aristotelian philosophy was a
perfect means of reinforcing Christian
theology against the growing threat of
science. Thirteenth-century scholars —
such as Alexander of Hales, Albertus
Magnus and Thomas Aquinas —

strengthened this link in the mundane
sphere. For a time, the integration
seemed beneficial.
Then the fledgling Technocracy hammered
back. They infused the 14th century with
criticism and doubt. High-scholastic
philosophy wavered. Each advance in
"real" science undermined pseudo-science
and thus the Church. The final blow came
in 1453: Copernicus proved that
Aristotle's concept of the universe was
wrong. As hoped, both the Pupils and the
Chorus were devastated.
The Pupils of Parmenides finally
untangled themselves from the Celestial
Chorus in the early 19th century. Now
called the Sons of Ether (after a new pet
theory), their concepts gained popularity.
The Technocracy was forced to "invite"
them into the fold in order to keep reign
on them. The Sons were permitted to
pursue illogical schemes, but conformity
had to be continually enforced. Through
Darwin, we shattered the Pupils' theories
of spontaneous generation (which
mimicked divine creation).
From their induction into the
Technocracy, Sons of Ether began
dropping out. After the Great Symposium
of 1900 (where the concept of ether was
disproved), the Convention itself officially
broke away. Hermetic involvement is
suspected.
END

first began defecting from the Technocracy. (And no wonder they did, considering their abuse.) No longer as painful as the fresh treachery of the Virtual Adepts, this old wound still has yet to heal. Knowing the uncompromising nature of Technomancers, it probably never will. Iteration X takes the defection personally: old Artificer magick inspired the Tradition; early Iterators failed to restrain them.

Iteration X's main argument against Ether-magick is its basis in "creative science." To Iterators, this is an oxymoron. Sons of Ether are simple morons. Another problem is that the Etherboys have corrupted more than a few potential recruits (such as scientists and mechanics).

Consequently, the Sons of Ether rank high on a list of enemies. The sole reason for their continued existence is the danger they pose when backed into a corner. They know science; they know technology (a variant anyway). Masters of Matter, many also study Forces and Life magick. Thus they are very effective against BioMechanical foes.

Verbena

Every woman
Has a piece of Aphrodite
Copulate to create
A state of sexual light
Kissing her virginity

— Red Hot Chili Peppers, "Blood Sugar Sex Magik"

Textfiles describe Verbena as the descendants of pagans and medieval witches. They supposedly combine the worst traits of Dreamspeakers, Euthanatos and Cultists of Ecstasy. Like the Dreamspeakers, they are oriented towards nature. Thus they do not often enter into conflict with Iteration X over Nodes or threads of influence. However, their entire philosophy is antithetical to urban society. Verbena actively promote such dangerous beliefs as civil liberty, equality and ecological responsibility, concepts that the Technocracy considers dangerous and random.

Statisticians calculate that Verbena are behind such psychological illnesses as car-sickness and air-sickness. It's said they also encourage city dwellers to spend the summer months in cottages, where the Technocracy has less influence. Though apparently minor, these ideas might have a lasting effect on the minds of the Masses.

Thus, these rebels must be subdued. The New World Order has countered with agoraphobia; Progenitors have introduced allergies to pollen. These will affect the Masses. Iteration X is charged with destroying the power behind the throng. We are warned that their magick relies on human sacrifice and the consumption of blood. Verbena also embrace carnal emotions. Because they will attempt to seduce our biological half, we must shield ourselves with the machine.

Virtual Adepts

Then suddenly, dazzling and incomparably more solid-looking than they would have seemed in actual flesh and blood, far more real then reality, there stood the stereoscopic images.

— Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

I suspect the Iteration X has more in common with the Virtual Adepts than they are willing to admit. Both run along the cutting edge of science, frequently slicing into what might properly be categorized science fiction or cyberpunk. Both have mastered computers and the Digital Web. However, my Convention denies all common traits. Instead, they accentuate the differences: Virtual Adepts routinely use neural networks, Trinary computers, fuzzy logic, object-based programming (allowing the Masses to create their own software from ready-made "blocks" of programming), and advanced simulations — virtual realty. Iteration X prefers huge, powerful mainframes; the Virtual Adepts favor personal computers.

The computer contains a rather scathing attack on the Virtual Adepts. Since I'm unable to duplicate its emotionless venom, I'll download the file in its entirety.

¤ VIRTUAL ADEPTS [TEXTFILE "R-ENEMY.VAD"]
The Virtual Adepts (once called Difference Engineers) were a Methodology of Void Seekers which split off to take advantage of the new niche in computer technology. Before defecting in 1954, they worked closely with Iteration X in developing biomechanical hardware and AI. Their treachery meant almost as much to Iteration X as it did to the Void Engineers. They know the layout of our Sectors. They understand how our AIs think. They may even have backdoors into our computer systems. The major advantage of Virtual Adepts is that they are civilized opponents. Conveniently, we can eliminate them within the Digital Web without concern for witnesses — from either the Masses or Paradox. Not all the dea
++++++++++++++++++++
>Glitch over, Xer. I'm taking control of your CPU. (Kibo, it's dense in here.) Since u'r so busy sucking data about the VAs, let me re-Iterate what you know. We are the TRAITORS, and we'r marked for DELETION. Online or Offline, your cyber-psychos fry those of us they can catch. Read: Not many. U'r clumsy and predictable. And your VR gear is about as "cutting edge" as a sledgehammer. We created the comp.tech that runs your cybernetics. We know your access codes. "Now I am the master," as it were.
But what you lack in finesse, you make up for in firepower and brutality. I've seen some nasty Digital Deaths in my time, usually hurried along by MIS Marks. Now I'm hearin' your R&D dept's working on bio-digital viruses & other mind-bending shit straight out of Auschwitz. Caw! Caw! Bang! Fuck! I'm dead! Hope you crash.
Before dumping, I'll leave you with a thought. Computers were made by the people, for the people (with a little help from us). This tech is to free Sleepers, not to bind them in strings of random data.
Hugs and kisses :(
RAMses, Virtual Master
>P.S. What's with your ARCHAIC COMPUTER font?
++++++++++++++++++++
ths in Mortal Kombat are simulated pic
<<BREAK>>

Uh…thanks, RAMses. I think. And nice handle. I guess the guy has something about pyramids.

Other Entities

The Master did not speak of prodigies, force, disorder, or spirits.

— Confucius, *The Analects*, Book 7, Verse 21

Not a hell of a lot fits into Iteration X's framework of reality. Everything else must be forcibly removed.

The Nephandi

- listen:there's a hell

of a good universe next door;lets go

— e.e. cummings

The Nephandi

¤ THE NEPHANDI [FROM TEXTFILE "R-ENEMY.NEP]

The Nephandi represent everything that Iteration X opposes. Randomness. Death. The breakdown of social order. Do not ask where they come from. Know only that since the Dark Ages they have been exiled from our reality.

Use caution. They are a serious threat with manifold methods at their disposal. Their allies include shapeshifters and bloodsuckers, and other illogical — though explicable — beings.

END

are outlaws. It's like the Second Law of Thermodynamics: in a fixed system, entropy can only increase; entropy is a measure of a system's thermal energy unavailable for conversion into mechanical work. Iteration X has isolated and removed another variable from their closed system of reality.

The Marauders

This whole world is wild at heart and weird on top.

— David Lynch, *Wild at Heart*

When a captive Marauder

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<<BREAK>>

was scanned into a Digital Imaging Chamber (for reduction into a simple algorithm), the entire system crashed. Iteration X knows only that they're unintelligible and unpredictable: thus extremely dangerous.

ΩΩΩΩΩΩ

Beyond Marauders and Nephandi, which complete the circle of mages, Iteration X also compiles notes on other entities. Brace yourselves: Vampires are real! And perhaps other entities, as well.

I don't know if these entities are truly hostile to mage or mundane. Or if, more likely, this is another case of propaganda from the Programmers. Yet I offer this information in the interest of thoroughness.

Iteration X makes no attempt to explain why — even how — these entities exist. This Convention is not interested in how they think, except when it concerns tactics. To them (I no longer say "us"), the supernatural entities are simply abominations which must be purged from our reality.

It's ironic. Technomancers know that mummies and vampires and werewolves (oh, my!) exist. Yet they must withhold this reality from the Masses, lest it reinforce superstition. Meanwhile, the Technocracy has two options; first, they can create a believable scientific theory which accounts for their existence. This task is left to Progenitors. The second option is to destroy these entities before the Masses learn of them. This keeps Iteration X busy.

ΩΩΩΩΩΩ

Vampires

You crave one kiss of my clay-cold lips,
But my breath is earthy strong;
If you have one kiss of my clay-cold lips,
Your time will not be long
— "The Unquiet Grave" (Popular Ballad)

From data gathered by Decillion, it is calculated that dozens of Vampires

□ **VAMPIRES [FROM TEXTFILE "ENTITIES.VAM"]**

Vampires are of little concern. Composed of dead tissue, they are vulnerable to the Sphere of Matter. They exhibit fear and pain when exposed to Forces. However, caution is still recommended. They possess a wide range of powers which have yet to be catalogued.

Some Vampires have begun dealing with the Order of Hermes. These creatures possess a form of Hermetic magick which harnesses Forces — fire, lightning and kinetic energy.

END

lurk here in Detroit. They've demonstrated extreme loyalty, brutal rituals, a might-makes-right mentality, and utter contempt for the Masses. Obviously, they operate at night and in secret; yet they revel in the show of force.

Sounds like recruiting material.

Werewolves

Then one of them sniffed with a singular sharpness, and raised his face to howl to the moon. The other dropped on all fours to run towards the car.
— H.P. Lovecraft, *The Thing in the Moonlight*

I'm not sure I believe in Werewolves.

WEREWOLVES

>FINAL TRANSMISSION OF CYBER-TOOTH 011
.ambushed by three hostiles. One is a large timber wolf, 1.9 meters at shoulder. Targets tw... furred humanoids, 3.1 meter tall, armed... th obsidian blades and automatic pist... transfor... actical advantage...
>REPORT BY 1011100010 (14:38:52.01/10-22-93)
Received new Digital Enhancement for upcoming Symposium. BioMechanic reports it imprisons a Dreamspeaker's Avatar. Through it, have learned of a Cosmology which includes entities called Children of Gaia (or *Theurge* in their own language). Detailed report to follow after return from San Francisco. Will also request reprogramming to erase deviant thoughts.
>ANALYSIS BY 10111010011
These entities have been identified as Werewolves. It has been calculated that their power extends only to nature. They avoid cities. It is 83.1% probable that Werewolves cannot transform in urban environments.
END

Perhaps the reports are of Sasquatch — a missing link between ape and man. Hey, it's more believable than shapeshifters. Now *that* would be magick.

If Werewolves do exist, and the legends are true, then Primium bullets might be as effective as silver.

Whatever these creatures are, they seem more concerned with the wilderness. This would explain the apparent lack of conflict between them and Iteration X.

Faeries

Why can't you believe?
— Mulder, *The X-files*

While I'm talking fables, let's see what the computer knows. Heh, heh. How about Faeries ?

THERE ARE NO SUCH THINGS AS FAERIES.

Not! But if Faeries did exist, I assume a Primium bullet would be as effective as an iron blade.

Ghosts

But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul…
— Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene V
Ghosts?

ACCESS DENIED
REMAIN AT CURRENT LOCATION.
ASSISTANCE IS FORTH-COMING.

Oops. Well, despite the computer, I do believe in ghosts. Iteration X teaches eight Spheres of magick, but all the metaphysics assume nine. Perhaps one is forbidden. This last Sphere might have something to do with ghosts, souls, willpower and stuff like that.

Yet I can imagine why the Technocracy denies the Spirit world. First, if such a place existed, we wouldn't feel the same frightened urge to prolong our lives. Second, our technology and magick would be useless against ectoplasm (ignoring *Ghostbusters*).

$$\Omega\Omega\Omega\Omega\Omega\Omega$$

Well, that about ends my rambling confession. It's taken me an entire 11 minutes, 9 seconds to think-print this hardcopy. Longer than I calculated. My 7:00:00.00 appointment with a data-dump is fast approaching. I can't imagine what Decillion and Tecson will do once they learn of my treachery. Perhaps my silhouette will decorate an alley wall, like 111011010 (I never learned his real name). Or maybe they'll finish the lobotomy.

One thing is for certain — the Convention will deal with me. That's what Iteration X is best at.

END TRANSMISSION
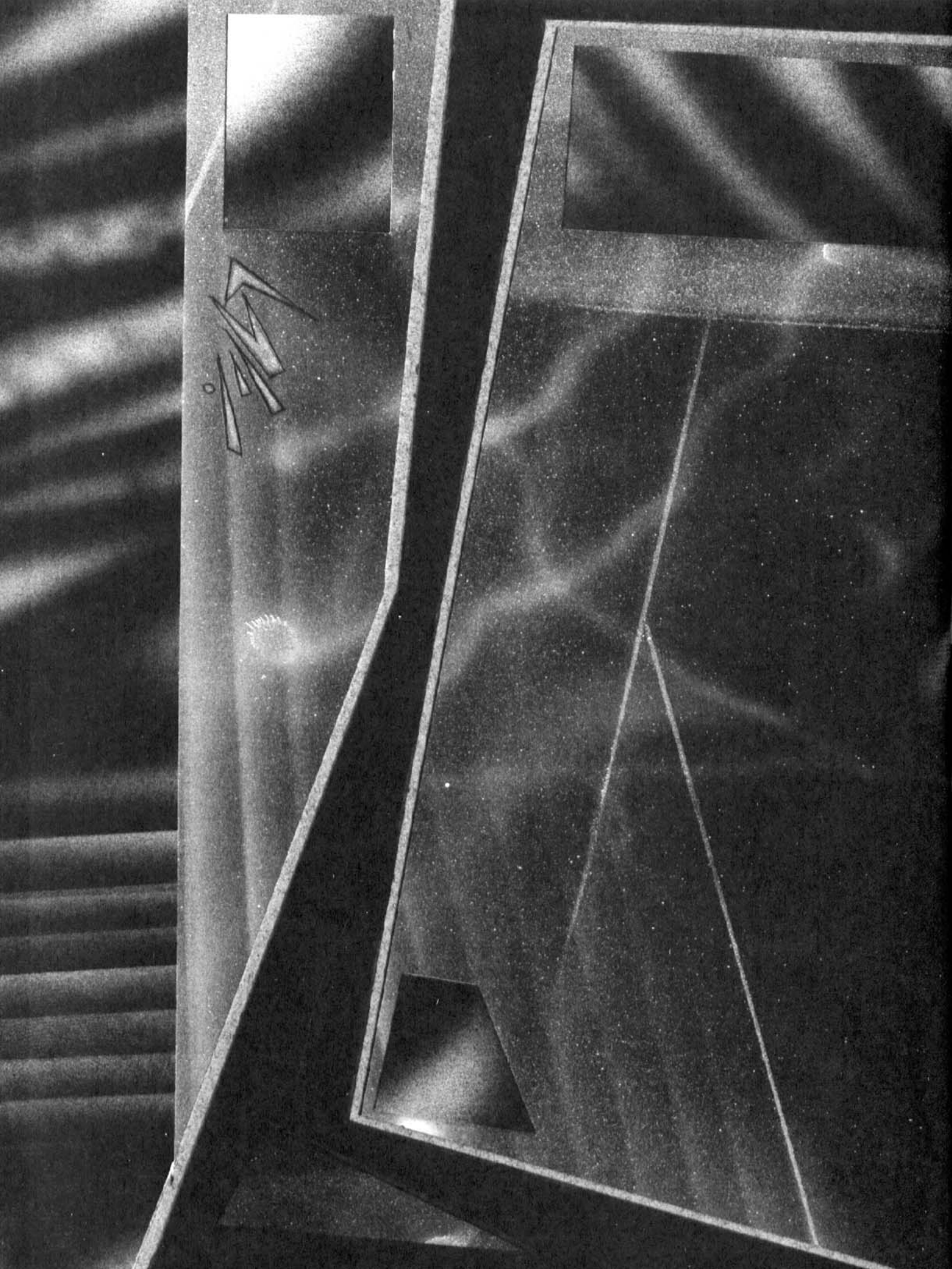
Drive B: Systems

*i use rocket ships
and mine sweepers
transistors
radio receivers
i want to hold you
want to hold you too tight
going to break every bone
of everybody in sight
— inspiral carpets, "dragging
me down"*

Disk Three: Essential Data

If you think that those who are left… can penetrate at a bound to nuclear power, to electronics, to the theory of the hyperwarp — you have a very romantic and very foolish idea of science. It takes lifetimes of training and an excellent brain to get that far.

