

BERAEDS' PORTAL



HERMES' PORTAL

Issue n° 1

September 2001



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HERMES' PORTAL

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Thanks: Sheila Thomas, Neil Taylor, Michaël de Verteuil for their constant support, Angela Taylor, Radja Sauperamariane for their illustrations, John Nephew for answering my questions.

Hermes' Portal is an independent publication dedicated to Ars Magica players. *Hermes' Portal* is available through email only.

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Who's Who?

David Chart

David Chart has been writing material for *Ars Magica* since the first Wizard's Grimoire. He was co-developer of the Wizard's Grimoire Revised Edition, and author of *Heirs to Merlin*. In real life, he is a mild mannered teacher of philosophy.

Niall Christie

Niall Christie is a mediaeval Islamic historian, currently finishing a position at the University of Toronto, before spending a year researching at Cornell University in upstate New York. His wife, Steph, is a Visiting Professor in the department of mathematics at Cornell, and so they don't argue about their work very much.

Niall has been playing and writing material for *Ars Magica* since he was first introduced to the game in 1992. He is also involved in the Society for Creative Anachronism as a singer and storyteller. He says his hobbies allow him to explore the "what-ifs" of history that wouldn't stand up to academic study, but this may just be an excuse for being a roleplaying geek.

Timothy Ferguson

Timothy Ferguson is 28 and works as a library locum in Thuringowa, North Queensland, Australia. He's currently fossicking about for a new job, as locums do, and studying for his next degree.

Andrew Gronosky

Andrew Gronosky is a scientific programmer living near Boston, Massachusetts. He even knows how to spell "Massachusetts." He has been playing *Ars Magica* since 1st Edition in 1988. His most significant gaming-related accomplishment has been meeting an unattached, female gamer— a feat heretofore believed impossible— and being fortunate enough to become her boyfriend. And he owes it all to *Ars Magica*.

Eric Kouris

Eric is 34 and teaches mathematics. He began playing RPGs in 1982 with FGU's *Chivalry & Sorcery* (instead of AD&D), then *Space Opera*, *Call of Cthulhu*,... In 1989, he turned to *Ars Magica*, and in 1994, he began publishing a French zine for *Ars Magica* named *Ars Mag*. To this day, 23 issues have been released. He also regularly plays go and you can meet him on the IGS go server.

Radja Sauperamaniane

Radja is working in a game store in Paris. He worked on the card game *Zoon*. He has been doing illustrations for *Ars Mag* since issue #11.

Angela Taylor

Angela studied English Literature at Clare College, Cambridge, and Mediaeval History at York, taught for some years, then married Neil. She draws and paints, while making rude comments

about Neil's gaming (fair enough, really!); she is a non-gamer... almost a "gaming widow" even!

Sheila Thomas (editor)

Sheila Thomas has been editing technical publications for paper and electronic distribution for years. This is her first attempt at doing it for game material. She discovered RPGs about ten years ago but it was a couple of years before she learnt that AD&D wasn't the only RPG system around. She now devotes most of her gaming time to *Ars Magica* but is still playing in that AD&D campaign.

Michaël de Verteuil

Michaël de Verteuil, Canadian political analyst, *Ars Magica* storyguide, co-author of *Ordo Nobilis*, amateur medievalist, occasional contributor to *Ars Mag*, and a noted Berklist pugilist, is the lead writer for Heretic's Corner, a column devoted to suggesting simplifications to the *Ars Magica* rules and to providing simple solutions to rule problems. Michaël (pronounced Mee-ka-el) is currently a consultant for the pre-planning phase of an upcoming French language medieval adventure TV series based on the house of Savoy and aimed at young teens. Interested readers are invited to submit suggestions or comments concerning Heretic's Corner to m_de_verteuil@sympatico.ca.



Publisher's Corner

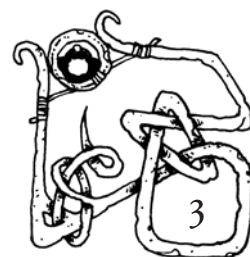
A long time ago, following the example of Peter Henges' *Redcap*, I proposed to my friends the idea of publishing a French zine for *Ars Magica*. Against the odds (I didn't have a computer at the time), I managed to release issue #1 of *Ars Mag*, a 20 page zine. Last July, I published issue #23, 80 pages long.

When Damelon Kimbrough announced the end of *Mythic Perspectives*, I suggested publication of a pdf zine, getting rid of one of the problems that plagued the life of Damelon's zine. *Hermes' Portal* is the result!

To be honest, I have to thank all the people contributing to this issue. Without them this zine wouldn't exist. But I also have to thank Damelon. Many of the articles appearing in this issue (and also in the forthcoming issues) were first written for *Mythic Perspectives*, turning this issue of *Hermes' Portal* into a tribute to Damelon's zine.

What you'll find in *Hermes' Portal* has been written for players by players. They all have their own views on the game. Maybe you'll disagree with them, maybe not. Either way, I'll be glad to publish your comments to widen the audience for *Hermes' Portal* and make it your own zine.

Lastly, this zine was time-consuming to produce and the subscriptions will be given to the authors. To see other issues produced, please don't distribute this file. This way, *Hermes' Portal* will follow in *Ars Mag*'s steps.





Form and Substance

by David Chart

Mythic Perspectives held three annual fiction competitions. The stories from the first competition were published in the special fiction supplement, but the stories from later competitions remained unpublished. This story won the second competition, but this is its first publication.



"Hoc est corpus."

"Hic est panis," Stephen thought, as he chewed and swallowed the Host. The cathedral was huge around him, filled with the chattering of the people as the archbishop and his deacon moved on among the communicants. Slowly, Stephen stood and made his way back into the nave. People glanced at him and stepped aside as he passed, but the magus barely noticed them, lost in disappointment. There were sounds of a scuffle from the shrine as someone tried to climb into Becket's tomb, but he only glanced at it. Bread. It was always bread.

He stopped in the nave and raised his face towards heaven. Bread, but he could *feel* the power, lying over him like a heavy blanket, muffling his Gift until he made the effort to push it aside. Something was real, here.

He became aware of someone standing beside him.

"Sir, are you all right? Do you wish to be taken to the shrine?" Stephen realised he must have looked like a blind man, and turned to the young clerk. His face was earnest, and he was dressed in rags. A glance down revealed that he was barefoot.

"I was just thinking about God," Stephen replied, "and his ministers." The young man bowed his head.

"Then I am sorry to have disturbed you. It is an ill thing, to disturb a man at prayer."

"Oh, I was not praying, simply thinking." He began walking from the church, with the clerk at his side.

"But surely any thought about God is a prayer."

"It depends what you are thinking. I was wondering whether God really showed his power through the sacraments, whether the priesthood are really his vessels."

"We know that it is so, for the Holy Church teaches it."

"And still the bread remains bread, and the wine, wine." The clerk looked slightly shocked at that, and shook his head vigorously.

"No, they become the body and blood of Our Lord. That is the mystery of the Mass." Stephen smiled, and reached into his pouch for a coin, holding it out to the poor man.

"Here, have something, buy some shoes." But the clerk shook his head.

"I will not take money. I have vowed myself to Lady Poverty." They were outside the church now, walking through the mud and filth of the forecourt.

"Ah, one of the little brothers of Francis. Well then, let me at least buy you some food." The friar smiled at that.