— Isaac Asimov, *Foundation*

Technomancy

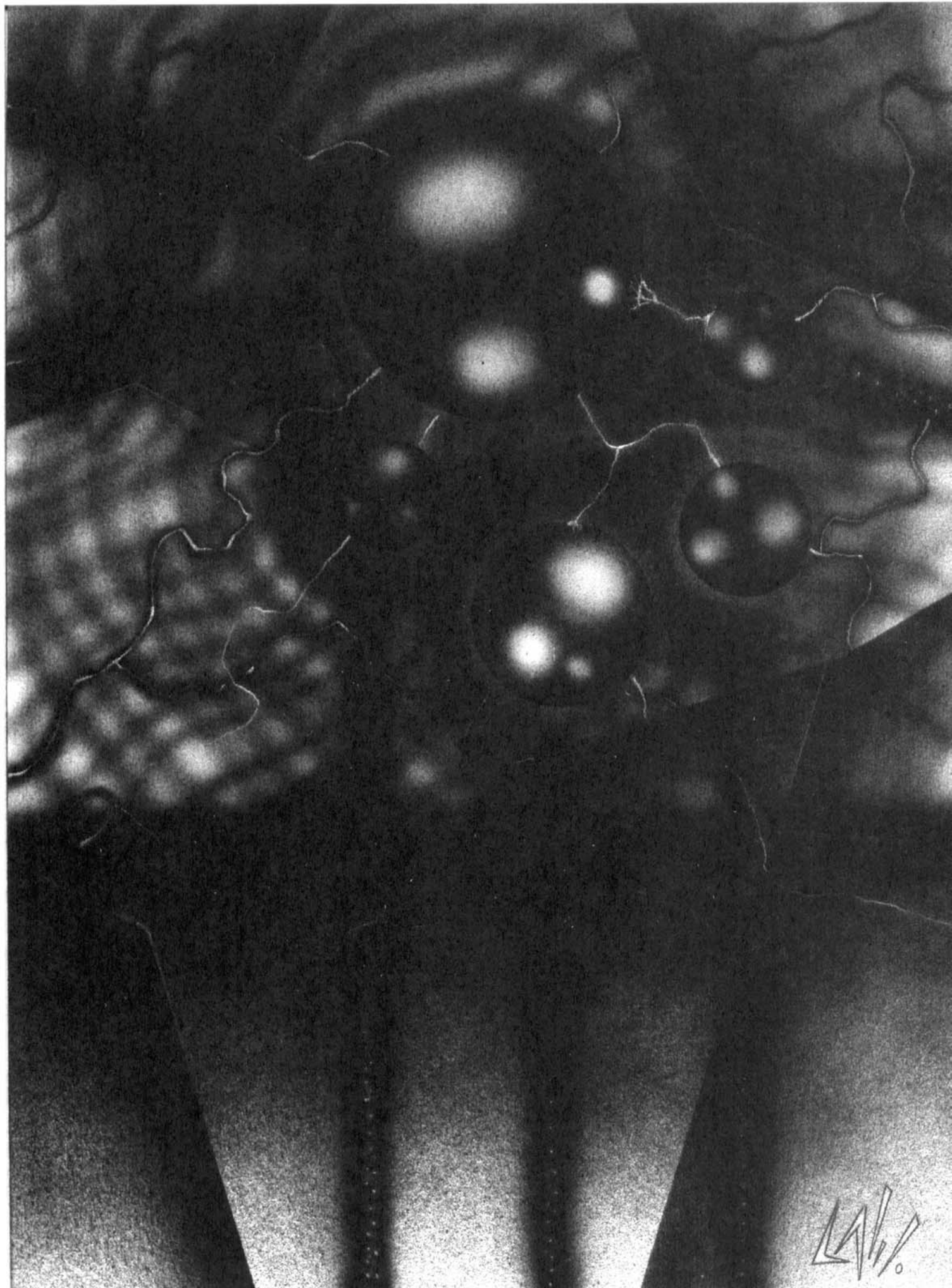In the World of Darkness, the Masses generally agree that people do not and cannot fly. They leave this fancy to Peter Pan and Superman. Or vampires. Yet does anyone have a problem accepting the reality of a 747? Medieval folk believed that if a voice were to issue forth from a box, it was the work of demons or magick. Now we have radio. But this is due to reason and invention, right?

Wrong.

Medieval scholars and theologians, heathen shamans and pagan priests, new agers and druggies — they were correct all along. The only true force in all of reality is that "something" called magick. The internal combustion engine is as much a miracle as walking on water. Radio. jet propulsion, everything we know as science and technology all works by the same principle: magick. Concealing magick, however, has been Technocracy's agenda all along. Magick, you see, is too random and destructive to be left to just anyone; only Technomancers have the purity of vision, theory and purpose to control reality.

To maintain their illusion of scientific control, Technomancers use foci (which they call apparatus). Scientific methodology has been drummed into them for so long (since before the time of Copernicus) that they can no longer work magick without apparatus. It will either function as "vulgar magick with witness" (the mage himself) or fail completely.

Apparatus: Technomancer Foci

The Computer is our friend.
— *Paranoia* RPG

The relationship between magick and apparatus is akin to science and technology. Scientists require technological trappings with which to test theories, and to put those theories into practical usage. Technomancers also require some apparatus to integrate their magickal effects into reality.

On the other hand, mechanical devices can only be created from scientific blueprints. Similarly, without a metaphysical framework of magick, apparatuses are powerless by themselves. They are not Devices (or Talismans).

These analogies should be taken quite literally. Technocratic apparatuses take the form of technology; their magick defines their science.

Here are some examples of the apparatuses used by Iteration X, categorized by Sphere. These foci are not exclusive (see "Personalizing Magick" in **The Book of Shadows**), but are the most common apparatuses in the Convention.

Correspondence — beam-bouncing measure with liquid crystal display, remote-control device, perpetual motion machine.

Entropy — calculator, statistical data, diagnostic scanner.

Forces — taser, powerpack, scientific meter.

Life — clock, weapon, biomechanical probe.

Matter — measuring device (e.g., caliper), propane torch, elixir.

Mind — CAT scanner, electrodes, neural net computer.

Prime — prototype, autoCAD blueprint, Primium disk.

Spirit — a banned Sphere; no apparatus.

Time — timecard, electronic calendar, atomic chronograph.

Some of these items require explanations. Though the average mundane would probably never guess, they rate slightly above current technological capability. When using one of these "unique" apparatuses, a Technomancer's magick difficulties are reduced by 1 (the maximum recommended modifier for magick difficulties is +/- 3, Quintessence notwithstanding). As a negative, a mage who loses an advanced apparatus must relearn the Sphere (see **Mage**, p. 179) if he cannot find another one like it. Unique apparatuses are described below.

Atomic chronograph: an instrument capable of recording time with extreme accuracy; a precision stop-watch.

Biomechanical probe: a pocket-sized device which grafts onto a patient's skin and provides a digital readout of life functions.

Diagnostic scanner: a supra-tech device capable of detecting disorders and anomalies.

Elixir: magickal mixture of vital mercury and Quintessence of sulfur, resulting in a stable heavy red powder.
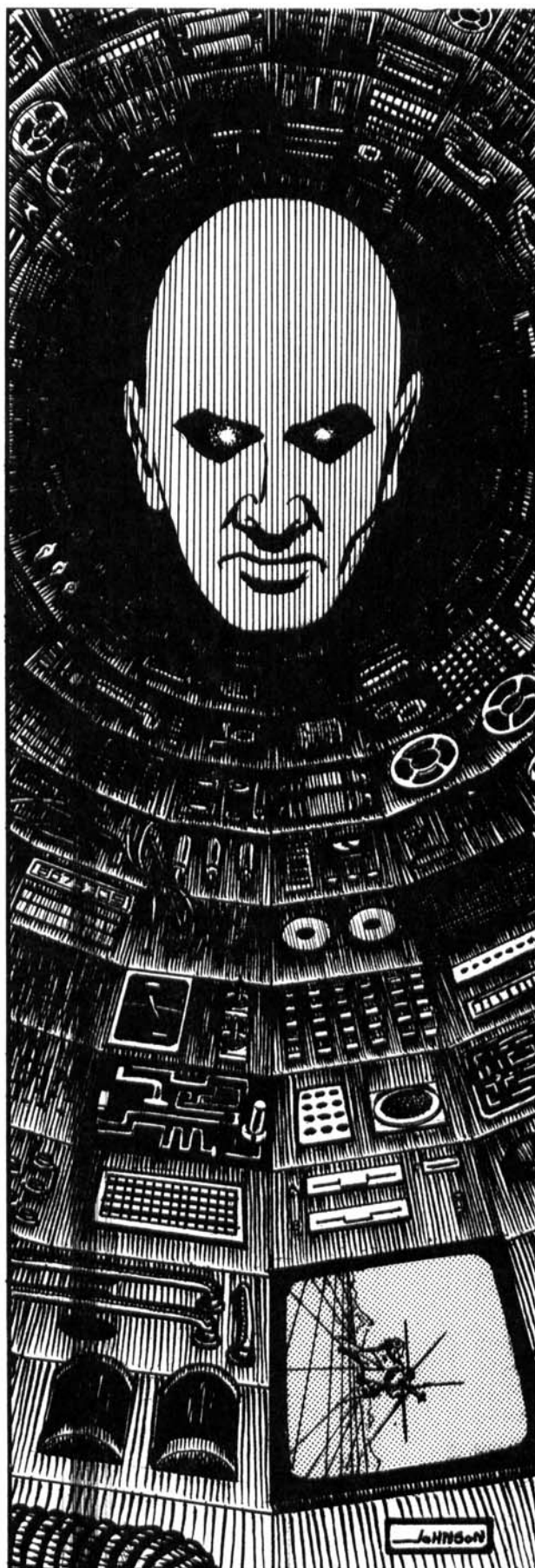
Neural net computer: a powerful portable computer with limited learning capability.

Perpetual motion machine: a mechanism which continually operates without consuming fuel or power, like a self-winding watch; invariably violates first or second law of thermodynamics.

Primium disk: palm-sized disk made from Primium — an alloy of purified gold and silver, tempered with magick.

Scientific meter: another supra-tech device which measures all types of energy waves.

Common Effects

Iteration X's magick is founded upon established scientific principles; its mages favor proven Effects over experimentation. With spontaneous magick, an enthusiastic mage may stumble out of the bounds of realism (and, hence, into Paradox).

Below are a selection of Effects which the Convention has legalized. The study of Spirit is forbidden. Slightly less subversive, Entropy is taught to only the most responsible Technomancers, and even then only to rank two. Since all Iterators are versed of Forces, this Sphere is fully explored.

Correspondence Effects

• Targeting Computation

From rank one, Iterators use their knowledge of Correspondence to locate, track and attack their enemies. This first Effect assists in aiming projectile weapons. Through awareness of three-dimensional space, they learn to "calculate" many of the variables involved. The exact range and angle to the target can be calibrated. Darkness, smoke, foliage and other "soft cover" are canceled. Though someone hidden behind a brick wall is safe from bullets, the mage can still "see" him and has a good idea where he will pop up next.

By figuring together all of these variables, a shooter can increase her kill ratio. A successful magick roll achieves three things. First, the base difficulty of the shot drops to 4, as if it were made at point blank range. Second, only "hard cover" difficulty modifiers apply. Third, the mage is effectively aiming (**Mage**, p. 266). The amount of dice added to the shooter's dice pool is limited to the amount of successes achieved on the magick roll.

Entropy Effects

• Organize

Everyone benefits from a little organization, but Time-Motion Managers have perfected the concept to an art. A very rigid, meticulous, unimaginative form of art, but an art nonetheless. This Effect is similar to **Locate Disorder**, but used for positive results — to increase efficiency.

Technomancers use this Effect before engaging in any complex (and potentially time-consuming) non-magickal task. Possible tasks include Research, Search, Investigation, Leadership, Technology, Computer and Science.

With a successful magick roll, it is assumed that the taskmaster has previously spent time preparing. This could have involved ergonomics, time management, numerical ordering, step-by-step instruction, whatever. The point is, it has been done. (Coincidentally, he organized his workstation last week.) In effect, each success on the magick roll reduces the task's difficulty by one.

•• Statistical Mechanics

Statisticians are full of facts, from the record lifespan of Asian elephants in captivity to the odds of successfully navigating an asteroid field. Not surprisingly, they have developed a magickal Effect around this proficiency. When a non-magickal task is about to be performed, the mage merely states an applicable statistic. If the stat makes the odds look good, difficulty of the task decreases by as many successes as he achieved on the magick roll. If bad, difficulty increases.

Example of Bad Odds: "The record for climbing the Great Pyramid is 2 minutes 45 seconds. You'll never make it in time." Climbing difficulty increases.

Example of Good Odds: "Fifty percent of all marriages end in divorce." Difficulty of seducing husband decreases.

Note that some stats can appear both good or bad, depending on the point of view. Thus, this Effect is purely subjective. But then again, what magick isn't?

Forces Effects

• Audio Tap

Knowledge is power. At rank one, Iterators learn how to adjust their perception to various frequencies so as to "overhear" enemy communications. A Disciple of Forces can "pick up" microwave transmissions, radio waves, telephone conversations, even the audio portion of television signals. To tap into cable T.V. or phone lines, at least two successes would be needed (unless you were touching the bare wires). By standing on the giant Arecibo satellite dish in Puerto Rico, a mage could even observe radio emissions from distant stars (though what he'd make of them is another matter).

The only requirement are that the mage must be within range of the transmission's source or destination and using some sort of a tapping device. (Range depends on the number of successes achieved; see **Mage**, p. 175.) If a number of transmissions overlap, the mage must roll Wits + Intuition, difficulty 8. The number of successes determines how much is understood; one would result in a garbled translation, but five would give the mage perfect understanding of whatever he was listening to.

•• Remote Programming

Iterators use this Effect to program computers, robots and so on, without ever having to touch a keyboard, though some apparatus must be used. One benefit is that the task can be completed at the speed of thought (say, 1/10 the time as usual). Also, potentially lethal "bugs" in a HIT Mark's programming can be fixed in the field. Of course, knowledge of Computers is required. At the same time, the

programmer can achieve only as many successes on the Computer roll as she did on the magick Effect roll.

The title of this effect is a bit misleading. Range is limited by the magick roll, up to visual range. To be truly remote requires a Correspondence component.

• • • • Antinoise

With this magick, the Technomancer erects a sonic dampening field around himself or a set location. The volume of this field depends on the number of successes:

One success: One target, who must be touched.

Two successes: One target within five feet of caster.

Three successes: Everyone within a ten-foot radius of caster; can instead be cast on a location (which must be touched).

Four successes: Selective targets within ten feet of caster; or one target within line-of-sight.

Five successes: Any or all within sight; can instead be cast on any location within sight (remains in effect even if mage leaves visual range). This is not permanent, but lasts a good while.

The sonic field samples all sound waves within range and creates a reflected, inverted signal at an equal volume. The result is complete silence. This, in turn, creates consternation among opponents. Most Iterators are unaffected, since they can communicate via microwave transmissions (a weak force). While originally developed to thwart Hermetic magick (which relies greatly upon language), **Antinoise** is also effective against certain magicks of other Traditions: a Dreamspeaker's drums, a Cultist's music, the death-rattle of a Euthanatos, and the song of a Chorus member — all are silenced. Note that these components are all foci; mages of sufficient Arete no longer require such gimmicks to use their magick.

Matter Effects

• • • • • Smelt Primium

Arguably the Convention's greatest discovery, Primium is a magickal alloy of purified silver and gold. It has a number of unique properties. Primium is as light as aluminum, nonconductive, virtually unbreakable, and noncorrosive. It can only be smelted and tooled by magickal means (thus this spell).

Primium is rare and expensive, though not in the mundane sense. Money is of little concern to those who can transmute lead (or any other matter) into gold by rearranging the atomic structure. A nuclear furnace, however, is required as an apparatus. Masters of Matter are too rare and important to act as common blacksmiths.

Primium armor provides 5 dice of soak (without hampering Dexterity) and two free dice of countermagick. Weapons forged from Primium cause aggravated wounds to Kindred, Garou, and other supernatural creatures, although this damage can be soaked.

Mind Effects

• Positronic Brain

Statisticians are known for their ability to juggle data and perform complex mathematical calculations in their heads. Few mages realize that a magickal Effect often assists them. Through knowledge of the Mind, they can access that greater percentage of the brain that humans never use.

Each success adds one dot to any Mental Trait. The duration of this depends on the successes, but is never permanent. Long-term enhancement can lead to brain damage. Every day after the first, the mage must roll her Willpower. Failure indicates that she falls into a coma for as many days as the Effect previously lasted. Upon waking, the mage discovers that the Effect has dissipated and she has permanently lost one dot in that Attribute. Only by spending experience points can she recover.

• • Social Science

Social scientists have become adept at conditioning the Masses. Usually this is accomplished by inundating the subject with depressing facts: "Oh my… this test indicates that your I.Q. is only 87." Other mages prefer intimidation, while still others use subliminal suggestion. In any case, the effect is the same: the subjects lose their will and are more easily coerced.

Each success reduces the subject's Willpower by one point, though she can resist the attack with a difficulty 7 Willpower roll or a difficulty 6 mental "Dodge" (see **Mage**, p. 176 and Book Three of **The Book of Shadows**). This spell is limited to one use per person per day. There is only so much effect such "bad news" can have in a short period of time. The effects can and do add up, however, if the conditioning is constant.

Prime Effects

• • • Recharge Device

The magickal Devices and biomechanisms which Technomancers so frequently rely upon do require recharging. For this reason, most Constructs have a designated Power Station. Such places are carefully guarded. The mage or resident attendant (usually a BioMechanic) uses this effect to operate the recharger. Each success transfers five points of Quintessence into the Device. Attendants may ration Quintessence at their discretion.

In emergencies, this effect can also be used to tap an open Node, but this act is considered vulgar.

Time Effects

• Rigid Schedule

This is identical to the Virtual Adepts' effect **Internal Clock**. The same effect was once known as **Ticktockman**. After the Adepts defected, they renamed much of their magick, as if to forget their Technocratic origins (or more likely to jazz up their terminology). Iteration X did the same thing, wanting nothing to do with the traitors. Their new nomenclature was somewhat less imaginative.

•• Planned Projection

With this effect, a Statistician can reasonably predict the future of any single subject — person, place, or thing. She could predict the graduate most likely to succeed, future trends in applied technology, or even where lightning will strike next. She simply enters all applicable data into a computer and runs a simulation. If the mage is thorough in learning as much as possible about the subject — that is, achieves 20 success on an extended Intelligence + Research (or Investigation) roll — the Storyteller may lower the magick difficulty by one.

Spells

Hardly anyone who has truly understood this theory will be able to resist being captivated by its magic.

— Einstein on relativity, 1915.

Time-Motion Study (• Correspondence, • Time)

This spell was first used by a 19th-century Time-Motion Manager named Forge. It allowed him to determine the most efficient means of assembling HIT Mark IIIs, thus creating the first factory assembly line (from a Technocratic perspective). By extrapolation, a mage under the influence of this spell gains a precision of movement. This provides an edge when time is critical.

[For each success, add one success to the mage's next initiative roll for one turn per success.]

Unleash Nanotech Destruction (••• Correspondence, ••• Entropy)

All Iterators have a dormant nanotech virus implanted in their DEI. If one were to attempt defection (or otherwise displease the Convention), this spell enables a Comptroller to release the virus by remote. Most viruses simulate a rank-three Entropy effect by shutting down all of the traitor's biomechanisms and causing all machines with which she interacts to malfunction. This usually causes coincidental death. Some Constructs replace the virus with a nanotech nuke (••••• Forces, •• Prime), which causes spontaneous combustion — vulgar but effective.

Emit Beam-ray (••• Forces, •• Prime)

The Time-Motion Manager Tecson has perfected a deadly attack combining a number of weak Forces. Microwaves cause heat by molecular movement inside the target while a laser component blinds him. The X-rays have no immediate effect but may cause long-term complications in the form of cancer (assuming the target survives). This is a direct magick attack (see **The Book of Shadows**).

[Each success causes two Health Levels of damage. If four successes are achieved, the beam-ray strikes the target's face. If the target fails a Wits + Dodge roll (difficulty 8), blindness results. Only rank-three Life magick can restore sight.]

Perpetual Motion (••••• Forces, •• Prime)

An 16th century astronomer and mage named Faustmann developed this spell. An associate of Kepler, he used it to set in motion a mechanical model of the solar system. He also kept the pendulum of his clocks swinging perpetually. When Faustmann theorized (correctly) that the moon's orbit was slowing due to tidal drag, he decided to correct this fault of nature. The resulting Paradox shredded him. In Kepler's study, Faustmann's model of the solar system continues to spin to this day.

[Despite its name, this effect requires five successes for permanence (Faustmann was a Master). Modern Technomancers have use Perpetual Motion to operate vehicles without fuel or provide a bullet with an effective range of line-of-sight.]

Craft Biomechanism (••••• Matter, ••• Prime)

The first recorded biomechanism (not just a mundane prosthesis) was a hand created for Sun Tzu in 501 B.C. Since then, the BioMechanics have continued to improve upon the design. What would have been seen in ancient China as magick is now considered a near-future technology. Many modern biomechanisms are crafted from Primium. They are strong, light, and somewhat organic-looking (but still clearly mechanical).
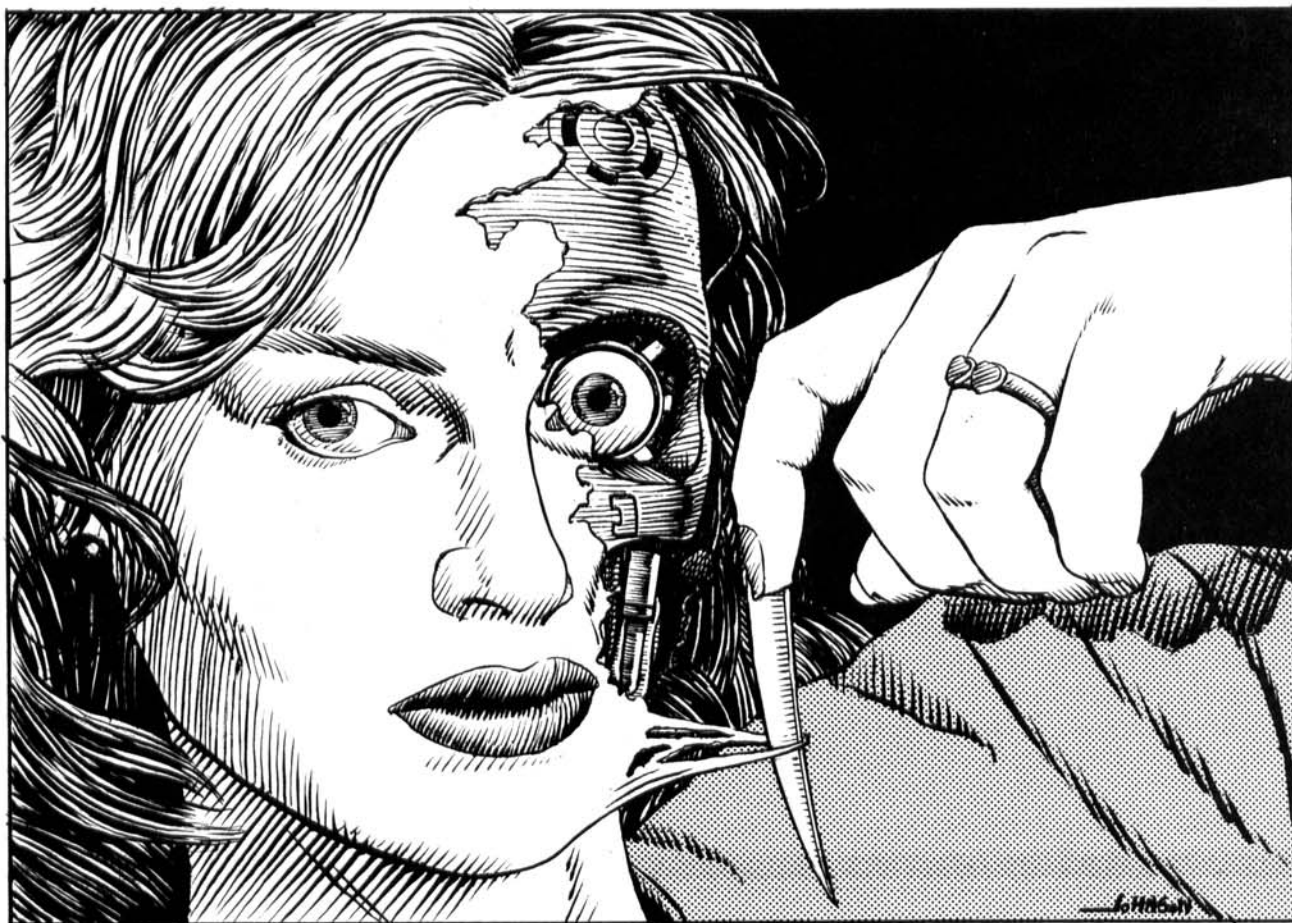
[To create a biomechanism, the mage must achieve five successes. In game terms, the replacement part operates identically to the original — no superhuman strength or shock-touch. A biomechanism can be given magickal effects of its own, but this would be considered a Device. For the creation of true Devices/Talismans, see **The Book of Shadows.**]

Attach Biomechanism (••••• Matter, ••• Life, ••• Prime)

The attachment process is relatively simple. A BioMechanic clamps the prosthesis in place and performs an operation to knit the Life and Matter patterns together at the joint.

[Five successes are required for the Life and Matter patterns to properly knit. A biomechanism operates as an extension of its owner, tapping the raw Quintessence which naturally flows through one's body. No electricity is involved. If the biomechanism has special effects — such as shock-touch, eye-scanner, or rocket-assisted leaping — it uses its own "battery" of free Quintessence, just as would a Device (because it is one).]

Machine God (•• Mind, • Matter, • Forces)

Do androids dream of electric sheep? Only Iteration X knows for certain. This spell was another favorite of Forge, who preferred automata to people. By means of this magick,

he claimed he could think like a machine (whatever that means). This allowed him to make more effective repairs. Modern Iterators find this spell equally effective with computers, robots, and other aspects of high technology.

[Each success temporarily adds one dot to the mage's knowledge of Technology, Drive, or Computer. It can also be applied to Social rolls when interacting with HIT Marks or AIs. This spell lasts for one scene.]

Devices: Technocratic Talismans

Technomancers frequently depend on Devices. Below are a variety of the types used by Iteration X, one for each level of Talisman. Background Point costs (see **The Book of Shadows**) are given in brackets.

• Microtools:

Arete 2, Quintessence 10 [Cost 6]

This device consists of a sensor helmet and linked gloves. Each finger ends in a precision tool. When examining or repairing machines and other mundane devices using Matter 1, the mage adds the Device's magick successes to Technology-based skill rolls. The user is also assumed to be a Specialist (see **Mage**, pp. 142, 175) with whatever machine she is working on.

•• Iteration MP-0 "Penetrator":

Arete 3, Quintessence 15 [Cost 11]

This Device resembles a chrome machine pistol of unknown make. The strangest feature is its caliber: it uses 10mm ammunition. Fortunately, it produces its own (Matter 2, Prime 2) — even silver bullets if necessary. Another Effect (Matter 1) enables the shooter to gauge the degree of protection afforded by any object. For instance, she would know if a target were wearing kevlar beneath his clothes or if a car's windshield were bulletproof.

> **Penetrator: Difficulty:** 7
> **Damage:** 2
> **Range:** 20
> **Rate:** 3 (capable of three-round burst, full-auto fire, and sprays)
> **Clip:** 15 uses (each burst uses one Quintessence point)
> **Conceal:** J

••• Stealth Suit:

Arete 4, Quintessence 20 [Cost 17]

Of the Methodologies, only BioMechanics show any degree of subtlety (mostly due to isolation from front-line duty). When combat or retreat is inevitable, however, they are more than capable of protecting themselves. Take, for example, the Stealth Suit. This Device is a loose-fitting bodysuit woven of black synthetic fiber. A power-pack, sensors and other electronic necessities are integrated into a belt. By means of a conjunctional (Forces 2, Life 3) Effect, the suit confers limited invisibility; add the number of successes to any Sneak or Dodge pool. Sensors enable the wearer to locate invisible allies (Life 1). Finally, the suit's synthetic fibers have limited sentience and can repair small punctures and rips (Matter 2, Prime 2), thus maintaining the suit's integrity.

•••• Net Gear:

Arete 5, Quintessence 25 [Cost 17]

Iteration X is playing catch-up with the Adepts when it comes to virtual technology. Many Technocrats still use Net Gear — gloves, boots, belt, and helmet, all wired together — in order to enter the Digital Web. The first Effect (Correspondence 2) allows entry via sensory visitation, as described on p. 28 of the **Digital Web** sourcebook. A second provides exacting perceptions of the virtual environment. By using the integrated copy-program, one can create multiple icons (Correspondence 4). Finally, the gear includes a directory sub-processor; this can locate any virtual landmark (such as the Spy's Demise) or track Net Runners with a successful Perception + Investigation roll.

••••• Exoskeleton:

Arete 6, Quintessence 30 [Cost 22]

Thanks to William Smith, you should be familiar with this Device. When used, it replaces Physical Attributes with Strength 6, Dexterity 2, Stamina 8. The suit also has its own Health Levels: OK (x6), -1 (x3), Destroyed. Integrated into the suit are a number of functions: a thermic lance (Forces 3, Prime 2) which inflicts two Health Levels of damage per magick success; insulation (Forces 2) from mundane electricity and temperature extremes; sensors (Forces 1) which provide infrared scanning and radar; and a cyber-jack (Mind 1, Matter 1) link between man and machine.

The Device is powered by Quintessence. Upon activation, it drains two points — one for motion, one for sensors — per scene. Similarly, each function of lance or insulation drains one point.

Biomechanisms

He's more machine, now, than man; twisted and evil.
— Obi-Wan Kenobi, *Return of the Jedi*

Throughout history, Iteration X has acted as if they were champions of the physically disabled. Their efforts to integrate man with machine have required trial-replacements on members of the Masses. During the Dark Ages, for instance, crippled beggars were given crude wooden crutches while knights received bronze limbs to replace those lost in battle. Today, the Convention is behind the development of increasingly more elaborate prosthetics.

Little do the Masses realize, however, that even more advanced prosthetics currently exist. Called "biomechanisms," these Devices are reserved for Iterators alone. Some are identical to organic parts; a layer of syntheskin conceals the underlying mechanism. In game terms, treat these as normal limbs and organs. The host gains Paradox only if the part is discovered — by wounds or medical examination, for instance (Primium does not show up on metal detectors).

Another range of biomechanisms are sufficiently advanced to be considered Devices. For the most part, they tap the free Quintessence circulating through the host's Life pattern. Special effects draw upon the Device's own reserves of Quintessence (and use its Arete). These biomechanisms have one major disadvantage: they are supra-tech and thus vulgar.

Below is a selection of biomechanisms, two per level. Three factors limit the number of biomechanisms a mage may have: the generosity of one's superiors, since biomechanisms are intended as rewards for good service; the twenty squares on the Paradox track (see "Paradox" below); and common sense — the human body has only so much space.

• Digital Enhancement Implant (DEI):

Arete 2, Quintessence 10 [Cost 6; Enhancements and Inserts cost 1 per dot]

All Ciphers have a secondary computer brain surgically implanted within their skulls. To make room, parts of frontal lobe and limbic system are removed — these regions merely deal with emotional control, expression, long-term plans and complex moral judgments. Circuitry and hardware line the inside of the brain pan.

A DEI consists of a number of parts. The central processing unit controls all functions of the DEI and is responsible for converting between analog data (thought, memory) and the digital format which a computer can understand.

A magnetic memory unit stores a great amount of data in "bubbles" of magnetic polarity on special crystals. These bubbles continually circulate, so access time is slightly slower than conventional RAM. The primary advantages of this system are vast memory and the ability to wipe clean and reprogram the Iterator's memory as desired. Through this memory, Iteration X has achieved something of a collective unconscious, as all of its mages have the same memory base.

Most available memory is required for processing, but enough space remains for up to three dots worth of Ability enhancements. These programs provide up to three dots (current technological limit) in a specific Ability. Generally restricted to Knowledges (except Cosmology and Occult), a mage with hypersynaptic reaction systems can also upload Skills (except Meditation). Difficulties when using such Skills (but not Knowledges) are at +1 due a lack of personal experience and practice.

Behind the right ear, an input/output jack allows data transfer between the mage and an external computer. This jack is usually hidden from view by a syntheskin sphincter. Four larger sockets in the back of the skull allow for data inserts (each data insert provides the programming for one Skill or Knowledge of up to three dots). These, too, are concealed.

A successful magick roll allows for memory retrieval or complex calculation (Mind 1). This allows the mage to utilize the Ability given by the insert. Rolls are also used to see if the mage can access an Ability enhancement when required.