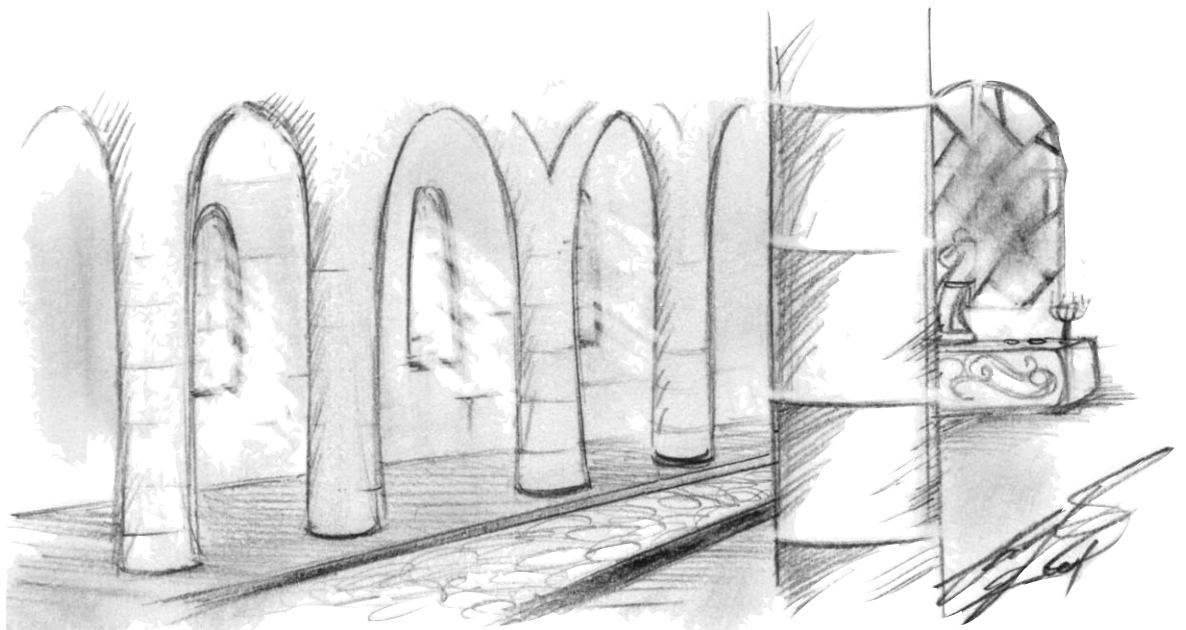
"May God bless you." Stephen smiled a little wryly at that, and went to buy the food.

He sat with the friar as he ate, on a stump on the edge of the city, watching the pilgrims pass to and fro. The friar waved his hand at the crowds.

"They come sick, and they return healed. What more proof could you want?"

"It isn't proof I need. I know that God has His hand on the church. I can feel it when I stand in the nave, more strongly in the sanctuary."

"Truly?" the friar asked, wide eyed. "You can feel the presence of God?" The magus nodded, gazing at the horizon.



"I know that He is. *credo, sed non intellego*." The friar looked a little blank. "I believe, but I do not understand. Anselm of Canterbury said he believed in order to understand, but I can only manage the first part."

"Is understanding that important? Aren't belief and obedience enough?"

"Not for me. I must know what I believe. I must know that I am not deceived, that when I think I feel the hand of God it truly is His hand, and not the devil's."

The friar ate in silence for a while, and Stephen did not interrupt him. Finally, the clerk looked straight at him.

"Come with me, and I will show you." Stephen looked into his eyes. There was no deceit, only faith and the intention to teach by example.

"Very well, Martin. I have looked in the cathedrals and monasteries. I will look by the roads as well."



Before they had been together a week Martin was commenting on the weather, and the providence that God was showing. Stephen smiled a little, but did not enlighten him. He had no intention of slogging through mud to get his revelation, and it was easy enough for him to turn such weather aside. That knowledge might disconcert the young friar, however.

He was reluctant to talk about himself, preferring to talk about God and Francis. Stephen listened to his prattle, enjoying the company of simple faith for a while. But there was no sign of great revelations.



They heard the noise before they saw anything, and Stephen suggested that they should leave the road and hide in the fields. Martin shook his head.

"God will protect us, you will see." Feeling that, if necessary, he could supply God's office in this matter, Stephen let himself be persuaded, and they continued round the corner.

The bandits had surrounded a small group of women and one of them, stripped of her clothes, was being forced to the ground.

"Mother of God preserve them!" Martin breathed, and then ran forward. "Stop! In the name of God, what are you doing?" One of the bandits turned, and casually threw his spear towards the friar. Without a thought, Stephen turned it aside. Martin came to a dead stop, and began to turn.

The bandits were not stopped by awe. Two of them rushed towards him, pausing only to push Martin to the ground. As they approached first one, and then the other, fell to the ground in a deep sleep. Martin struggled to his feet, and saw the bandits reach Stephen and begin beating him. For a moment, he couldn't decide who to aid, but

as he wavered the remaining bandits, and the women, also fell asleep.

The bandits beating Stephen vanished, and the magus, unharmed, walked briskly towards him.

"Come along, we must get the women out of there." He picked his way among the fallen bodies, carefully rolling the bandits aside. He put his cloak around the naked woman, and woke her up. As she realised where she was, her terror returned. "Hush, you're safe for now. Go to the friar." He wakened the next one, and realised that the women were nuns. He wondered why they had been travelling without an escort, and started to look around for wounded. There were none in sight. Martin was reassuring the nuns, and he quickly followed Stephen's beckon. A short distance down the road the magus turned, and sent the bandits a dream they would not soon forget. He realised that Martin was staring at him, but the nuns, much relieved, were chattering about the intervention of St Thomas, whose shrine they were visiting.

They escorted them to the next village, and learned that one of the bandits had been escorting them, as their original escort had fallen ill with a fever. At the village, Stephen found a couple of trustworthy men, and gave them twelve pence each to see the nuns safely to Canterbury, two days' journey away. The nuns thanked him, and promised to pray for his soul, but Martin was silent.



As they walked away from the village, the friar was obviously lost in thought. He kept glancing at the magus, and starting to speak. Finally, Stephen decided he needed some encouragement.

"Say it, Martin."

"Who are you?"

"Stephen, as I told you. Someone searching for God."

"But surely you have already found him. Those were miracles!"

"No more than the strength of your arms or the sight of your eyes. No less, mark you, but no more."

"What? I don't understand."

"I'm a wizard, Martin. God's gifts to me include the power to work wonders. Which is why I am not convinced by miracles. I know of at least three powers that can do such things: my own, the fay, and the devil. I need to know that God is something other than that."

The friar was silent again, and they walked on.

"You can't be a devil sent to tempt me."

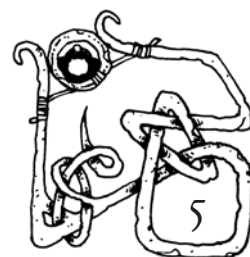
"How do you know?"

"You haven't tempted me." Stephen burst out laughing, from pure happiness at the man's simplicity.

"Very true."

"And you took Mass in the cathedral, and in the church last Sunday. You can't be a devil."

"I am not a devil, Martin. Just a man."





"You aren't that either. I saw what you did. No man can do that."

"Not many, true. But there are others."

"It must be God's power." Stephen sighed.

"No more than your arm. Look." The road turned to silver in front of them, leading to a golden castle. Beautiful naked maidens stood by the road, calling to them to come in and enjoy the pleasures of their bodies. The image vanished as Martin stood, open mouthed. "God would not create such a vision, would he?"

"No. But the devil would not snatch it away before I could sin. So, you are a man."

"I am."

"And you seek God. Even with your power, you seek God."

"It isn't about power, or wealth. What have you given up to seek God?" Martin blushed.

"You know?"

"Not in detail, but I do know that you gave up much."

"My father was William Marshal. I am a bastard son, but I was a favoured bastard. The child of his old age, like Joseph." Stephen drew in a sharp breath.

"You did give up a lot. You see, even with that, you had to seek." Martin nodded.

"Seek, and you will find."

"But when?"



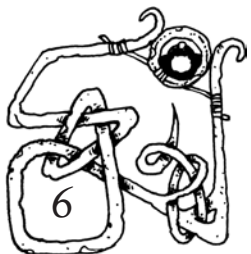
The bell fell silent as they hurried through the streets of the village, towards the dilapidated church. There was a crowd of people pushing its way through the door, and they could hear, faintly, the first words of the mass. Martin plucked at Stephen's sleeve, and picked up his pace.