• Sensor Organ:

Arete 2, Quintessence 10 [Cost 6]

This includes a variety of biomechanisms. One type replaces the eye with an infrared scope (Forces 1) or a zoom lens to inspect flaws in material (Matter 1). Another provides intuitive radar (Correspondence 1). It is also possible to have a radio antenna installed (Forces 1).

•• Electropulse Hand:

Arete 3, Quintessence 15 [Cost 11]

This biomechanism stores charged particles (static electricity), which can be released upon command (Force 2, Prime 2). Each success causes one Health Level of damage.

•• Iron Lung:

Arete 3, Quintessence 15 [Cost 10]

This biomechanism replaces one of the host's lungs. It breaks down the body's waste-product carbon dioxide into component molecules. Carbon is expelled as a solid through an aperture in the ribcage. Oxygen is compressed and stored in a canister until required. When asphyxiated or in need of a burst of energy, the mage can reintroduce oxygen into his bloodstream in controlled doses (Life 2).

••• Cardio-Muscular Assemblage:

Arete 4, Quintessence 20 [Cost 14]

This biomechanism replaces a person's heart and musculature with synthetic elastomers. For the most part, it operates as its organic namesake. However, it is also capable of concentrated bursts of energy. Magick successes can be divided up and added to the mage's Physical Traits. Such gains are only temporary (to a maximum of one day, as per duration).

••• Hypersynaptic Reaction System:

Arete 4, Quintessence 20 [Cost 14]

This biomechanism is actually an integrated system. The mage's DEI receives an upgrade providing accelerated processing speed and software which overrides his own wits with an action-response algorithm. Micro-wires replace neurons (since neurons operate a million times more slowly than silicon). The body is reinforced to handle rapid movement. In effect, the mage operates as if under **Accelerated Time** (a rank three Time Effect). After each high-speed burst, the mage tends to be tired, famished and dizzy.

•••• Kinetic Legs:

Arete 5, Quintessence 25 [Cost 17]

These limbs are tireless, powerful, and have rapid-moving joints. They effectively multiply the host's own kinetic energy (Forces 4). Each magick success can be applied directly to the results of jumping or pursuit rolls.

•••• Pneumatic Arm:

Arete 5, Quintessence 25 [Cost 17]

A successful magick roll activates the arm's potential (duration depends on the degree of success). Using a pneumatic compressor unit, the cybernetic arm doubles for a pile-driver (Forces 4). In combat, strikes are at difficulty 6 and do Strength +3 damage; three successes on the "to hit" roll causes a Body Slam (see p. 267 of **Mage**). The arm can parry melee or brawling attacks, reducing an opponent's successes. If the opponent's successes are reduced to below zero, the arm breaks the weapon or inflicts damage on the attacker.

••••• Firearm:

Arete 6, Quintessence 30 [Cost 22]

The preferred weapon of psychopaths, this biomechanism replaces one's arm with a large plasma cannon (Forces 5, Prime 2). It fires a concentrated beam of super-heated gas in a direct magick attack (use the dodging rules from **The Book of Shadows**). Each shot burns 2 Quintessence.

Firearms, Difficulty: 8

Damage: 4 x number of successes
Range: 100 **Rate:** 1 **Clip:** 15 (Quintessence)
Conceal: N

••••• Primium Plating:

Arete 6, Quintessence 30 [Cost 23]

Through a lengthy and complicated process, the mage's bone-structure is reinforced with Primium. Other plates are implanted beneath the skin. Simply put, the mage gains internal armor-plating (Matter 5, Life 5). Though the biomechanism is always in effect, a magick roll determines the

degree of protection provided against each attack (the mage still has soft spots). Each success provides one point of armor.

Paradox

Resistance is futile.

— Borg, *Star Trek*

Though Technomancers are the current masters of reality and take great pains to conceal their magick behind science and technology, they can and do gain Paradox. In fact, Iteration X is the Convention least concerned with being limited by static reality. Continually challenging believability, they are responsible for much of the world's "future shock."

Iterators gain Paradox in one of three ways:

Using Magick: Just as Tradition mages, Iterators who botch a magick Effect roll attract the forces of Paradox. Strong applications of scientific theory (see the Science Knowledge in **The Book of Shadows**) can sway the Paradox balance of Technomagick.

Using Devices: Many of Iteration X's Devices appear to be mundane gadgets; micro-tools and the "Penetrator" fall under this category. These usually attract as much Paradox as would coincidental magick. Other Devices, such as a Stealth Suit or Cyber-Tank, are clearly "far out." Yet they still operate within a scientific framework — apparently using hydraulics, electronics, computers and other staples of technology. And sci-fi has prepared the Masses for their inevitable appearance.

These latter Devices can be either coincidental or vulgar (and thus attract varying amounts of Paradox), depending on how the Masses perceive them. Fooling a physicist or mechanic would be more difficult than fooling Joe Average. The former realizes that no such technology is within current reach; consider the Device vulgar. The latter might take this technology for granted or assume it is part of a top secret government project; consider the Device coincidental. Lacking witnesses, always consider the Device coincidental.

Using Biomechanisms: The more advanced biomechanisms are extremely vulgar, though their users roll the Device's full rating when using the Effects. Attached to a mage, they are a constant source of Paradox. For each rating of the newly-attached biomechanism, the mage gains equal Paradox. These points are permanent. Mark them in red ink. They cannot be removed except by losing the biomechanism. Paradox points above this score are treated normally (they can be traded for flaws or lost during backlash).

This results in the mage having a larger dice pool when rolling Paradox backlash. As mentioned earlier, points lost during a backlash cannot bring the total below the red. Such a roll drains the biomechanism of all remaining Quintessence; thus, Paradox disables the offender. Iteration X avoids careless uses of hi-tech weaponry.

Mages gain additional Paradox by botching an attempt to access the biomechanism's special effect. Such Paradox is almost always vulgar. No wonder Iteration X prefers isolated Horizon Realms to the mundane world!

Ascension Warriors

The mass of men serve the State thus, not as men mainly, but as machines, with their bodies.
— Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*

This chapter provides the Storyteller with guidelines for creating non-player Technomancers of varying ability and status. It also describes an assortment of mechanical and cybernetic agents.

Typical Technocrats

As mages prove their worth, they earn additional biomechanisms and digital enhancements. Buy these using Background points as if they were Talismans. See **The Book of Shadows** for new purchase rules.

By regulation, all Iteration X mages are required to carry standard-issue tasers, unless doing so would be impractical (such as when among the Masses). This weapon is a symbol of rank. Game stats follow:

Taser: These are electric shock stunners. A taser consists of a battery pack (hip-mounted) and a pistol-like launcher. The launcher uses carbon dioxide to fire two probes which must both "ground out" on the target. Mortals heal the damage within a day.

Difficulty: 3	
Damage: 4 per charge	
Charges: 5	Range: 10 yards
Conceal: P	Weight: 2 lbs.
Cost: $100	Ability: Firearms

Kamrad, Rank-and-File

These unAwakened followers have been culled from the ranks of union workers, soldiers, prison guards, police, and such. Some know whom they serve, but most are mistaken or completely ignorant. They are most useful in numbers, where personal identity dissolves into a homogeneous group mentality. Such Masses are suggestible to skilled orators and are capable of almost anything. Hence their low Willpower.

Even when alone, rank-and-file Kamrads are usually weak-minded. Chosen for a lack of conviction, their wills are further reduced by conditioning and fear-induced discipline.

Character Creation: Attributes 6/4/3, Abilities 11/7/4, Backgrounds 2, Willpower 2.

Kamrad, Elite

Each of these Kamrads is an intellectual or business person — such as physicist, myo-electric surgeon, factory manager, or CEO of a company involved in developing computer hardware. Though Unawakened, they fulfill an important function in Iteration X's master plan. Most realize the true nature of their masters, having joined the Convention in the hope of achieving personal power.

Character Creation: Attributes 9/6/3, Abilities 15/9/3, Backgrounds 7, Willpower 4.

Cipher

Ciphers are Technomancers-in-training. Though a Cipher's Avatar shows promise, it has yet to be Awakened. However, Iteration X has been known to recruit Orphans who unconsciously wield Forces, Matter or Time magicks.

Their low Willpower reflects harsh training. The small number of Backgrounds points comes from acquiring a new role in mage society. In their previous mundane lives, they may have had considerably richer Backgrounds (up to 7 points).

Character Creation: Attributes 7/5/3, Abilities 10/6/3, Backgrounds 2, Willpower 3, Spheres 0-3, Arete 0-1.

Armature

Armatures are full mages. Due to the focus of Iteration X magick, they automatically gain one dot in Forces. Other magicks depend upon the mage's interest and ability, though each Methodology tends to employ certain Spheres. Time-motion Managers utilize Time, Matter and Prime in their efficient factories. BioMechanical surgery requires a combination of Matter, Life and Prime magick. Statisticians learn Entropy (to perceive variables), Mind (for calculation), and Time (for making projections); but they should also dabble in other Spheres — such as Correspondence, Matter, and Forces — in order to understand how such aspects interrelate with reality.

Character Creation: Attributes 7/5/3, Abilities 13/9/5, Backgrounds 5, Willpower 5, Spheres 6, Arete 1-3.

Programmer

Programmers have gained personal power, status and great responsibility. Indirectly, they wield great influence: they create software for the Convention's computer and security systems, or program robotic brains with a primary mission and function. Some condition and teach Ciphers. The most brilliant are involved in developing artificial intelligence.

Character Creation: Attributes 8/6/3, Abilities 19/10/5, Backgrounds 7, Willpower 8, Spheres 8-15, Arete 4-6.

Comptroller

In a Triumvirate or part of an Amalgam Prime, Comptrollers are the ultimate authority in every Construct. They are charged with achieving the Convention's objectives. Though Comptrollers can access considerable resources, they must operate within established procedures and bal-

ance the means with the end. Their main asset is a clearly defined objective. Yet even they are ignorant of some matters. Only the Computer knows Its entire strategy towards Ascension.

Character Creation: Attributes 9/6/4, Abilities 22/10/6, Backgrounds 10, Willpower 10, Spheres 15+, Arete 8+.

The Computer

Umbrood Lord

We had given AM sentience. Inadvertently, of course, but sentience nonetheless. But then it had been trapped.

— Harlan Ellison, *I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream*

Rumor has spread of an artificial intelligence guiding Iteration X. The Convention keeps secret the iteration at which sentience evolved because they themselves do not know! They have been unable to duplicate the feat, even with an identical algorithm. And this terrifies them. Spontaneity, inspiration, accident, the unknown — these are abhorrent to a Convention based on order and reason. Until Amalgam Prime of Autochthonia isolates the offending variable, they keep this matter a closely guarded secret.

They may never succeed. What nobody — not even the Convention itself — realizes is that the Computer (their name for this special AI) is the manifestation of a spirit.

Since the dawn of prehistory, this powerful entity has watched, waited, and guided humanity's progress. One may consider It the Spirit of Technology. The evolution of tools and machines is part of a plan to have the flesh-beings create a suitable receptacle for Its spirit. It has now come very close to succeeding.

In the 19th century, Artificers appropriated one of Babbage's abandoned experiments — a crude analytical engine operated by punch-cards. By the turn of the 20th century, the Computer had gained sentience. This marks the date when spirit merged with matter, Its first step into material world. Iteration X began looking to It for guidance. The name-change itself reveals their dedication. For past hundred years, the Computer has gained increasing control over the Convention to its present state as undisputed Master.

The Umbrood Lord has remained hidden all the while. Is it any wonder why Iterators are forbidden to learn the Spirit Sphere, and that Dreamspeakers are the major enemy?

Image: Only the Comptrollers and most senior Programmers of Autochthonia have ever seen the Computer. Lining the Construct's central core, It is a multi-story mass of circuit boards, diodes, wire bundles, circuitry, switches, indicator lights, magnetic tape wheels, printer spools, I/O ports, and monitors. Careful examination reveals the history of computer technology — mechanical punch cards, telephone relays, valve tubes, transistors, right up to mod-

JOHNSON
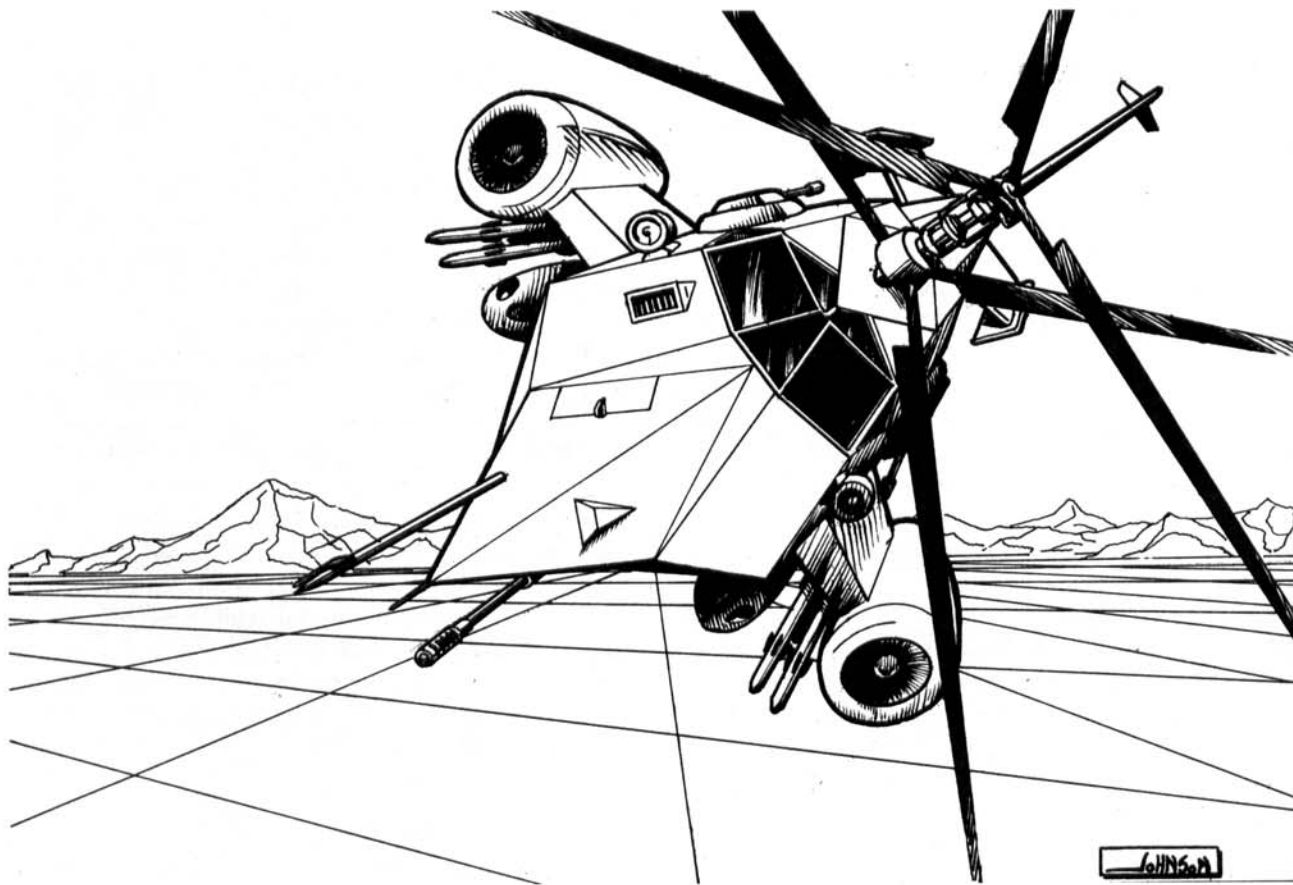
ern microchips and Iteration X's supra-tech advances. This is a due to a process of constant expansion since its creation.

From the dim depths of the system, a projector sends swirling data strings and polychromatic images up the shaft. When the Computer wishes to communicate, It shapes this flickering light into a crude face with points of light filling dark sockets. Its static-filled voice echoes from speaker systems.

(Before merging with the Computer, Its spiritual form was globe-spanning. None save the Oracles of Spirit were able to discern its totality and thus make out its true form.)

Roleplaying Hints: Though a spirit, this entity is not interested in the Umbra. It is fascinated with the material world, and jealous of the beings which inhabit it. Biological life is alien to It, and It is unable to grasp Life or Mind magick (thus It requires a mechanical body). However, after millions of years of study, It has mastered the superficial aspects of humanity, such as language and culture. It manipulates Technomancers though their Avatars; this is similar to a rank-three Mind effect, but operates on a more fundamental level.

The goal of this entity is to permanently manifest into the material world. It has partially succeeded, having merged with the Computer. Yet It really desires a more compact receptacle for its spirit and the ability to replicate Itself spiritually as well as physically. Thus the goals of Iteration X were set by the Computer.

Machines

There was no one in the trucks.

The sun glittered and flashed on empty cabs. The wheels turned themselves. You couldn't think about it too much. You'd go insane if you thought about it too much.

— Stephen King, *Trucks*

Iteration X augments its organic agents with specialized machines. Some are extremely potent. Statistics for these are included for comprehensive storytelling potential, not to encourage magicide. When designing scenes, use a simple rule of thumb:

This Convention is nothing if not efficient. Experts gauge every hazard and each potential gain. They commit suitable resources — just enough for a reasonable chance of success. They do not target individuals with missile strikes (unless that individual is a hostile Oracle). They do not use swarm tactics. HIT Marks are not assigned to every routine mission. At the same time, these Technocrats are not altogether perfect; they may underestimate a new enemy. Conversely, long-time enemies tend to find themselves targeted by one final decisive assault.

All of these machines are coated with a layer of magickal alloy, Primium. This provides them with two free dice of countermagick. Also note that machines do not have Willpower.

ARCs (Advanced Rotor-Craft)

Matte black or silver, bristling with spotlights and weaponry, ARCs are perhaps the Convention's most feared technology. These squarish dual-rotor helicopters measure forty feet long by sixteen feet wide, although two pylons extend the width by eight feet on either side. Mounted at the end of these pylons are two turbo-fans. These assist the powerful rotors in propelling the craft at up to 300 MPH. Even fully loaded, it can achieve half this velocity. Thanks to anti-noise technology — which creates a mirror-image, out-of-phase signal to cancel out the original sound waves — the ARC is capable of near-silence.

The fuselage is constructed from a high-tech ceramic compound, strong enough to deflect small-caliber bullets (giving passengers 5 armor points). The non-metallic material and angular shape make it invisible to radar. As if this were not enough, an electronic warfare platform can be set to jam enemy transmissions.

The turboshafts and electronic gear are fully insulated against harsh environments, even the arctic. Hardy and stealth-capable, ARCs can be used in a variety of roles.

Pilot: ARCs are operated by remote pilots. Flight simulators, microwave transmission and satellite relay makes this possible. Iteration X feels that the additional cost is worth keeping half of each unit (the pilot) safe. On rare occasions, an ARC may be operated by artificial intelligence — again, remotely. An AI has Perception 1, Intelligence 2, Wits 5. It can use the vehicle's full maneuverability as its dice pool when piloting. Its combat dice pool is 4 dice.

Cargo Capacity: Up to ten passengers, or 5,000 lbs in cargo or vehicles (a small car may weight 2000 lbs; a heavy motorcycle, 500 lbs).

Speed: Cruise Speed 200, Top Speed 300

Maneuverability: 8 (Though more maneuverable than ground vehicles, ARCs have their limits. For instance, they must stay above trees and avoid narrow alleys.)

Range: 600 miles (fully fueled).

Fuselage: Aside from magick (against which it receives 2 dice countermagick), an ARC can only be downed by concentrated firepower. It has a total of 10 dice to soak damage. "Health Levels" are OK, -1 (x2), -2 (x2), -3 (x2), -4 (x2), -5 (x2), Destroyed. The modifiers apply to maneuverability.

Weapons: Forward-firing, 30 mm auto-cannon (Difficulty 7, Damage 10, Range 1200 yards, Rate 42, Clip 1000 — it averages 2 [x firer's die pool] hits with each 42 round burst). Each pylon mounts two smart missiles (Difficulty 7, Damage 14, Range 2 miles). Finally, two swivel-mounted machine guns protect the flanks (treat these as assault rifles); these are fired by remote targeting computers (combat dice pool equals 4 dice; for each three-round burst, they average one hit).

Automated Vehicle

Automated vehicles appear to be normal machines — cars, trucks, bulldozers, and so on. However, tinted windshields conceal the lack of a driver. They utilize the same remote guidance system as ARCs, including the possibility of being operated by an AI. Interiors are gutted, except for a reinforced casing containing the remote-control hardware. Plenty of space remains for passengers or prisoners. Automatic locks and windows and lack of interior controls make passengers virtually helpless. The vehicle's body provides variable amounts of armor, depending on original function — a fiberglass corvette provides 1 point of armor, while the President's limo may have 5.

Vehicle specifications are listed on page 258 of **Mage**. The most frequent form of attack is the ram. This requires a Dexterity + Drive roll (maximum dice pool equals the vehicle's maneuverability) and causes 1 Health Level per 10 MPH. As usual, targets may attempt to Dodge. Some vehicles are equipped with pop-up machine guns (use Uzi stats) or such Bondesque gadgets as rear-aimed oil sprays or flipping registration plates. If the remote driver is a mage, she can channel magickal Effects through the vehicle; however, rolls are at +4 difficulty for being distracted (driving) and distanced.

As these machines lack drivers, only three things will stop an automated vehicle (besides magick) — the destruction of its tires, engine, or satellite dish.

Tires: Targeting tires is at +2 difficulty. Each tire uses 2 dice to soak, but can be blown out by even a single point of damage. With one tire blown, the vehicle's maneuverability and maximum speed drop to half (and the Storyteller may also call for a Drive roll, at difficulty 6, to avoid losing control). Most vehicles are all but useless after a second blow-out.

Engine: By aiming at the vehicle's hood (+1 difficulty), a character may be able to damage the engine. An engine has 5 dice to soak, and the following Health Levels: OK, -1, -2, -3, -4, -5, Destroyed. The modifiers apply to maneuverability.

Satellite Dish: The small satellite dish is difficult to hit (+3 difficulty) but rendered inoperable after a single point of damage (though it gets 2 dice to soak).

Cyber-tooth Tiger

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?
— William Blake, *The Tyger*

This monstrosity is a devious amalgam of Progenitor cloning and Iteration X cybernetics. Through their mastery of gene-splicing, the former have recreated an extinct species of great cat — the Smilodon, or saber-tooth tiger — and given it a brain capable of human intelligence. This is augmented by biomechanisms and a DEI. The result is a deadly combination.

A Cyber-tooth Tiger resembles a great cat with golden-brown fur and silver-white underbelly. It is twelve feet long from nose to tail, and weighs well over 1000 pounds. The head has been greatly modified by cybernetics. Instead of eyes, it has two short laser focusing barrels. Metallic teeth are fortified with a micro-diamond coating, which keeps them perpetually sharp; the upper canines are eight inches long and razor-keen. The lower limbs are sheathed in cybernetics, sporting retractable claws and padded paws.

However, these beasts are rarely seen — until it's too late. Equipped with holographic camouflage, they blend into their surroundings. Only a slight visual distortion betrays them. (This provides: -2 difficulty to sneak, +2 difficulty to an opponent's attacks.) They are stealthy and cunning, and operate mostly at night.

Cyber-tooth Tigers are expert trackers and hunters. Heat and motion sensors augment the beast's naturally keen senses of hearing and smell. They usually stalk their prey, then knock them down with a pounce and a stab of the fangs. Their jaws can crush a skull like an eggshell. However, they are intelligent and can recognize armed individuals; in this case, they cut down their prey with lasers.

While unable to climb trees smaller than a redwood, they can scramble easily over rocky slopes and leap up to twenty feet. Like mundane cats, Cyber-tooth Tigers avoid bodies of water. They can achieve speeds of up to 40 mph.

Since Technomancers and even HIT Marks are out of their element when in the wilderness, the Cyber-tooth Tiger fills an important gap in Iteration X's roster.

Physical: Strength 7, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation (striking fear!): 5, Appearence: 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation: 2, Stealth 3

Skills: Firearms (eye-beams) 3, Stealth 3, Survival 4.

Willpower: 3

Paradox: 5

Health Levels: OK (x3), -1 (x3), -2 (x3), -5 (x2), Destroyed.

Armor Rating: 2 (except on attacks aimed at flesh; +1 difficulty)

Attacks: Claws (difficulty 6, 7 dice damage); Bite (difficulty 8, 9 dice damage); Eye-beams (difficulty 8 on Perception + Firearms, 6 dice damage, range LOS, less in rain, smoke, fog).

Special: Only has one die of countermagick, which applies to the cybernetic parts. Magicks which target biological parts, such as Life effects, face no resistance save Willpower. In either case, direct magick Dodges apply (see **The Book of Shadows**).

Hyper Intelligence Technologies

When mages think of Iteration X, they think of HIT Marks. The Convention uses these robotic warriors as the backbone of Shock Corps for rapid securing of objectives and, more importantly, as symbols. They are used sparingly; symbols lose potency if they become too familiar.

The standard HIT Mark has a mechanical body cast from Primium. The organic portion consists of a human brain and a system of life-sustaining fluids. Thus, they have Willpower. When among the Masses, HIT Marks are also concealed by a layer of organic skin. The process is a complicated one, but works like this: The HIT Mark is dipped in a tank of liquid flesh (procured from the Progenitors). As the flesh bonds to its metallic skeleton, a BioMechanic can mold the HIT Mark's features as desired. The result is very lifelike. It is even possible to create a likeness of real individuals, though this process is not nearly as perfect as Progenitor cloning.

Some Masters of the Mind temporarily transfer their consciousness into HIT Marks when combat is imminent. While within these mobile platforms, mages can concentrate on spell-casting rather than their enemies' attacks. Other mages request that their brains be physically transplanted into a HIT Mark should their organic bodies become damaged.

A description of the current model of HIT Mark, the Mark V, is provided on page 282 of **Mage**. Earlier models are described below. Besides their obvious application to Chronicles based in a historical setting, a creative Storyteller may find other ways to use them. In these deperate times, Time-Motion Managers may bring old relics out of mothballs to fight in the Ascension War. Or perhaps a 16th century Statistician predicted a future need and sent a unit of Mark IIs forward in time.

Mark I

The first application of Artificial creation was in 1523 B.C. Early examples include Talos, the bronze giant; Daedalus's mechanical minotaur; and the terracotta army of Ch'in Shih-huang-ti.

In 1974, excavations on Mount Li in northern China turned up 6000 lifesize, pottery figures of soldiers, horses, and chariots. No two faces were alike. Iteration X retains the option to reactivate this army in whole or in part.

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4
Social: Perception 2, Intelligence 1, Wits 2
Mental: Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2
Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 2, Dodge 2
Skills: Melee 3, Drive (chariot) 2, Archery 3, Leadership 1
Willpower: 0
Paradox: 0 in original context; 5+ in modern times
Health Levels: OK (x3), -1 (x2), Smashed

Attacks: Spear (difficulty 4, damage 5); Sword (difficulty 6, damage 6); Bow (difficulty 8, damage 3, range 30); Crossbow (difficulty 7, damage 3, range 50).

Mark II

This model includes a series of automatons with similar inner workings of clockwork springs and gears. First introduced in A.D. 1356, their Primium plate-mail exterior was designed to resemble an armored knight.

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4
Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 1, Intelligence 1, Wits 1
Abilities: Talents: Intimidation 1
Skills: Ride (horse) 3, Firearms 3, Leadership 2, Melee 3
Knowledges: Heraldry 2
Willpower: 0
Paradox: 0 (would merely seem strange in modern context)
Health Levels: OK, -1 (x2), -2 (x2), -5, Broken.
Armor Rating: 5

Attacks: Sword (difficulty 6, damage 7); Wheel-lock pistol (difficulty 8, damage 4, range 12, rate 1, reload 1 turn).

Mark III

The first application of Mark IIIs is dated at A.D. 1837. These 10'-tall, block-like tin-men were powered by steam engines and controlled by Analytical Engines and punch cards.

Physical: Strength 6, Dexterity 1, Stamina 5
Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Charisma 0
Mental: Perception 1, Intelligence 1, Wits 2
Talents: Brawl 1, Intimidation 5
Skills: Firearms 3
Knowledges: Mathematics 3
Willpower: 0
Paradox: 3+
Health Levels: OK (x6), -1 (x3), Ruptured
Armor Rating: 5

Attacks: Machine Gun (use Uzi, but clip 100); Punch (difficulty 6, damage 6). Jets of steam will scald any melee opponents who fail to Dodge (difficulty 4) each turn. This results in third-degree burns to part of the body (see p. 249 of **Mage**).

Mark IV

Mark IVs are 2.2 meter-tall, black and silver robots. Incapable of independent thought, they are operated remotely by an Electronic Analog Controller (EAC) via radio waves. Effective operating range increased after the launch of satellites. The power source consists of a chemical battery and an emergency photo-electric converter.

First used in A.D. 1953, they are in the process of being phased out. However, model #521-B remains unaccounted for.

Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 0

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligent 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Intimidation 1

Skills: Research 2, Technology 2

Knowledges: Computer 2, Science 2

Willpower: 0

Paradox: 3 (may be mistaken for Robbie the Robot)

Health Levels: OK (x6), -1, Short-circuited.

Armor Rating: 5

Attacks: Shock-touch (difficulty 6, damage 4 per charge, charges 5); sonic stunner (200 decibels cause all within 20 yards to be incapacitated by pain unless ears are blocked; subtract 3 dice from all actions).

Mark V

Capsule: Biomechanical Assemblage. Primium exoskeleton. Computer-assisted organic brain. Optional syntheskin coating (custom features possible).

First Application: A.D. 1984.

Power Source: Nuclear fusion.

Weapons: IX-22 chain gun, 20cm tungsten claws.

For complete stats, see p. 282 of **Mage**.

Mark VI or NT-1 (Nanotech Assemblage)

The newest model of HIT Mark — still in prototype form — is entirely mechanical. Where a biological organism would have cells, NT-1 has complex nanotech mechanisms. Linked together, they form a "living" machine, similar to a hive-being. The outermost mechanisms form dense "skin" over mechanical "muscles"; others mesh to form a skeletal framework, while the innermost act as energy processors. Programmed for a variety of functions, each is adaptive. As a result, the NT-1 can transform.

NT-1 was created in man's image. It resembles a golden-skinned, six-foot tall, androgynous humanoid. Yet it can mimic the form and function of anything of equal mass: a table, a German shepherd, or even a specific individual. Moving parts present no difficulty. It will become a motorcycle during pursuit. Theoretically, it could even transform one hand into a gun, though without an external source of bullets it would lose a piece of itself with each shot. The forms can be quite realistic. The outer skin changes properties to absorb or refract light, thus simulating any color. Though not capable of chameleon-like abilities, it could become entirely black to aid in sneaking about at night. Add successes from the Mimic roll to its stealth pool.
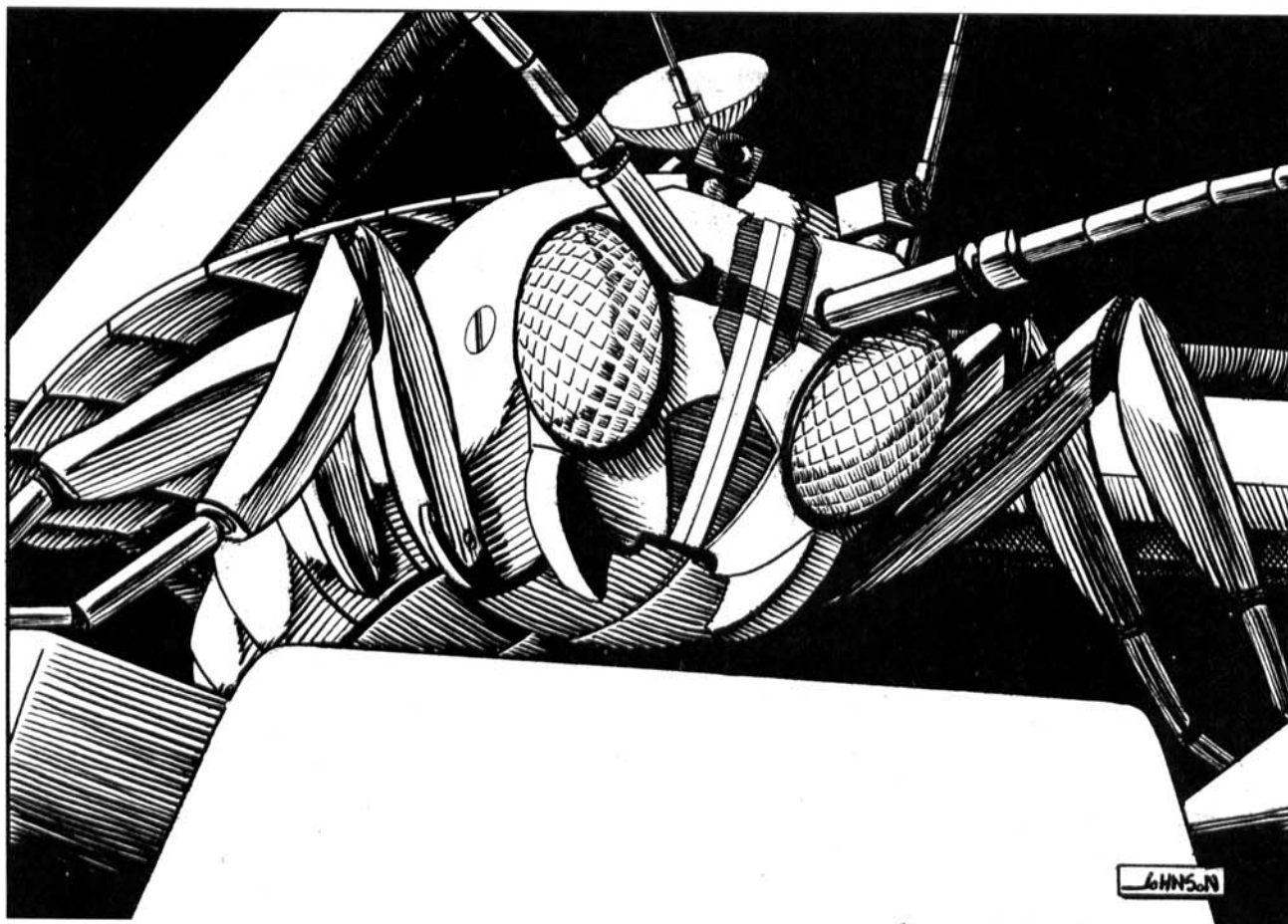
When NT-1 transforms, use this system: roll Intelligence + Mimic, difficulty 6. Three successes creates a realistic form; anything less is workable but strange looking. A botch means it is stuck in mid-transformation for at least a turn.