"We'll be late!" Stephen looked at the church, its roof covered with oak shingles that almost seemed to be alive, shifting... He drew his breath in sharply, and muttered the words of a spell. Martin heard him, and stopped in his tracks.

"Stephen?"

"Get them out of the church. The roof is going to collapse." The friar broke into a full run, yelling at the top of his voice, and Stephen wasn't far behind. The magus ran to the side of the church, laying his hands on it as he spoke, firmly, the words of another spell. As the last syllable sounded, he felt the weight of the roof, the shifting of the rotten beams, and he held them. He stood there, still, as the congregation streamed out, kept from panic by the soothing words of the priest. He and Martin were the last to leave, and the friar stopped to speak to the magus.

"Everyone is out. They are safe." Breathing heavily, Stephen stepped back from the wall. For a moment nothing happened, then, with a groan, the roof caved in, raising clouds of dust. As the timbers fell Stephen thought he heard a scream of frustrated malice, and Martin turned sharply.



"Did you hear that?" the friar asked. Stephen nodded.

"I know of three powers..." he said, quietly, and Martin shuddered. The priest was thanking them for the warning, and Stephen explained that he had seen the roof shifting as they approached, saying that he had worked as a carpenter, and knew the signs. As they left the village, Martin pressed him for more explanation.

"You never worked as a carpenter, I'm sure."

"No. But the truth would not have served very well there."

"How *did* you know?"

"My magic lets me see things you cannot." He pointed to a clump of trees. "To you, they look much the same, do they not?" The friar peered at them for a moment, and nodded. "The one on the left, with the crow on it, will be dead before the end of the year. Already the disease has eaten away much of its heart."

"But if you can tell so much, surely you know about the Mass. Or do you know that they are merely bread and wine?" His voice shook, and the friar looked more afraid than he had when facing the bandits.

"I know that they are bread and wine before the consecration. I know that I can tell nothing afterwards. I also know that the fay and the devil can do that, as can those of my sodales who surpass me in power. There is certainly a power at work in the Mass."

The friar nodded, and then smiled.

"You are a good man, Stephen, and you are looking with all your heart. God will not hide from you for ever."

For a moment, the magus truly believed him.



They were walking past a field where men were mowing the hay when there was a scream, and one of the mowers fell. As usual, Martin hurried over, Stephen following. The man had slipped, and his scythe had sliced his thigh to the bone. His blood pumped out onto the ground, and he looked likely to die.

"Heal him!" Martin urged, under his breath.

"I can't. I have no *vis*."

"Trust God. Heal him."

The magus laid his hands on the leg, and the wound closed, disappearing as the other mowers reached them. The wounded man sat up, wonder on his face.

"You must get home. The wound may re-open in time." At sunset, Stephen thought. The man stood, feeling no pain, and shook his head.

"It's fine. Some saint must have healed me. The friar's prayers, that's what did it." He pulled a penny from his belt. "I'll vow this penny to any saint you choose, friar." Martin paused a moment.

"Vow it to the Mother of God." The man bent the coin between his fingers.

"It is done. I shall give it as an offering."

He went back to mowing, more slowly than before, and Martin turned to leave. Stephen grabbed his shoulder.

"The healing will only last until sunset. Then the wound will be as bad as it was before. My power has limits, and this is one of them."

"Then we wait, and aid him again if necessary."

"He might be annoyed about that penny." Martin laughed, then.

"I don't think he'll worry about the penny."

The two went to sit at the edge of the field, watching the mowers move as the sun sank. Stephen felt it touch the horizon, but he hadn't worn a Parma for months, so he did nothing as his nerves strained for the scream.

It never came. The sun sank, the mowers packed up and left, and none of them collapsed to the ground. Indeed, the healed worker came over to them, and offered to let them sleep in his house

that night. Martin accepted, because Stephen was still too dazed to speak.



"That was the power of God." Stephen only nodded as they walked towards the church. Martin continued. "Now, look at the Mass with the eyes of faith."

They entered the rural church, its floor dirty and the Doom painted on the walls faded and peeling. The priest's vestments were almost as worn as Martin's clothes, but he looked at the miracle-working friar with great respect, a respect that Martin returned. The parishioners were all present, crowded into the church, waiting with bated breath to see a miracle. The priest stumbled through the Mass, his tongue mangling the Latin, but sincerity shining through. Finally, he came to offer the Host to the communicants.

"Hoc est corpus."

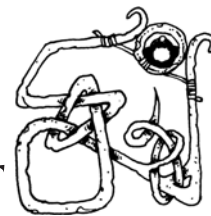
"Hoc est verum corpus."



APPOLONIOS OF JERBITON



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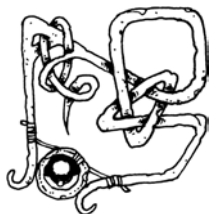
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'Tinged with mystery, the story is involving, the twists surprising.'

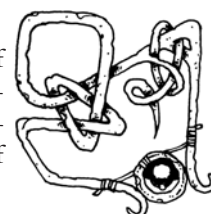
Gustavus of Bonisagus

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Prelude to Forever

by Timothy Ferguson

The *Prelude to Forever* is an adventure that stands alone, but is designed to form part of the *For Ever and Ever?* arc. Its purpose in the arc is to prepare a player-character for their central role in the narrative. When played as a stand-alone adventure, it deepens the characterization of a magus, allows them to develop a Virtue, constructs a friendly covenant, introduces a powerful ally, and allows the other characters to step outside their roles for part of a game session. It is suitable for one-to-one or troupe play.

The Prelude to Forever is a dream scenario, but that doesn't mean it is without consequences. In *Ars Magica* the land of dreams and the Magical Realm are identical, and what happens while the spirit rests there affects the waking world. What the players do not initially know is that it isn't their dream.

Years ago, before their Gauntlet, one of the characters caught the eye of Kirstel, the apprentice of Xavier of Jerbiton. Two years older than the object of her interest and fearing disapproval from her master, Kirstel kept her feelings hidden behind a façade of big-sisterly interference. After her Gauntlet she took the name Veronica and left for the Levant, never seeing her childhood crush again. Now, because of the Heart of Forever (see p. 12) or the loss of her familiar, Veronica's subconscious has the chance to see how things might have been, if only she'd been more forward...

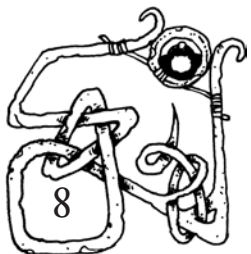
Choosing a Victim

For Ever and Ever? is a Gothic romance. Veronica is one of the romantic leads and you need to choose a player-character as the other. If you'd prefer a female PC to be the centre of the story, then replace Veronica filia Xavier with a magus called Xavier filius Veronica, or suggest sapphistry. The Veronica presented here should be tailored to suit a PC already active within your saga. The details provided are to save you the effort of designing her from scratch, but you should alter her so that a romantic relationship between your leads seems plausible.

You may want to ask your troupe about this in advance. Ask, in general terms, if one of them would like a romantic interest for their character in your next campaign arc, then let them stew for a few weeks, then add several new female characters. Dangle that True Love carrot, but stress that there will be some damage.

Choose a player who is interested in the non-magical side of his character's life, then get sneaky. Think about his previous girlfriends and steal the traits he admired for Veronica. Yes, it's nasty, but play the man, not the ball.

Don't get caught.



Intercut with the romantic storyline, the covenant is attacked by a group of the Discordant, the result of hideous experiments to restore life to the dead. They are drawn across Europe, destroying objects mystically tied to their creator, Martin of Bonisagus. Martin is the hero of a popular Hermetic tragicomedy (see p. 12). A copy is contained in the characters' covenant library. The assault by the Discordant is included so that characters not involved in the romantic plot aren't left out of the game. It also links to the later sections of the *For ever and Ever?* arc.