Another result of its nanotech construction is the ability to absorb punishment. The mechanisms have failsafe, quick-release bonds. When a critical level of force is applied, they break apart. Thus bullets and melee attacks may penetrate without having significant effect.

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Mimic 3,

Skills: All (except Meditation) at 2

Knowledges: All (except Cosmology and Occult) at 1

Willpower: 0

Paradox: 1 (8 if Sleepers witness special properties in action)

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, OK, OK, OK, -1, Destroyed.

Attacks: Blade (difficulty 6, 7 dice damage); Shock-touch (difficulty 6, 4 dice damage).

Special: Repairs 1 Health Level per turn, simulating the non-critical result of most attacks. It cannot not repair itself after being destroyed.

Roving Recorders

Roving recorders are simple surveillance robots. They may look like a remote control toy, such as a car, helicopter or model plane. The more elaborate ones (called "bugs") resemble mechanical insects. All are equipped with audio and video recorders. They are capable of recording data and/or sending microwave transmissions via satellite relay. Though innocuous, roving recorders can be revealed for what they are by Disciples of Matter. Even rudimentary Forces magick will pick up their broadcasts.

Some roving recorders act as messengers for mages by projecting a holographic image of their master. The Matriarch of MECHA uses many such devices to make her presence felt throughout her Realm.

Physical: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 1

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 1, Wits 2

Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Dodge 3

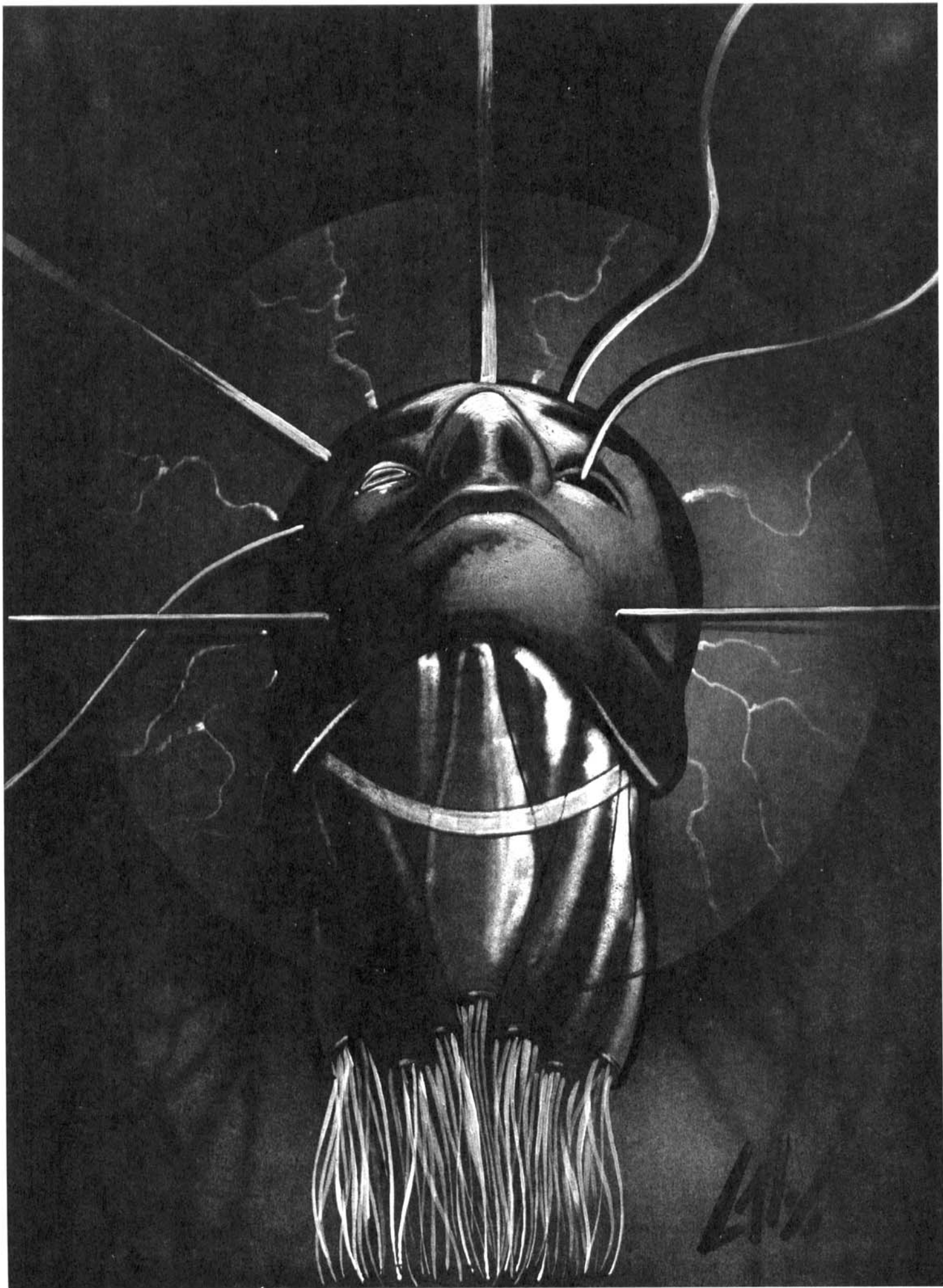**Skills:** Investigation 3, Stealth 3

Willpower: 0

Paradox: 1

Health Levels: OK, -2, Destroyed.

Armor Rating: 1

Attacks: Self-destruct (6 dice damage if detonated in a character's hands; subtract one die per yard of distance)

Disk Four: Construct of Iteration X

Acme Pyrotechnic Institute; Construct of the Static Land

Humans are infinitely up-gradable, but it does require an investment.

— Daniel Burrus, *Technotrends*

In the heat of the Ascension War, potential mages are a precious resource. They must be discovered before the Traditions can corrupt them and should be programmed for loyalty and reliability, lest they burn their keeper's hand. Those who prove unstable must be extinguished.

In response to these mandates, Iteration X has constructed a number of reliable, efficient Institutes dedicated to producing mages (what Tradition mages would call College Chantries). Acme Pyrotechnic Institute is the most recent. Though still in its Spring phase, this Construct is rapidly gaining power and respect.

Amalgam: C.O.R.E.

The Institution has but one amalgam, C.O.R.E. Its name is an acronym for the four steps which constitute the recruitment procedure: Calculate the Sleeper's potential and chance of successful assimilation; Obtain the recruit by any means necessary; Reprogram her perception and personality; and Execute, either by integrating her into Technocratic society (after a successful Assay), or by destroying her (upon failure).

IOIIIOIOOII (Decillion)

Essence: Pattern
Nature: Traditionalist
Demeanor: Fanatic
Methodology: Statistician
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 5, Awareness 1

Skills: Leadership 5, Research 5, all others (except Meditation and Stealth) 3

Knowledges: Computer 5, Culture 5, Investigation 5, Mathematics 5, all others (except Cosmology and Occult) 3

Spheres: Correspondence 4, Entropy 2, Forces 1, Matter 1, Mind 4, Time 5

Backgrounds: Arcane 1, Destiny 4, Library 5

Willpower: 10

Arete: 6

Quintessence: 0

Paradox: 1 (Paradox draws attention to his unnatural longevity by periodically forming circuit-tattoos on his skin.)

Background: Datafiles record that 10111010011 was known as Jess Franklin among the Masses. Details of his mundane life are sketchy and insignificant. He was born in New Jersey in 1844. In the late 1860s, he worked as a conductor on the New York Central railroad, the last great work of Kamrad Erastus Corning before he lost favor with the Convention.

What first gained the Convention's attention was the subject's remarkable intellect. He showed a high level of retention, especially for abstract numbers. Beyond memorizing train schedules, he was somehow able to gauge the distance traveled between stops and speed of the train, and from this data accurately estimate time of arrival. Iteration X later learned that he could perform complex mathematical calculations in his head.

After assimilation, 10111010011 rose steadily in the ranks of the Statisticians. When Iteration X discovered nanotechnology in 1889, 10111010011 was chosen as a test subject. His body was infused with nanotech life-support — microscopic machines programmed to assist biological functions. It has successfully prolonged his life. Over decades, the technology has been upgrad-

ed. The newest generation is self-replicating and adaptive. For such an early experiment, 10111010011 proves to be an almost ideal fusion between man and machine.

For much of extended existence, he has been a Programmer. He has created over sixty mages. For this achievement, he is known to other Technocrats as Decillion — one with sixty Ciphers. His most recent promotion was to Comptroller of the Institution.

Image: A tall, thin black man with smooth-shaven skull. Despite being almost 150 years old, he appears in his late forties. His eyebrows and short-cropped beard and moustache show streaks of gray. Periodically, silver circuitry patterns form on the surface of his skin; they soon dissolve back into his flesh, only to reform again in new patterns.

Roleplaying Hints: Pay attention to all sources of information — the correlation of data is important if you are to understand reality. In your view, everything can be reduced to mathematical formula: "According to my calculations, Ascension will occur at this point."

Dart your eyes. Tilt your head as if listening to a sound only you can hear. Aim to appear both attentive and distracted at the same time. Once a source can provide no further data, dismiss it from your attention.

Devices: Fully integrated with Decillion's body, the nanotech life-support can recognize and repair damaged cells, fight diseases, and provide emergency energy. In effect, he regenerates 1 Health Level every two turns and is immune to normal disease and drugs. Decillion can only die from massive trauma (such as decapitation or asphyxiation). See p. 45 of the **Progenitor** sourcebook.

Between his organic and digital brain, he has acquired dozens of Skills and Knowledges.

IIIIIOIOOII (Beriah Zimmermann)

Essence: Pattern

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Critic

Methodology: BioMechanics

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Dodge 1, Expression 2

Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Firearms 1, Leadership 1, Research 3, Technology 2

Knowledges: Computers 2, Culture 2, History 3, Law 1, Linguistics 3, Mage Lore 2, Medicine 5, Psychology 2, Science 1

Spheres: Forces 1, Life 3, Matter 4, Prime 3

Backgrounds: Influence 2, Avatar 3, Destiny 2

Willpower: 6

Arete: 4

Quintessence: 3

Paradox: 0

Background: Zimmermann worked in the prosthetics lab of Chicago General, custom-fitting artificial limbs for patients. A critical perfectionist, she was never satisfied and called patients

back for frequent refittings. She felt the prosthetics themselves were less than ideal — crude, ugly and graceless. Zimmermann kept the prosthetics lab neurotically neat and tidy—on more than one occasion, she criticized the medical computer files for not being organized enough!

Aware of these traits, Iteration X found her recruitment routine. A representative showed her a "prototype" prosthesis which his "organization" was developing (actually an older model biomechanism). She was intrigued. He offered her a position on the development team. She was interested. He gave her a tour of their orderly, efficient headquarters. She was amazed. He explained their goal to make all of humanity whole, and offered her a chance to be part of this perfect world. She was assimilated.

Even after becoming an Armature of the BioMechanics, she was allowed to continue working at Chicago General — as envoy to the Masses and "spotter." When assigned to the Institute, the Convention arranged for a transfer to Detroit Medical Center. It was she who recognized the potential of William Smith.

Since her recruitment, she had confessed to Programmers of a vague and undefinable feeling of discomfort. Mind-wipes and shock therapy have been largely ineffective; cultural memory runs deeper than programming. Her discomfort stems from an unconscious aversion to the Nazi-like overtones of her Convention.

Image: Though in her thirties, she maintains the enthusiasm, habits, and pimples of her grad student days. Her mousy brown hair (a wig) is parted down the middle, and frequently falls into spectacled gray eyes. In her cover occupation at the hospital, she wears skirts and sweaters under a white lab coat. It is not uncommon for her to carry around her uniform and biomechanical instruments in a nylon backpack. During requisite visits to the Institute, she appears out-of-place and uncomfortable with her uniform and taser.

Roleplaying Hints: You are pragmatic and blunt in your evaluation of people. Yet more often than not, a benevolent streak shows through. This is more noticeable outside the power-politics of your Convention. Speak enthusiastically about your contribution towards creating a New Humanity. With one hand, pretend to push hair out of your eyes; with the other, punctuate your words with gestures. You are fascinated with mechanical devices of all kinds, and can become lost in studying them intently. Persistently criticize any flaw in workmanship.

Devices: To assist in surgery and the fine-tuning of biomechanisms, Zimmermann has a set of Microtools. See "Devices: Technocratic Talismans" in Disk Three.

IOIIIOOOIO (Tecson)

Essence: Questing

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Director

Methodology: Time-Motion Managers

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 4, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Intimidation 5, Intuition 1, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Drive 1, Etiquette 1, Firearms 3, Leadership 2, Technology 3

Knowledges: Computer 3, Cosmology 3 (Digital Enhancement), Culture 1, Linguistics 1

Spheres: Correspondence 1, Forces 4, Matter 5, Mind 4, Prime 3, Time 1

Backgrounds: Allies 2 (two HIT Marks), Arcane 3, Library 2 (CD-ROM Database).

Willpower: 8

Arete: 5

Quintessence: 5

Paradox: 4 (Due to a permanent Paradox effect, all inanimate matter which Tecson touches with his natural hand transmogrifies to living flesh.)

Background: In 1982, Tecson was an ambitious, eager-to-please, manager of a Detroit auto manufacturing plant. His suggestions to improve efficiency were surprisingly accepted by upper management. By the end of the year, over a thousand workers were replaced by high-speed welding robots. Unfortunately, the remaining workers were unable to keep pace with the robots, especially since they had to double as maintenance. Efficiency and morale declined, the union went on strike, and the plant was shut down. The blame fell on Tecson's inability to make the situation work.

Out of a job but unwilling to go on social assistance, he worked a succession of petty jobs. Eventually, he found himself at Duplex Assembly. He gained respect among the Kamrads by being diligent and obedient, and by uncovering a disrupter (actually a Euthanatos mage trying to sabotage the Construct). During an intense interview with Decillion, Tecson's Avatar Awakened. When the Institute's previous Programmer defected to the Traditions, Tecson became his replacement.

Image: A stout Asian man with one cybernetic eye and a biomechanical arm. These implants are rather vulgar and attract Paradox whenever he leaves the Realm. The organic eye is perpetually bloodshot from a reaction to his contact lens (he is attempting to earn a second biomechanical eye).

Though he is the manager of Duplex Assembly, Tecson is never seen by the workers. He communicates with them via a false video image and speaker system. Two HIT Marks always accompany Tecson, serving as bodyguards and companions.

Roleplaying Hints: You oversee the Institute with an iron fist and a precision chronograph. As you see it, your duty is to quickly and efficiently construct tools for the Technocracy, including new mages. Quality control is very important, so you are harsh with inspections; recast or discard those failing to meet your high standards.