A session before running *Prelude to Forever*, the storyguide should give the characters the Request for Information handout. The author is Antony of Jerbiton, one of the Discordant, who is trying to systematize their task. He appears in *Continuing Forever*, a later story in the arc.

So, what do you wear in bed?

Begin by establishing that what follows is a dream sequence. Endings where players discover that everything was a dream irritate, so it's best to be upfront. Have each player describe their magus's nightly rituals. This encourages characterization and development of the covenant scenery. Players being paranoid, they're likely to engage in all sorts of unusual protective behaviour, but the point of this process is to warm them up for the game session and to firmly state that what follows is a dream. Scaring them a little is fine though. It enhances concentration and prepares them for the beta-plot.

Emphasize that the night is absolutely foul, with sleeting rain or wind-driven snow.

Veronica's Dream Sequence

Veronica's dreams are vital for introducing her relationship to the romantic lead, but they can be boring for the other players if they have to sit around while he gets to do all the talking. Combat listlessness by rapidly bringing Veronica's dream life into the players' covenant, by intercutting the beta plot that awakens the characters and by allowing them to play NPCs. It is useful to avoid awakening the romantic lead until all of the PCs are represented in Veronica's dream. It isn't until he wakes up that the players will be certain that their characters are in someone else's head. If this char-

A request for information

A young Jerbiton magus wants to stage the famous Hermetic story "The Tragedy of Martin and Petula" at the Covenant of the Descending Circles in the Theban Tribunal. He is attempting to find the oldest version of the story within the Order, and to trace its development into its modern form. He has requested that every covenant with a copy write to him, detailing how they acquired their version, if they have produced copies themselves, and how much they would charge for originals, copies or library time.

Veronica, filia Xavier, follower of Jerbiton

Veronica's sheet looks unusual for a variety of reasons. She spent a year bonding a familiar which has since died. She also has extensive experience spying on the ill-defined "enemies of the Order" in the Holy Land, which reduced her study time, but improved her skills. Finally, Veronica's pater allows her access to his spells, so that she hasn't needed to develop many of the odd variants, found below, herself.

The statistics given below are for the ages of: 25, for use in the dream sequences; 40, for a young saga; 60, for a group with more experienced characters. Since most Hermetic magi don't appear to age for a period after 35, the older versions of Veronica both appear to be in early middle age.

Personality profile

Veronica's personality should be adjusted to suit the player character targeted as her beau. The following is provided so you needn't work up her Hermetic attributes from scratch.

In a word: perceptive. Veronica is a counter-illusionist, skilled at discerning the truth when it is magically obscured. She's pragmatic to a degree that surprises those who consider Imaginem magicians flighty, and has had several scathing, public arguments with Merinita magi that share her specialization. Veronica dislikes falsehood, pretence and representation. Skilled at, but dismissive of, illusion, she craves vivid, real experiences.

She likes getting out of her tower and seeing things, and when she can't do that, Veronica sries magically, in a thoroughly legal fashion. If asked, she'll note that her spells allow her to sense real images from a distance, which means they aren't illusory. Her invisibility spell is a minor concession to common sense. Along with the rest of her House, Veronica embraces artistry. Since she considers most forms of Imaginem false, she prefers to work in solid media., although she's willing to enhance her pieces with Permanent or Instant spells. Veronica hates art which represents, although she makes an exception for tools like maps and books.

The older Veronica follows in her pater's footsteps, joining the Quaesitores. She's less dismissive of the Merinita after her retraining, but is still stubborn, and maintains a private dislike for people who don't see the importance of things being real. She learns Aura of Rightful Authority to assist her quaesitorial investigations, since it means she can avoid learning Aura of Ennobled Presence.

Statistics

Age: Two years older than the PC chosen as her romantic interest

Size -1

Int +3, Per +3, Pre +1, Com +2, Str -1, Sta 0, Dex +1, Qik 0

Virtues and Flaws: Affinity +2 (Intellego Imaginem), Mentor (Xavier, filius Jessica, follower of Jerbiton, Quaesitor), Gentle Gift +1, Free Expression +1, Clear Thinker +1, Quaesitor (to be developed during play), Minor Magical Deficiency (Creo) -3, Small Frame -2, Non-combatant -2, Gothic Romance (developed during play)

Sigil: Clarity

Personality Traits: Stubborn +3, Pragmatic +2

Reputation: Annoyed by illusions (Levant Tribunal) after her time there.

Aged 25

Abilities (numbers after hyphens are experience points)

Etiquette (magi) 3, Affinity (Intellego Imaginem) 3-2, Magic Theory (Imaginem) 4-1, *Parma Magica* (faeries) 2, Scribe Latin (Church) 3, Speak Latin (to magi) 5, Speak (Whatever language is appropriate to your saga) (nobles) 4, Finesse 1, Penetration 1, Athletics (ice skating) 1, Awareness (faeries) 1, Charm (magi) 1, Folk Ken (festivals) 1, Concentration (spells) 2, *Certamen* (Intellego) 1, Bargain (with magi) 3, Intrigue (with magi) 3, Ride 2, Craft (whitesmithing) 4-2, (wherever) Lore (home covenant) 1, House Jerbiton Lore (art created by) 1, Legend Lore (illusionists) 2

Hermetic Traits (numbers after hyphens are experience points)

Creo 0, Intellego 12-3, Muto 0, Perdo 6, Rego 8, Animal 0, Aquam 0, Auram 0, Corpus 0, Herbam 0, Ignem 0, Imaginem 12, Mentem 6, Terram 6, Vim 0

Spells (numbers in brackets are page references for ArM 4ed.)

The Non-combatant flaw has been interpreted to mean that Veronica's spells can't injure.

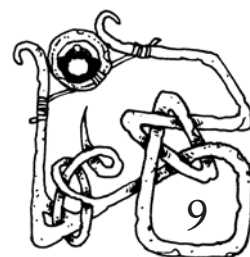
An asterisk indicates mastery.

Eyes of the Past InIm20 (140), *Discern Images of Truth and Falsehood* InIm35 (140), *The Spell We Do Not Admit We Know* InIm35, *Veil of Invisibility* PeIm10 (142) (* by age 40), *Dispel the Phantom Image* PeIm25 (142) (* by age 40), *Perception of the Conflicting Motives* InIm25 (145), *Fondling the Distant Object* ReTe25

Aged 40

Abilities

Etiquette (magi) 4, Affinity (Intellego Imaginem) 5-3, Magic Theory (Imaginem) 6, *Parma Magica* (faeries) 4-1, Scribe Latin (Church) 3-1, Speak Latin (to magi) 5, Speak (Whatever language is appropriate to your saga) (nobles) 4, Finesse 1, Penetration 2, Athletics (ice skating) 1, Awareness (faeries) 2, Charm (magi) 2, Guile (magi) 1, Folk Ken (festivals) 3, Concentration (spells) 4, *Certamen* (Intellego) 2, Bargain (with magi) 3-2, Carouse (remaining sober) 1, Intrigue (with magi) 3, Leadership (hoplites) 2, Ride 2-2, Craft (whitesmithing) 4-4, *Artes Liberales*





(music) 1, Civil and Canon Law (crusading orders) 1, *Philosophiae* (natural philosophy) 1, Theology (crusader) 1, (wherever) Lore (home covenant) 3, Levant Tribunal Lore (hoplites) 3, House Jerbiton Lore (art created by) 2, Order of Hermes Lore (hoplites) 2, Faerie Lore (avoidance) 1, Hermetic Law (Tribunal) 2, Occult Lore (convictions for diabolism) 2, Legend Lore (illusionists) 2

Hermetic Traits

Creo 6, Intellego 23-13, Muto 6, Perdo 6, Rego 18-11, Animal 10, Aquam 0, Auram 0, Corpus 6, Herbam 0, Ignem 0, Imaginem 19-11, Mentem 8, Terram 6, Vim 11-3

Spells

As above and:

Image of the Beast InAn5 (108), *Opening the Tome of the Animal's Mind* InAn25 (108-9), *Commanding the Harnessed Beast* ReAn30 (112), *Liar's Chime* InMe25, *Posing the Silent Questions* InMe25, *Peering Into The Mortal Mind* InMe30 (146)*, *Thoughts Within Babble* InMe30 (146) (Duration extended to Sun), *Fishing Pole of the Distant Thief* ReTe30

Aged 60

Abilities

Etiquette (magi) 5-1, Affinity (Intellego Imaginem) 7, Magic Theory (Imaginem) 6-3, *Parma Magica* (faeries) 5-7, Scribe Latin (Church) 3-1, Speak Latin (to magi) 5, Speak (Whatever language is appropriate to your saga) (nobles) 4, Finesse 2-2, Penetration 2, Athletics (ice skating) 1, Awareness (faeries) 3, Charm (magi) 3, Guile (magi) 2-2, Folk Ken (festivals) 5, Concentration (spells) 4-4, *Disputatio* 1, *Lectio* 1, *Certamen* (Intellego) 2, Bargain (with magi) 4-2, Carouse (remaining sober) 2-2, Intrigue (with magi) 4, Leadership (hoplites) 2, Ride 2-2, Craft (whitesmithing) 6, *Artes Liberales* (music) 2-2, Civil and Canon Law (crusading orders) 1, *Philosophiae* (natural philosophy) 1, Theology (crusader) 2, (wherever) Lore (home covenant) 3, Levant Tribunal Lore (hoplites) 3, House Jerbiton Lore (art created by) 2-1, Order of Hermes Lore (hoplites) 2-2, Faerie Lore (avoidance) 2, Hermetic Law (Tribunal) 5, Occult Lore (convictions for diabolism) 2, Legend Lore (illusionists) 2

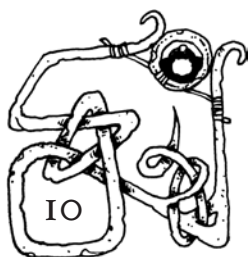
Hermetic Traits

Creo 6, Intellego 36-9, Muto 6, Perdo 6, Rego 20-4, Animal 10, Aquam 6, Auram 6, Corpus 20-5, Herbam 6, Ignem 6, Imaginem 25-5, Mentem 11-2, Terram 6, Vim 11-3

Spells

As above, plus:

Whispers Through The Black Gate InCo15 (124), *The Inexorable Search* InCo20 (124), *The Eye of the Sage* InCo30 (124), *Leap of Homecoming* ReCo35 (129)*, *Seven League Stride* ReCo35 (129)*, *Confusion of the Numbed Will* ReMe15 (148), *Aura of Rightful Authority* ReMe20 (148-9)*, *Sight of the Active Magics* InVi40 (156)



New Spells

The Spell We Do Not Admit We Know

InIm35 Ritual

Arc. D: Sun T: Room

A rock crystal (+1) or water in a basin carved of rock crystals (+3)

This spell is a modified form of *Summoning the Distant Image* (p. 141). Its duration has been increased and it allows the magus to “touch” objects, although this doesn’t grant the ability to move them. This spell is usually used in conjunction with *Fondling the Distant Object* (below).

Fondling the Distant Object

ReTe25

R: Arc. D: Sun T: Small

A bit of silver (+1) or a gauntlet of silver chainmail (+3)

This version of *Unseen Arm* (p. 153) is used to alter the area into which a magus is scrying. For example, it can be used to open drawers or turn pages.

Liar's Chime

InMe25

R: Eye/Sight; D: Sun; T: Ind.

An almond (+1)

A modification of *Frosty Breath of the Spoken Lie* (p. 145), this spell switches requisites to Imaginem, so that a bell sounds when the target lies.

Posing the Silent Questions

InMe25

R: Eye/Sight, D: Conc., T: Ind.

A version of the spell of similar name (p. 145), which allows multiple questions to be asked.

Fishing Pole of the Distant Thief

ReTe30

R: Arc., D: Mom., T: Small

A fishing line baited with an arcane connection to the object to be stolen (+3)

A version of *Hand of the Invisible Thief* (p. 154), this spell allows theft at extended distances. Veronica couples it with *The Spell We Do Not Admit We Know*.

acter is going to be woken up, you should tell the player that their dream continued to its conclusion and play out their “memory” of the dream.

Veronica’s dream includes the following scenarios, but you should tinker with them. Similarly, you should expand the beta plot, the assault by the Discordant, as necessary.

First Dream Scene

The romantic lead's arrival at the covenant where his master or mistress lives.

Get the players to describe the covenant in detail and develop characters as they mention them. Assign some of these characters to other players and tell them they get Good Things if their characters are played vividly. Part of the reason for this level of detail is to make Veronica less conspicuous when you add her to the character’s

childhood memories. It obfuscates the romantic nature of the arc, because you can age this covenant and then stage a visit in a later adventure. Lastly, it keeps the other players from being bored if they have characters to play. Although they aren't likely to have rapport with these characters, a lot of fun can be had fooling about in the childhood of another PC.

Since they are seeing the covenant through the eyes of a child, players should be encouraged to use dialogue from children's television and literature. Choose whichever style is best. Enid Blyton's stilted and over-polite English works well, but some troupes will prefer the coarser dialogue of South Park or the Simpsons. Comic sections bring down the players' psychological defenses, which make them easier to frighten later.

The comic elements should not so subtly hint that things are different to how the character remembers them. This should disguise the first clue. The character remembers Veronica, then called Kirstel, watching from a window when he arrived, looking disgusted. "Boy germs" aren't in paradigm, but if the players are punning along, you can slide it and "bossy big sister" into the back story. With a little luck one of the players will suggest that she's more responsive to the character than she was last time. If not, she smiles quizzically and waves.

Second Dream Scene

The Children's Game

The character awakes, in his dream, with someone scratching on the shutters of his window with a chicken foot on a pole. This is calling out, a children's folk practice from parts of England imported to the covenant by one of its magi. By tradition the player character should respond by sneaking out of his window to join whoever is holding the pole. If he doesn't, after a few minutes, the other apprentices will try to lure him out with the minor spells they can cast spontaneously.

When the character joins the other apprentices, there is one for each player, plus a few extras for the storyguide. One option is to prepare a player, other than the romantic lead, to play Kirstel for this section. This prolongs the period during which the players think that the victim is the focus of the story.

The apprentices have arranged with a grog to let them sneak out of the covenant, so that they can make merry in the local village. They've decided to pretend to be the Black Sprites, a local group of itinerant faeries who, they've been told, always leave crow feathers stuffed under doors when they visit the town. The apprentices do this several times a year. To keep up this façade they avoid doing serious damage, although they perform minor acts of vandalism and steal liquor, if they like. Certain important buildings have amulets that the Black Sprites cannot approach, and they can't

enter hallowed ground, so the apprentices leave those alone.

Their masters know they're sneaking out. The Black Sprites are a tradition started by one of the covenant's founders to ensure that apprentices who skulk out for a wild night don't do anything too dangerous. The citizens of the village know the covenant takes responsibility for Black Sprite damage, but only those with close ties to the covenant know that they're the apprentices, working off their youthful vigour away from their masters' library and laboratories. Every so often one of their masters will make a little mischief in the town and leave feathers about, so that the apprentices don't catch on.

After explaining to the players that they are apprentices who are cutting loose for the evening, the storyguide probably won't need to supply much plot, since they'll provide momentum themselves. Ideas to prod things along include:

- Trying to convince villagers who see you that you're really Black Sprites
- Getting a drunken apprentice back into his bed, past the grogs and his master.
- Impromptu boasts and challenges
- Burglary, especially while seeking alcohol
- Elf-riding local donkeys or mules
- Making dramatic declarations about the future
- Wandering off in the woods

The player-character remembers attending these jaunts. Kirstel was bossy and overbearing, but useful when some clear thinking was needed during the night. This time Kirstel is friendlier and more mellow, but none of the apprentices are acting exactly to character either, so she shouldn't obviously be the key element to the story.