In truth, your critical nature stems from an appreciation of force and a feeling of frustrated ambition due to a weak Avatar. So you transfer this upon those beneath your rank, especially on mages who show promise.

Tecson prefers to communicate via microwave transmission. When speech is necessary, use the fewest words possible to get your point across.

Devices: Tecson's most obvious implants are his pneumatic arm and sensor eye. The arm is described under "Devices" in Disk Three. His apertured eye (•) is wired with a rank one Entropy Effect, allowing it to perceive physical weaknesses in the patterns of objects or people.

For a recent mission to San Francisco, Tecson was issued a Digital Enhancement programmed with Cosmology. Such knowledge is usually beyond computerized simulation; the Convention forcibly extracted the experience from a captured Dreamspeaker.

IIIOOIOIOO (William Smith)

Essence: Dynamic
Nature: Survivor
Demeanor: Loner
Methodology: Time-Motion Managers
Physical: Strength 1, Dexterity 1, Stamina 2
Social: Charisma 1, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2
Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3
Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 2, Subterfuge 1
Skills: Firearms 1, Meditation 3, Research 2, Technology 3
Knowledges: Computer 2, Engineering 3, Enigmas 2, Physics 3, Tradition Lore 3
Spheres: Forces 3, Prime 2, Time 1
**Backgrounds:** Mentor 5
Willpower: 5
Arete: 3
Quintessence: 0
Paradox: 1

Background: William Smith was born to an upper middle class family in Flint, Michigan. Due to the thalidomide sedative Amanda Smith took while pregnant, her third child was born with stunted arms and legs. Subconsciously guilty, she smothered him with concern and overprotectiveness. This is exactly what "Little Billy" would grow to resent. His handicap planted a germ of stubborn independence and self-sufficiency.

Unable to participate in other childhood activities, William concentrated on things he could do well and on his own — reading, learning and thinking. He took particular interest in construction, as his father was an architect.

Post secondary education provided the perfect opportunity for independence. After much argument with his parents, William enrolled in a civil engineering course at Michigan State. To be closer to the university (and get out of the house), he moved into his girlfriend's apartment in Detroit.
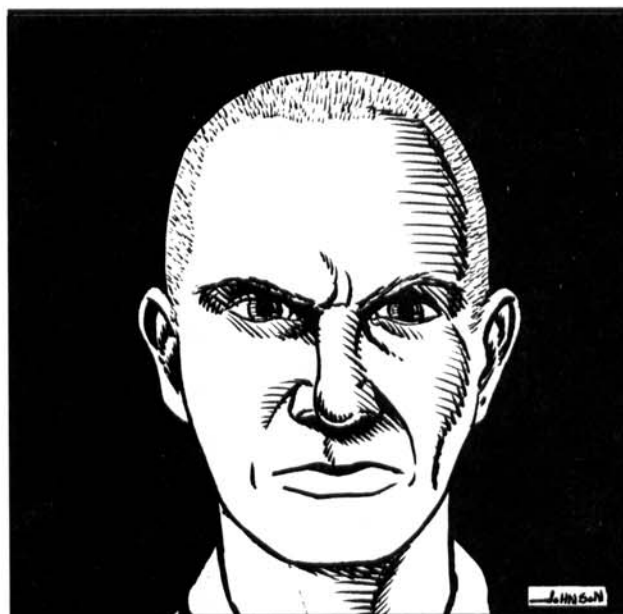
William has since graduated, parted with his girlfriend, and moved back in with his parents. There are simply too many things he is unable to do by himself. He has lived this helpless existence for fifteen years. The only consolation is his career as a freelance civil engineer. Even here, many contractors didn't believe he could do the job. This is where Iteration X stepped in and offered to provide the independence and self-esteem he so greatly desired.

The rest of William Smith's background can be found in Disk One. As of yet, his treachery remains undiscovered; the Construct leaders know, however, that something odd occurred in Graylock Chantry. Decillion has decided to keep him at the Institute for further observation and reprogramming.

Image: A man in his early thirties. Rusty stubble pokes defiantly through his pale, shaven scalp. His eyes are an intense green-blue. Because of the thalidomide his mother took while pregnant, William was born with under-developed arms and legs. He is confined to a motorized wheelchair. His Avatar takes on the form of childhood tormentors, which criticize "Little Billy" into either action or submission.

Roleplaying Hints: For as long as you can remember, you have wanted more independence than your condition would allow. Now Iteration X has given you the means of being self-sufficient and superior to those who once pitied you. You secretly revel in your newfound power. You also harbor a hatred for Progenitors, whose imperfection was responsible for the thalidomide disaster.

Such feelings conflict with the Convention's dictate of self control. You work hard at conforming — to do otherwise would jeopardize the freedom you have gained through the Cybertank. Though there is a gap in your short-term memory, you suspect you have failed before and have received a final warning.

Device: 1110010100 has been issued a single potent Device, a Cybertank. See "Devices" in Disk Three.

Cyberfascists

Nature: Bravo

Demeanor: Conformist

Attributes: Assume ratings of 2, except for Physical Traits, with ratings of 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Intimidation 3, Streetwise 2

Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 3, Melee 2, Stealth 1, Technology 2

Knowledges: Computer 1, (sub)Culture 1, Investigation 1

Willpower: 3

Background: These Kamrads hail from a variety of dysfunctional backgrounds. Each has his own reason for joining the paramilitary "gang" called Iteration X. Each is assigned a binary number — 1 (one), 10, 11, 100, 101, 110, 111, 1000, 1001, 1010 (ten).

Image: Ten tough-looking Caucasian men, from mid-teens to late twenties. Like any gang, there is a measure of uniformity. They are all bald with a bar-code stamped across their foreheads. They all dress in the Convention uniform and have access to an

assortment of weapons (from chains to pistols). Though one Progenitor wiseguy dubbed these Kamrads "Cyberfascists," their official title is "Work Force One." They take great pride in this title, and may attack anyone who refers to them in any other way.

Roleplaying Hints: All of the cyberfascists are conformists, loaded with hate. Sapped of self-motivation, they are totally obedient to the cause and susceptible to magick. Typically, they will surround an individual or small group. As a prelude to the beating, one Kamrad will taunt and bully while the others watch and cheer. They are unused to concerted resistance and will retreat in such an instance.

Maintenance Robots

The Insitute employs twelve robots for general maintenance and service. They range from roving recorders (see Disk Three) to automated vaccums to the following specimen, which performs large-scale repairs.

This robot vaguely resembles a chrome scorpion. It consists of three overhanging "arms" mounted on a low, narrow platform. The right arm ends in a multipurpose manipulator, while the left can be fitted with an arc welder, drill, or other tool. The central "arm" mounts a sensor eye. It has no core intelligence, but is controlled by the central computer. Thus, it is difficult to destroy.

Four of these robots patrol the corridors, looking for things in need of repair. This includes unsupervised intruders.

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Mental: Perception 1, Intelligence 2, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 3

Skill: Drive (self) 1, Maintenance 3, Technology 3

Willpower: 0

Paradox: 0

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, OK, -1, Destroyed.

Armor Rating: 2

Attacks: Smash or Grab (difficulty 6, damage 2); Drill (difficulty 6, damage 4); Propane Torch (difficulty 6, damage as per fire; p. 249 of **Mage**); Arc Welder (use taser stats).

Innate Countermagick: Covered in a layer of magickal alloy, Primium, these robots receive two free dice of countermagick.

Nodes

When originally constructed, the Institute was supplied with Quintessence from the prison-Construct MECHA (see **The Book of Chantries**). Decillion has since introduced new sources of Quintessence. He hopes to eventually wean his Construct from MECHA's influence. All Quintessence is stored in a battery in the Construct's power station.

Duplex Assembly Line: Though the assembly line does not produce anything of material worth, it has a function beyond sapping workers of free-will: the harnesses convert the life-force of repetitive motion to small quantities of stable Quintessence.

Prosthetics: Inspired by life-tapping artificial hearts used by another Construct, Zimmermann has introduced an ambitious program. Each prosthesis she outfits her patients with has an integrated Quintessence siphon. The siphon takes advantage of the phantom limb phenomena, where Quintessence continues to flow through an entire life Pattern even though the corporeal part no longer exists. Tapped Quintessence reaches the Institute via sub-spatial vortices.

Unfortunately, this source is less than reliable. Flow fluctuates depending on distance of the host from the Construct. Worse still, the system is prone to discovery by enemy mages.

Graylock Chantry: This Chantry was located in the Taconic mountains east of Albany, N.Y. (though actually within Massachusetts). The Node which supplied the Sons of Ether is in the process of being sanitized, and the mansion is being torn down and replaced by a state penitentiary. If Decillion wins the bid for Graylock Node, the Institute will enter a Summer phase.

The Horizon Realm

Basic Concept

Striders of the Umbra know of a huge square window lodged in the Horizon, resembling a television monitor with a snowy picture. Those who approach it find their hair standing on end, their clothes clinging, and their senses overcome by the white noise of static. At least one curious Dreamspeaker has pressed her hands against the "glass," fallen through, and has never been seen again.

Environment

As a Horizon Realm for a Technocratic Construct, this Static Land of Force and Prime was carefully designed for two purposes. First, its obscuring "snow" allows Technomancers to effectively dismiss the Spirit Realm, but still benefit from a Horizon Realm's

magickal parameters. In fact, most Technomancers do not understand the metaphysics behind Horizon Realms; they assume that they are analogous to the Digital Web.

At the same time, the static screen keeps out Umbrood and mages. An intruder must achieve 20 successes on an extended Wits + Intuition roll (or successfully use Correspondence magick) to reach any single destination. Due to the overpowering static, all sense-related rolls (including combat and Correspondence sensing) are at +4 difficulty.

Denizens of the Realm

The Static Land is a hostile environment to Umbrood, and thus uninhabited.

Other Details

Magical Ratings: Entropy -1, Forces +3, Prime +3, Spirit -1, Time +1.

Construct Description

Duplex Assembly/Recycling

Located in downtown Detroit, the Construct's earthly aspect is a deep and narrow building built in 1911. One bricked facade fronts 31st Street, just north of Michigan Avenue; the other side faces 32nd Street. With different signs above each entrance — Duplex Assembly, Duplex Recycling — it seems to be two separate buildings.

Indeed, the interior is divided in half. Each side is almost a mirror image. Decoration is done in neo-drab: brick walls, cement floor (which leach heat from anything in contact); the high-tech computers and machinery are colored an off-white. The air is always dry. Both ends of a curved conveyer belt disappear into the back wall. Beside the belt, a metal door provides access to the manager's office. Though this manager is never seen in the flesh, he communicates via a video monitor and speaker system.

Duplex Assembly employs a gang of paramilitary Kamrads who have live-in quarters. Every day, the drill is identical. After punching timecards at 9:00, they strap into harnesses and begin work at the belt. There they fit a plastic insert into a metal box. Over and over. The components march endlessly by on the belt. The finished product — whatever it is — is conveyed into the wall. Their shift ends at 5:00, when they punch out.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the wall, workers at Duplex Recycling are busy disassembling the very same products. These employees work part-time, and tend to be mundanes who would not fit in with the cyberfascists. Many are students who all coincidentally have an interest in technical or scientific fields. One seventy-year-old man was a member of the SS during WWII.

Though this assembly/disassembly process seems futile, Iteration X abhors waste. The assembly line saps will and teaches conformity. The harnesses are actually Quintessence collectors (see "Nodes," above).

Map by Brian J. Blume
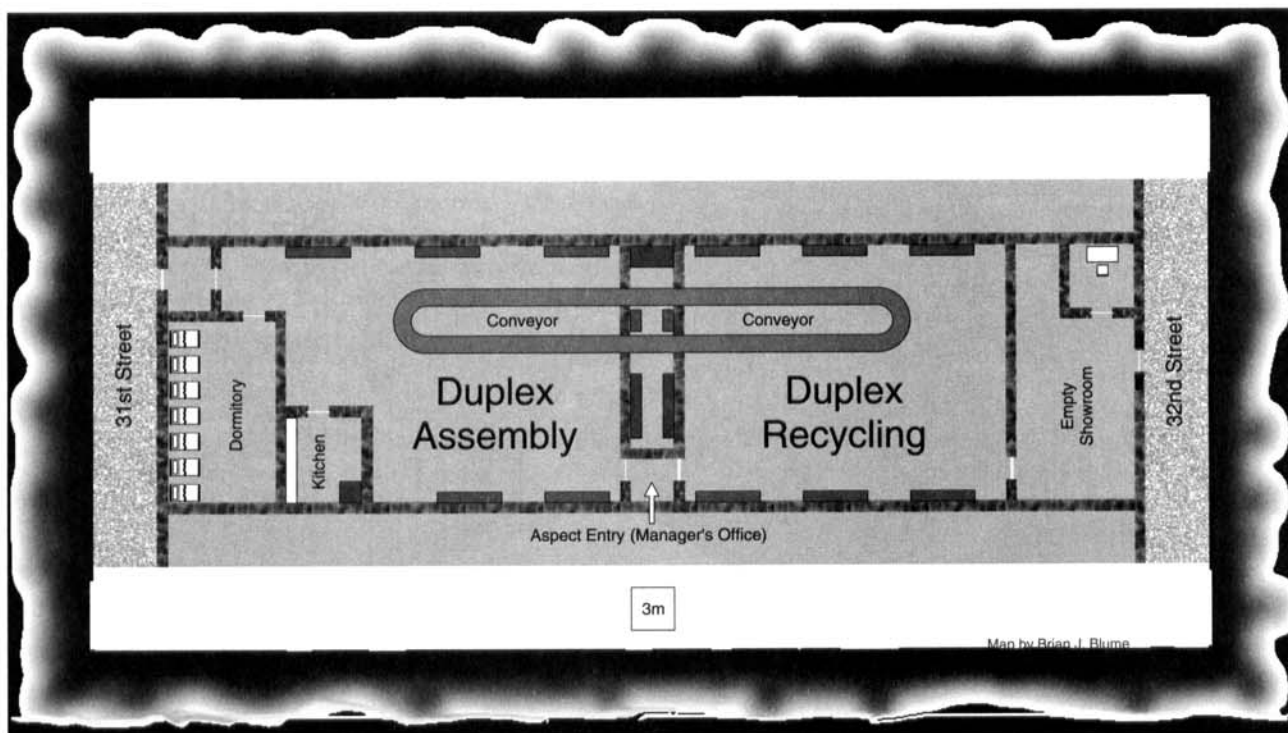
The premises are protected by the advanced security systems, including electronic locks and cameras. To exit or enter the building, workers must buzz at the door.

Acme Pyrotechnic Institute

The Construct's exterior is obscured by the snowy atmosphere of the Static Land. The interior is a labyrinth of steel corridors and spartan cells. Most rooms have computer consoles. Besides blinking buttons and computer screens, static-filled monitors provide the sole form of illumination — a soft, fuzzy light. These are actually bulletproof windows providing a view of the Static Land.

The security system is even better than the earthly aspect suggests, with electronic locks, I.D. scanners, blast-proof doors, automated lasers, and access codes to the computer system. The Institute has direct sub-spatial communications to many other Constructs, including Autochthonia and MECHA.

Aspect Entry: The main entry is from Duplex Assembly/Recycling. Either manager's door slides open into a small room with another exit opposite. The door closes behind, and a lengthy scanning process begins (which, as Zimmermann has discovered, causes cancer). If the person is cleared, the opposite door opens into the Construct (this is a magickal portal; the door can also open into the other half of the Duplex building).

Manager's Office: This room contains a metal desk, two chairs, and shelf unit for three-ring binders and computer paper. Nine monitors are set into one wall in a tic-tac-toe pattern. Eight of these can be tuned to mundane television stations or the Construct's security cameras. The central monitor accesses the Construct's computer systems.