The Tragedy of Martin and Petula (a book of mundane lore)

Every society tells stories which embody the collective wisdom of its members and are used to socialise the young. Hermetic folklore includes the story of the doomed love of two magi, Martin of Bonisagus and Petula of Criamon.

Although each House tells a slightly different variant of the tale, these lovers went against the norms of their traditions and died tragically. Some versions end with Martin wasting his life so zealously on hopeless experiments to reanimate the dead that he cannot rest when his own time comes, his hapless shade continuing to wander forever, searching for the key to immortality. Others insist that in the moment of his triumph, God shattered the Covenant of the Unending Ribbon with bolts of lightning, punishing Martin's hubris and destroying his sodales.

Interestingly for Hermetic historians, the key characters of the story demonstrably existed, and their covenant was destroyed by a disaster of unknown origin. Hermetic magi are sufficiently cynical to not be taken in by the more dramatic

additions to the narrative, but many accept its underlying premise: that monomania should be channelled into the study of magic. A few Jerbitons disagree and interpret this story subversively, as being about romance in the face of opposition. Their versions are popular with apprentices going through what other magi consider to be a common, exasperating phase of growing up, where embracing the Mundane (in general or particular) seems like a good idea.

Variations of this work are found in both narrative prose and verse play formats, but each is designed for entertainment rather than pedagogy. Its prose form is a Summa: Order of Hermes Lore 1, House Criamon Lore 1, House Bonisagus Lore 1, Enigmatic Wisdom 1, Faerie Lore 1. Quality 12. Cost 90 points. In play form, it is similar to a liber quaestionum: Order of Hermes Lore 3, Enigmatic Wisdom 1, Faerie Lore 1, Quality 15. 50 points. Several variations, which substitute Philosophiae for Faerie Lore, derive from a reinterpretation of the story penned last century. These are popular since the new version was annotated (glossed) by the contemporary Primus of House Jerbiton. (Quality 18, cost 59 points).

The Heart of Forever

The Heart of Forever is a flawless, milky opal as long as a spread hand is wide. It is shaped like a teardrop and floats, taper downward, a few inches above whatever surface it surmounts. The Heart is collared by an inch-width of gold leaf one-third from the tip of the gem. The gold collar is decorated with a Celtic knot, the symbol of the Covenant of the Unending Ribbon. This Criamon clutch were the Heart's owners, although they did not create it.

The Heart is virtually indestructible, and has three functions. It produces a pawn of Corpus vis each season. It is used as a meditative focus for those studying Enigmatic Wisdom, allowing practice. It projects magi into the Magical Realm through dreams. The comparative locations of the Heart and the magus do not inhibit this power.

When a magus's Vim score reaches 10, there is a tiny chance the Heart will project their dreaming selves into the Magic Realm. Once there they will relive a fragment of their existence, and have the apparent opportunity to change an action they regret. Magi who change their decisions

encounter arduous consequences as the story of their past life skips past them, forcing them to deal with a rapid succession of altered outcomes. Those who fail to navigate this retelling of their lives awaken as if from a nightmare and gain a Twilight point. Those who successfully retell their story awaken with two experience points of Enigmatic Wisdom and regrets that a path was not taken.

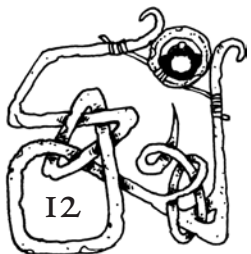
Except...

When a magus successfully recreates their life in the Magic Realm they create a pool of sympathetic energy that is drawn into the Heart. The Heart then reaches out into the Mundane World and alters it in a tiny way, which eventually leads the magus to some semblance of the state they achieved.

The Heart doesn't rewrite reality, and can't exceed the limits of Hermetic magic. Its ability is similar to a very precisely targeted version of the Bless Talent. It can take years for the effects of the Heart's blessing to become apparent, so few magi connect their lucid dream with later events. Those few magi who do make this connection assume that the phenomenon is natural.

The point of this episode is to have the character begin to fall in love with Kirtel. This can't be scripted generically, because it depends on who is playing your romantic lead. Think about why you chose them, and about what you want Veronica, the adult Kirtel, to be like. Try to be subtle. If you can get the player to take the initiative, that distracts the other players from Veronica's role as central character.

You may need to decide if Kirtel is willing to have sex with the player character. Generally the better answer is "No," because the demonstrable existence of demons assists chastity. If you feel it gives you a handle on the romantic lead you wouldn't otherwise have, it can be rationalized easily. After all, this is Veronica's dream and the Order of Hermes has perfectly safe, absolutely reliable contraceptives.





Third Dream Scene

The Day Before Graduation

In this scene, Kirstel needs to make major decisions about her life. She is going to attempt the Jerbiton Gauntlet, then, if successful, she has the option of travelling to the adjacent Tribunal to be sworn into her House. The player remembers this as a time when Kirstel was moody and withdrawn. She conversed with him, superficially, about what he planned to do once he gauntleted, and about her option of staying on at the covenant for another couple of years, until the local Tribunal. A few days after that she left for Valnastium and he never saw her again.

This is the episode where you tie the futures of the two characters together. Most players will cut you enough slack to manage this, simply by making their characters look wise. When his younger self describes what he'd like to do in the future, encourage the player character to explain how their apprentice came to the saga's main covenant. From there you negotiate Kirstel's continuing link to the character. Perhaps Kirstel leaves, with the agreement that the PC will catch her up in a few years, possibly after she has scouted out the covenant's site. Alternatively, perhaps she stays around for an extra two years, either as an apprentice or as a junior maga, until her beau passes his gauntlet.

Fourth Dream Scene

Return to Spring

In this scene you replay an early incident in the campaign, establishing that, in the dream, Veronica is a valued member of the player-character's covenant. Each of the players revisits younger versions of their characters, dusting off the dead if

your saga's mortality rate is high. If the romantic lead makes the mistake of using Veronica's apprentice name, then she'll smile and use his apprentice name in return. Among Hermetic magi this is one of those mushy, "couple things" which make people (well, sour bachelors) bilious.

If the characters do particularly well in this adventure, give them information which is valuable and accurate. If, for example, they missed a clue the first time, then they might discover it on this occasion. The benefit need only be small, but it should confirm, after the scenario, that the dream was significant.

Fifth Dream Scene

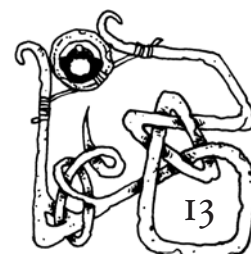
The Crisis

In this scene, one of the covenant's greatest setbacks is averted by Veronica's presence. She doesn't need to take down the villain or cast monumental spells. The more minor the alteration, the more dramatic the effect. The new ending needn't be perfect, just substantially better than how the crisis truly was resolved. An option is to reduce the damage, but focus it on one of the PCs. For example, a siege that killed three dozen grogs and four NPC magi might instead be broken with the death of a PC. This creates an ambiguity, where the outcome is better for the covenant, but worse for the character, and may create tension when the character meets Veronica.

Sixth Dream Scene

The Morning After

The last scene is set in an alternative version of the present day for your saga. It's the capstone, which ends the dream and hammers home the message "Had things been different, they would have been better." Since none of the other PCs are





Statistics for the Discordant

Magic Might: 20

Size: Varies within human range

Characteristics: Vary within human range, except for tireless Stamina. Str, Dex and Qik are all 1 point higher than they were in life.

Personality Traits: Vary, include Hatred (Martin of Bonisagus) 4

Weapon/Attack: By weapon

Soak: +8

Fatigue: Tireless

Fatigue Levels: Tireless

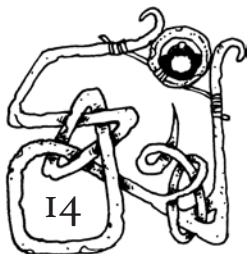
Body Levels: Vary within human range. No penalty for injury short of incapacitation.

Powers

- *Heal* (5 points): This power allows the Discordant to repair damage to itself, even regrowing lost body parts. Each expenditure of points cures one Body level.
- *Ignore Fatigue* (0 points): The Discordant are undead, requiring neither sustenance nor rest.
- *Magical Projection* (CrVi25, 5 points): This power allows the Discordant to project people or objects into the Twilight Realm. To use this power the Discordant needs to clutch the object to its chest, so that it comes into close proximity to its spectral heart. The Discordant themselves are immune to this effect, as are personal items they are currently using: clothing, for example.
- *Return to Earth* (0 points): When one of the Discordant loses its body, it continues to dwell within the world as a ghost. The next time that a nearby magus suffers Twilight, the Discordant is able to possess the closest corpse, which rapidly transforms into a duplicate of the body it has lost.
- *Suppress Magic Resistance* (1 point): This power allows the Discordant to hide their magical nature. It permits them to appear human to magical Sight and to step through wards against magical creatures. While their magic resistance is suppressed it provides them no protection.
- *Sense the Tethers* (InGen25, 0 points) Indicates the direction of the closest (non-Discordant) work of Martin of Bonisagus, and is used to select the targets for raids. It indicates copies of *The Tragedy*, because the dialogue contains accurate renditions of Martin's spellcasting.

Vis: 5 pawns Corpus

The vis from the Discordant is horribly tainted. A magus who uses it in their longevity potion becomes one of the Discordant after death. This can be determined in the laboratory with a Magic Theory roll of 15+.



involved, it is best to keep this vignette brief. As an example, the character "awakes" when he accidentally kicks away the covers. He notices his wedding ring, inscribed with a complicated swirl, and feels the warmth of his sleeping wife. Alternatively, if there's a goal the character has been working toward, Veronica can be shown helping him get there earlier. Again, the hint given in the dream should be accurate when awake. The point of this section is to have the romantic lead, and hopefully the other characters, miss Veronica when she's gone.

The Assault of the Discordant

After the death of his wife, Martin of Bonisagus dedicated his research to returning her from Twilight. Toward the very end of his life, as a breakthrough drew near, Martin began to experiment on humans. He removed each victim's heart, then attempted to bind their ghosts back into their bodies. Usually this succeeded, but he was unable to then place the heart back into the body and restore it to life. When his covenant was destroyed, Martin's victims escaped their confinement, and now travel Europe, destroying his works. Since Martin was attempting to revive his wife, the majority of the Discordant are female.

Each member of the Discordant looks passably human while clothed. Close inspection indicates that they do not breathe, and although they can eat and drink they usually choose not to. Each of the Discordant has a surgical wound in the centre of their chest, wherein can be seen a spectral, beating heart. They appear to be somewhat magical to Second or Faerie Sight, but they aren't obviously undead. Like most ghosts, the Discordant are monomaniacs, but they are capable of long term planning and are willing to achieve their goal by negotiation. Unlike most ghosts, they feel no compulsion to show mortals the site of their death, and are fixated not on eternal rest, but on the emotion which prevents them resting. They will, therefore, not voluntarily assist in their own destruction.

Negotiating for the sole ownership of a book with the wizards of the Order of Hermes is tricky, because they usually insist on copying everything before they trade it away. If however, this is possible, the Discordant simply buy the book from the magi, using vis gained elsewhere on their mission. In that case you should develop another beta plot for this scenario, using one of the recurring villains in your saga.

Before deciding to attack the covenant, the Discordant scout it out, to determine its library's location. They hide child-sized agents inside the covenant, then engage in a lengthy distraction beyond one of the walls, to draw magi and grogs away from their target. So as to intercut this plot with the dream sequence, it should be played in six episodes. The six given below are simply sugges-

tions, since the Discordant alter their strategy in response to the characters' activities. It's the first three that are the most important, since the dream plot includes only one PC for its first three episodes.

Distraction Episode One: The Masque Begins

One of the grogs notices a troupe of wandering players setting up a stage a slight distance from the covenant. If he's an NPC, his reaction is determined by the degree of training the turb has. The Discordants' motive is to draw the covenant's inhabitants away from their usual posts. If they think it's the most efficient way to destroy the book, the Discordant kill any small parties who approach their masque.

If there's no immediate call for magical assistance, then the Discordant make an error. One of their agents is spotted inside the covenant. Since one of the roles of this sub-plot is to keep the characters not involved in the romantic sub-plot active, it can't be allowed to develop slowly. Pitching the covenant into ill-defined crisis fulfils this function.

Distraction Episode Two: The Procession Begins

Unless it is clear that the covenant is in an uproar, the Discordant begin a mummer's procession about the walls, despite the abominable weather. Dressed in bright, motley clothes they wander around the edge of the Aegis, waving props, ringing bells and blowing horns. Again, their hope is to distract the covenant's sentries from the agents already inside.

Once it's clear that the covenant is responding aggressively, the Discordant run toward the wall in clumps. The foremost in each group throws itself against the wall and uses its Projection power to rip a hole wide enough for its fellows to enter. Once inside, their aim is to distract the sentries and magi so that their saboteurs can make their way to the library and destroy the book. The Discordant are willing to have their bodies destroyed, since they know that the first time a magus at the covenant goes into Twilight they'll rise as a group from all the sites of hidden murder and pagan burial in the region.

Distraction Episode Three: Burning the Library

The covenant's library suffers damage during this episode. The degree of harm is up to the storyguide. The saboteur tries to destroy several books so that it isn't obvious which one it was after. An attack on the library strikes at the core of the covenant, and is sure to grip characters not involved in the romantic subplot. Less dramatically, an enchanted library may be breached without the magi noticing.

A reminder on mood

Gothic romances have three key elements: crumbling structures, a supernatural menace who becomes romantically obsessed with a principal character, and inimical natural forces which conspire against the protagonists. Keep these elements in mind when framing your descriptions during the arc.

The Prelude to Forever introduces the victims of the menace and destroys sections of the characters' covenant. To emphasize the last element, the Discordant attack in foul weather, which provides them limited cover as they retreat.

If the covenant's library has been enchanted to prevent damage by fire, the Discordant uses its projection power to transmit the book into the Places of Madness in the Magic Realm. Although this doesn't destroy it, it suffices for the Discordant. Characters foolish enough to voyage through the Realm of Madness may find a midden of material related to Martin of Bonisagus. Although the saboteur will snatch a few volumes, this obscures their intentions less than a blaze. Such theft may be discovered hours after the attack concludes.

As the melee becomes general, the Discordant want to force a magus into Twilight. They understand that Twilight is one of the few things virtually all Hermetic magi react cautiously toward, and hope this will discourage later pursuit.

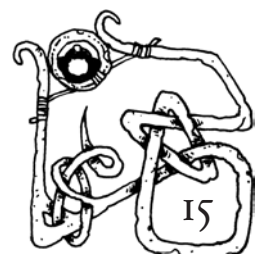
Distraction Episode Four: Forcing an escape

Once their goal is achieved, the Discordant disengage and flee toward the covenant wall, using the same trick to force holes through which to make egress. They are far more cautious than before. Previously they were acting as decoys, to allow the saboteurs to reach their target. Now, being injured would slow their transit to the next objective.

A few of the Discordant may hide within the covenant, sneaking away days or weeks after the attack. Since they don't need to eat or sleep, one of the Discordant can secrete itself in some tiny space and wait for the magi to go charging off after its fellows before emerging to flee in another direction. If their target has not been destroyed, these creatures can wait until the covenant's forces are pursuing the main group of the Discordant before emerging for another attempt.

Distraction Episode Five: Hunting the enemy

Magi may be sorely tempted to spread out and hunt the Discordant once they discover that they contain Corpus vis. At 4 pawns per body, the Discordant contain a lot of magical energy for creatures so human in their abilities. The Discordant are aware of this and have experience in avoiding and combating Hermetic magi.