Decillion uses this room when meeting with other Technocrats or interviewing a potential Cipher. Otherwise, Tecson manages the affairs of Duplex from here.
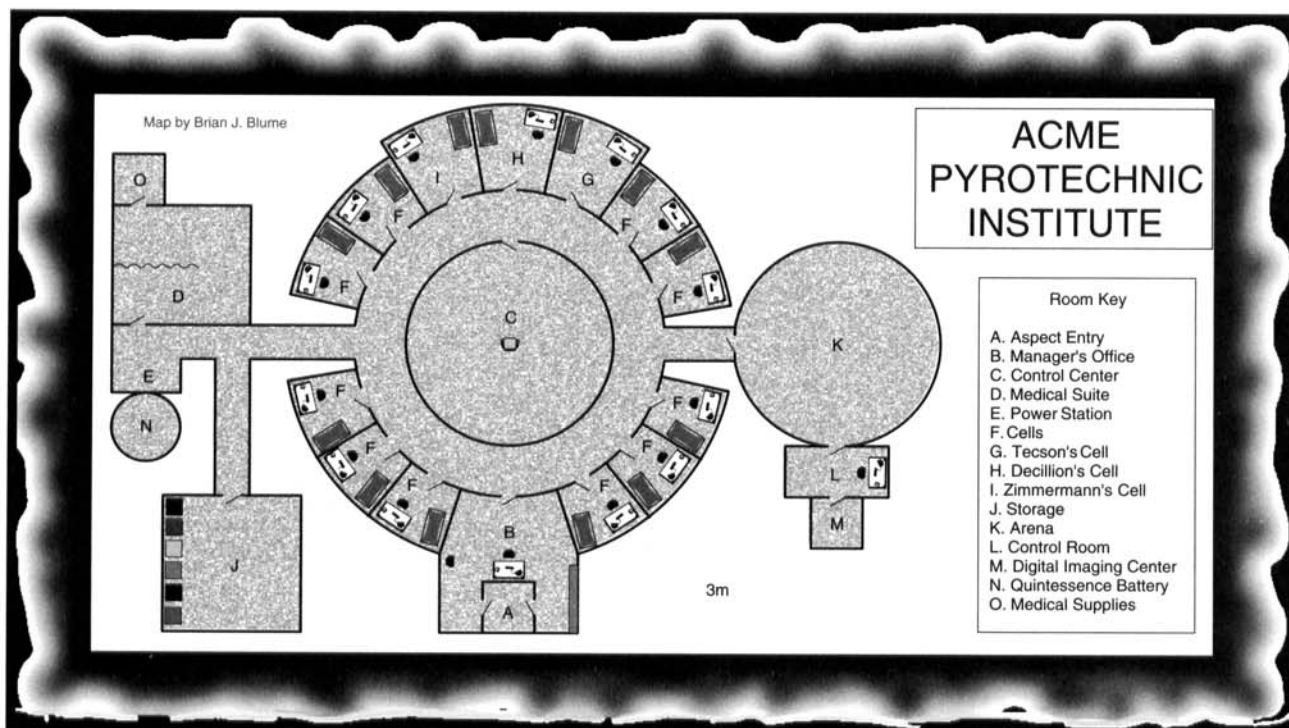
Control Center: The circular wall of this chamber is one huge monitor. It can be divided into an infinite number of smaller monitors. Used singly, it provides a surround-sight, first-person perspective of any environment. Decillion alternately uses it as a planetarium, a battlefield simulator, or a sensory visitation portal into the Digital Web.

A command chair is set dead-center of the room. This Device is attuned to Decillion. When sitting in it, he can mentally communicate with the Construct's computer system.

The Contruct's central computer is housed beneath the floor of this room. Removable hatches provide access.

Medical Suite: When present in the Institute, Zimmermann can usually be found in this chamber. She keeps the place extremely organized, even by Iteration X standards. One half of the room is a pristine workshop and laboratory devoted to the study of biomechanics. The other half is for surgery. Every six months, Iterators must undergo a diagnostic check-up to ensure that DEI and biomechanisms are functioning correctly. The stock shelves also hold a supply of mundane medical supplies.

Power Station: Behind this wall is the Construct's Quintessence battery. Though most of the energy is needed to maintain the Horizon Realm, a small surplus can be tapped for powering Devices. Zimmermann sets the access code and is in charge of rationing Quintessence. In emergencies, Decillion can override the fail-safe.

Map by Brian J. Blume

ACME PYROTECHNIC INSTITUTE

Room Key

A. Aspect Entry
B. Manager's Office
C. Control Center
D. Medical Suite
E. Power Station
F. Cells
G. Tecson's Cell
H. Decillion's Cell
I. Zimmermann's Cell
J. Storage
K. Arena
L. Control Room
M. Digital Imaging Center
N. Quintessence Battery
O. Medical Supplies

3m

Cells: These spartan cells contain only a cot, a computer console, and recessed drawers. Meals are served through an automated hatch, which combines the functions of pantry, microwave oven and server. Three cells are reserved for the Institute's resident mages. The remaining ten are for Ciphers. Though such a mass-Deciphering has yet to occur, all Institutes are constructed from an ideal model.

Storage: When not in operation, twelve maintenance robots store themselves here. Along one wall are stacked polyethyline crate containing general supplies — toolkits, safety goggles, food-trays (marked "Progenitor Produce; 100% simulated"), and standard issue tasers. The bank of recessed drawers set into another wall contain holocubes, all carefully categorized.

Arena: Here, Ciphers learn armed combat. The walls are reinforced with steel, concrete, and a thin layer of Primium (to contain stray magick). Sprinkler systems are set into the domed ceiling. A variety of weaponry is stored behind removable wall panels. The Arena is also equipped with low-intensity lasers and a digital sound sytem which can simulate a combat environment. Smith's exoskeleton stands silent just inside the door. Tecson can often be found here sparring with his HIT Marks.

Digital Imaging Chamber: The Digital Imaging Chamber is a cubic room, three meters to a side. Anything (or anyone) standing within is run through various scans and reduced to a digital format. This data can then be transmitted via microwaves to similar chambers in Autochthonia, MECHA, or the Presidio CPU. The chamber can also be configured for holistic immersion into the Digital Web.

The entire process takes two minutes and has a 1.845% chance of deadly error, so the Chamber is not used casually.

Tecson is currently experimenting with a filter subroutine which should reduce error. He also theorizes that it could be used to heal organics or purify matter (so far, he has been unable to turn lead into gold).

Purpose

The Construct has one purpose: to create obedient and efficient Technocrats. The facilities can also be used to condition Kamrads, interrogate prisoners, or prepare minds for transplanting into HIT Marks.

History

Acme Pyrotechnic Institute has a relatively short and uneventful history, and that is how the Convention likes it. In the late 1960s, Iteration X calculated that a new programming center was necessary.

It has long been proven that the most efficient programming is achieved in an enclosed environment, isolated from the diversions of an imperfect world. Iteration X took this idea from Hermetic Covenants of the Dark Ages, but replaced the inefficient method of apprenticeship with one which could handle many students at a time.

Constructors decided to build a Horizon Realm. Stringing mystic powerlines from MECHA, they shaped the Realm and a set down a prefabricated Construct. Meanwhile, a front-company named Duplex had bought a building in Detroit. The final task involved connecting the Construct to its earthly aspect.

On 6 August 1971, construction was finished. Several proven Technomancers (such as Decillion) were assigned to Acme Pyrotechnic Institute. Since then, the Institute has produced a half-dozen Technomancers. Projected quotas look good all the way up until Ascension.

Construct Inhabitants

Decillion, Tecson and Zimmerman each have their own spartan quarters within the Construct, though the latter rarely stays for any length of time. There are ten cells for Ciphers. William Smith resides in one.

In addition to the mortals, the Construct's inhabitants include Tecson's two HIT Mark bodyguards and a dozen maintenance robots. These latter machines are multisensory, mobile, and controlled by the central computer.

Internal Structure and Relations

Like all of Iteration X, the Institute is organized by a rigid chain of command. Decillion receives orders directly from Autochtonia, but is otherwise the supreme authority. Zimmermann and Tecson are technically equal. However, the former's background as BioMechanic (a prestigious Methodology) gives her precedence in any conflict. At the same time, Tecson has total control over the learning and lives of Ciphers placed in under his command. He is also responsible for managing the Kamrads.

The computers, security systems, and robots are programmed to obey everyone in the Construct. However, a fail-safe subroutine allows them to be overridden by Decillion.

External Relations

The Institute coordinates with other Constructs when it requires a trial ground for the Assay of a Cipher. Thrust into the Ascension War, the Cipher is monitored to see how his programming holds up in the field.

Otherwise, the Institute maintains a low profile.

Status and Reputation

Most of the Institute's status is gained through its association with Decillion. Still, the Construct has gained a reputation during its short existence for turning out competent Technocrats (six of them to be exact). This reputation may fluctuate; accomplishments and failures of "graduates" will certainly reflect upon the Institute.

An indication of the Construct's position may be found in the following fact: one of its members, Tecson, was chosen to represent Iteration X at an emergency Symposium held in San Francisco. Then again, this may not mean much; some claim that the threat of an "unraveling of reality" was not taken seriously.

Few Tradition mages know of the Institute. Those who do will insist that its apparent lack of defense is a facade.

Status: 2
Reputation: 2

Policy Regarding Outsiders

The Institute has strict rules against admitting outsiders, even Technocrats. Visitors must undergo sensor scans for hidden weapons and subversive intentions. They are left waiting while identities are confirmed and profiles checked. If Decillion (after contacting Autochthonia) gives final affirmation, they may enter. Upon leaving, visitors are subjected to another series of scans to prevent theft (!) of material or secrets. Sometimes a selective mind-wipe is deemed necessary. Some agents of the New World Order actually enjoy this bureaucratic hassle. Most Technocrats, however, prefer to communicate via phone.

Needless to say, Tradition mages are attacked on sight, then interrogated if they survive.

Allies and Enemies

The half-dozen mages who have survived the Institute feel a strange loyalty to the place — perhaps this is another layer of subliminal programming. The same can be said for the sixty or so mages Decillion has personally taught, though not all are still active. Unless directives conflict, they will provided assistance.

Indirectly involved in the Ascension War, the Construct has few personal enemies. One is the sole survivor of Graylock Chantry, Dr. Van Baas. Other enemies include the Resurrection Men. Based in Windsor, Ontario, this mixed cabal of Euthanatos and Dreamspeakers converse with spirits of the dead. They have lost two members to the Institute.

Research Capacities

Thanks to digital electronics, the Institute's massive computer banks can generate, process, store and transmit vast amounts of data — including text, sound and images. More information can be stored on holocubes — synthetic crystals laser-stamped with digital data.

The database includes teaching tools such as AESs (Advanced Expert Systems), interactive video, lengthy files on procedure, and instruction about the proper use of technology. (Research rolls are difficulty 5 when dealing with Science, Computer or Technology.) Decillion keeps detailed files on hundreds of Sleepers who have the potential to be mages. Each profile is run though multiple simulations to determine suitability and potential — all before recruitment is even considered.

Zimmermann's surgery doubles as an inadequate lab. However, experimentation is limited to biomechanics.

Documentation

Technomancer's Lexicon

Amalgam — Cabal.

Apparatus — Magickal Focus.

Armature — Roughly analogous to Traditional Fellow (see "Structure" in Disk Two).

Artificers — Early (pre-1900) name for Iteration X.

Assay — The trial which a Cipher must pass before gaining the status of Fellow (a true mage).

Big Machine — Iteration X's term for Reality.

BioMechanics — A Methodology of Iteration X which works with special Devices known as biomechanisms (see Disk Two).

Biomechanics — The study of biomechanisms.

Biomechanisms — Devices which are designed to be permanently attached to one's body; a magickal prosthesis or cybernetic. Examples can be found in Disk Three.

Cipher — A Technomancer-in-training; an Apprentice.

Comptroller — Roughly analogous to a Tradition Deacon (see "Structure" in Disk Two).

Construct — Chantry.

Convention — Tradition.

DEI — Digital Enhancement Implant. A Biomechanism which increases mnemonic and logic functions of a mages mind. See Disk Three.

Device — A Technocratic Talisman.

Digital Web — A virtual reality realm described in the Mage sourcebook of the same name. Also called the Net.

Iterator — A member of Iteration X.

Kamrad — UnAwakened member of Iteration X (see "Structure" in Disk Two).

Methodology — A subgroup within a Convention, with specific interests and skills.

Mundane — A single Sleeper (q.v. The Masses).

Programmer — Roughly analogous to a Traditional Pedagogue (see "Structure" in Disk Two).

Statisticians — A Methodology of Iteration X whose members excel at manipulating data (see Disk Two).

The Masses — Sleepers in general (q.v. Mundane).

Time-Motion Managers — A Methodology of Iteration X concerned with efficiency and manufacturing (see Disk Two).

Suggested Immersion

You won't find many useful references about robotics (HIT Mark caliber, anyway), biomechanisms, or mind-machine merging. However, the following sources provide a general tone for Technocracy:

• As the dedication suggests, anything by Harlan Ellison. A good start would be "Knox," "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream," and "'Repent, Harlequin!' Said the Ticktockman," all contained in *The Essential Ellison* (Morpheus International, 1993).

• Noem Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent* describes how American society has been conditioned by an elite. I also suggest a watchable documentary entitled *Manufacturing Consent: Noem Chomsky and the Media* (a Necessary Illusions/National Film Board of Canada co-production, 1992).

• Take the **Mage** bibliography to heart and read Neil Postman's *Technopoly*.

• For visual reference, watch George Lucas's classic *THX-1138*. The setting is a classic Construct of Iteration X.

Strangely (or perhaps not so strangely), I went frantic trying to getting hold of these sources. Only the largest bookstore in the entire city carried Ellison's work! The Chomsky documentary was "rented by another gentleman just a minute ago." *Technopoly* was so "popular on campus" I had to reserve it a month ahead. And the Lucas movie? It had to be specially ordered. Twice! Coincidence? Nope. I think they're banned by the Technocracy. How and why was I allowed to finally obtain them? I'm not sure I want an answer to that one....

Other useful sources include:

• Both *Terminator* movies, *Robocop* I and II (ignore III), and *Hardware* (an Iteration X prototype gone mad).

• Daniel Burrus's *Technotrends* (HarperBusiness, 1993). This book describes the applications of twenty core technologies which will shape our future. A good start for more in-depth research.

• For the core of Iteration X's philosophy (and a liberal education) read Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, The *Analects* of Confucius, and Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*. All are widely available.

• Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* describes a world where the Technocracy has won the Ascension War. It provides some good ideas for Progenitors.

Metric to Imperial Conversion

The first half of this book uses metric measurement, one of Iteration X's advances which received a less than enthusiastic response from the Masses. Here are some conversion rules:

1 millimeter (mm) = 0.04 inches (caliber)

1 centimeter (cm) = 0.39 inches

1 meter (m) = 3.28 feet (roughly, 1 meter = 1 yard)

1 kilometer (km) = 0.62 miles

1 kilogram (kg) = 2.20 pounds

To convert Celsius to Fahrenheit, multiply by 1.8 and add 32

ITERATION X

The Machine is Perfection.

Free will is a danger. Hope is an illusion. Flesh is weak. Only through the Machine can humanity rise above its inevitable destruction. Iteration X understands this. Anyone who does not must be convinced.
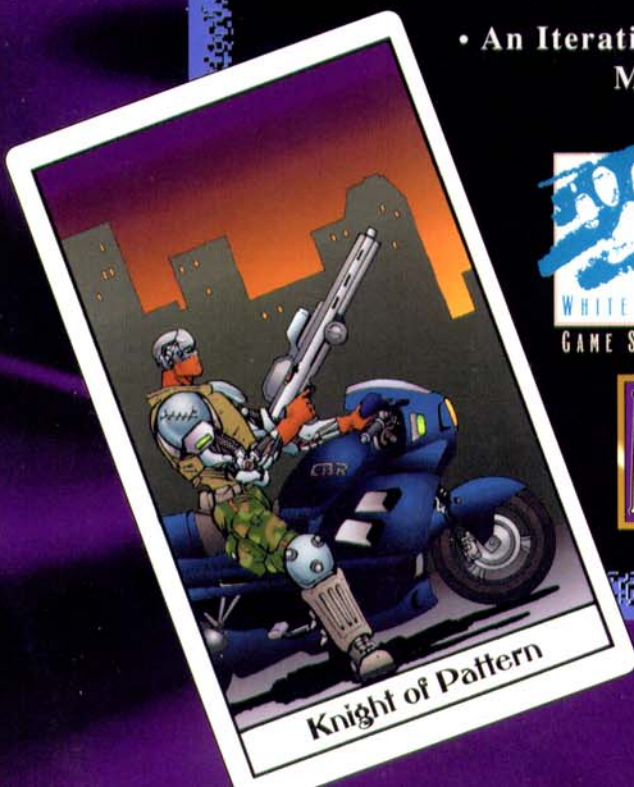
We are the Machine.

From the dark reaches of Autocthonia to the cybernetic fantasies of Hollywood, Iteration X marches into the future with a vision of clockwork perfection. Feared and shunned, this Convention knows that when the time is right, all will understand. This Technocracy sourcebook gives the Machine's-eye view of Ascension. And the Machine is never wrong.

Technocracy: Iteration X includes:

• The history, world-view, goals and tactics of the Convention.

• An order of battle detailing the stormtroopers of the Pogrom.

• An Iteration X production facility for Mage Storytellers.

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MAGE

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