The Mechanics of Love

Run alone, the romantic lead character has the option of finding True Love with Veronica. If one partner dies, this is transformed into the Lost Love flaw, or perhaps the Ghostly Warder virtue. If played as part of the For Ever and Ever? arc the characters develop the Gothic Romance virtue.

Gothic Romance is a mixture of the True Love virtue, the Enemy flaw, and the Cursed flaw. Lovers within a gothic romance are repeatedly assailed by a supernatural menace, which usually forms the third corner in a love triangle. When the menace is unable to entice the pivotal lover away from their partner, it is driven to violence, either against the character it feels is obstructing its romance, the one who has spurned it, or against the couple. Such menaces have a habit of returning, even when apparently destroyed.

For starting characters, Gothic Romance is usually a +1 virtue, its cost varying with the potency of the Enemy flaw it contains. Since the menace is likely to target the lovers' associates, players should check with their troupe before selecting it.

Earlier, during the combat, the Discordant demonstrated their ability to send magi into Twilight. If pursuit occurs regardless they have several methods of evasion:

- Sinking to the bottom of streams and swimming away
- Burying themselves in recently-tilled fields
- Finding areas of cover, subduing their magical resistance and remaining deathly still.

Review

Appolonios of Jerbiton, *We'll be in Twilight Tonight*

Review by Archmagus Heracles of Tremere

To say it simply, *We'll be in Twilight Tonight* is the worst book I have ever read!

It lines up the clichés from beginning to end. From the precociously Gifted arsonist, saved from the mob by a magus of Flambeau, and the young child raised by the faeries and bought from them by a maga of Merinita to become her apprentice, to the senile Criamon talking through riddles even a child of five could understand, everything in this book is absolutely ridiculous!

Certainly, the most absurd scene is the *certamen* between this young Merinita and an Archmagus of our House and the victory of the Merinita without spending a single pawn of Vis.

But the worst is not this silliness. I would not waste my time writing this review if this book was just the reflection of its author's mediocrity. The danger doesn't lie in the fairy tales for frustrated apprentices and the Redcaps in need of money (I

- Finding a crowd of mundanes and subduing their magic resistance
- Using missile weapons, with which they have exceptional skill, to hurt magi at a distance.
- Starting fires, whose smoke blocks Sight-ranged spells.
- Committing suicide, if near the covenant, since they know they'll rise again.

Distraction Episode Six: Aftermath

During this section, the characters investigate the damage and hold a council meeting to try to determine what led up to the attack. How successful they are depends on how discriminate the Discordant's destruction was, and how observant the players were.

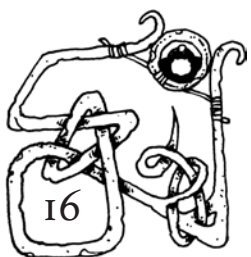
Epilogue

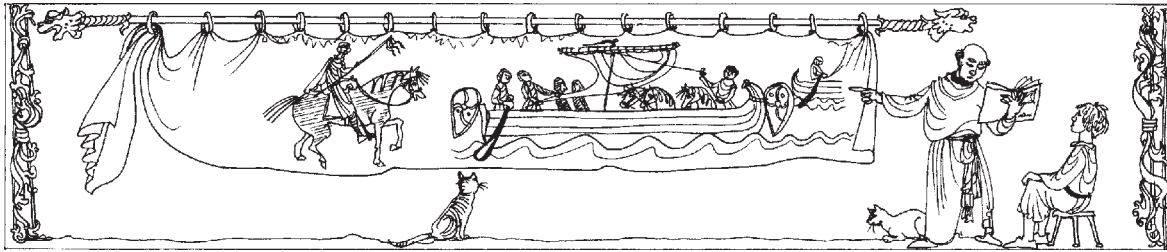
A long time passes before the effects of this adventure become obvious, possibly years. At the next Tribunal, Veronica is present. She tells the magus that she's travelled from the Levant because her familiar died and she wants to leave the memories behind. If her dream journey was successfully completed, this is a white lie. Although her familiar died, she could have stayed in Tyre. Her dream led her to reconsider her choices, and she's come to the Tribunal to see how her beau's life is going. She has enough vis that she can buy some library time at his covenant, and if he still seems loveable and available (which, of course, he is) she'll try to rekindle a relationship between them.

can hardly believe these Mercere take so active a part in the dissemination of this tripe for free!). It is lurking behind, well hidden, but at the same time sowing the seeds of an evilness worse than any disease.

Instead of recounting the glorious past of the Schism War, the author prefers to invent an unbelievable story mixing the "Duresca Scrolls affair", the corruption of House Tytalus and the "Tremere Sundering" (but the author should first prove this "Sundering" ever existed instead of retelling this fairy tale), presenting them as the visible elements of the conspiracy of three Houses to dominate the Order and pervert the ideals of Bonisagus.

What image of the Order does this book give to young people? Are we training apprentices to see them fill their heads with such nonsense? And who really is this so-called Appolonios of Jerbiton? Recently, Primus Andru assured me there is no magus in his House named Appolonios. The time has come to react with the firmest will and bring the authors of this insult to our House and our Order and all their accomplices before a Tribunal.





Dear Abelard

Translator's Note:

Dear Abelard is a column devoted to the writings of an elderly Bonisagus who believed the best way to fulfill his duty to the Order was to share all of his advice and research in the form of written correspondence with a network of readers, carried by Redcaps to magi throughout Europe. If, through the course of your saga, you discover a question that you think could have at one time been sent to Abelard, please forward it to the editor and we will attempt to find a record of his answer to such a question.

Salvete sodales,

I am very glad to return to Normandy after many months of mountain travel, and to stand again at my writing-desk to dictate my first letter in years. I do not think that I will travel again in this body, after the experiences I have endured since last I wrote to you, but of course none can say for sure where I will go should I die or pass into the Final Twilight, and the ways of this world are unpredictable and mysterious; I may find I cannot avoid another long journey. Nonetheless, my tour of Europe was a great success, and on it I have learned much about the Order and my fellow magi who live within it. This gives me new resolve to write my thoughts down for you, and to send them on their way to where you, God permitting, may read them.

While travelling, I convinced a number of my brothers and sisters in far lands to subscribe to this regular journal of musings and advice, simply by showing them the value of my thoughts and expecting no payment from them in return. Alas, this meant that I must be less prolific subsequently than I would have been otherwise, since to send it to each of you requires that I make ten times as many copies of each letter as I once did. If you who read this wish to help me save vellum as I spread these words across the land, please do pass on these pages to others of the Art in your acquaintance, and urge them to reply to me so that I may comprehend their opinions.

I have received several questions in my absence (though not as many, I admit, as I would have liked), and my custom is to respond to them in turn, by sharing their substance and my advice at once. Therefore, I shall begin this endeavor immediately, without further preamble; I apologize for not dwelling longer on my journey and I urge you

to write and ask me about what I encountered should the subject be of interest to you. Here, then, are the letters.



Dear Abelard,

Why do you call yourself "Abelard" when you write? Is this your real name? I will soon take my Gauntlet and become a full magus of the Order, and I wonder if I must change my name when I do, or if I can keep my given name.

Signed,

Duae Nominae

My Dear Duae,

I call myself Abelard because my mother and father gave me that name when I was born. When I joined the Order, I took the Latin name Lanatus as my Hermetic name, but I find that I prefer to be addressed in a more familiar sense when writing this way.

When you are initiated into the Order, you will be given a Hermetic name by your parens. According to my learned sodalis Moratamis, there are no legal requirements in the Peripheral Code that prevent you from later changing your name, or that force you to use the name chosen by your parens; and there are no requirements stating that your Hermetic name must be different than your given name. If you are on good terms with your parens, you might simply tell him that you prefer your given name, or perhaps suggest another name that you would like instead.



Dear Abelard,

Several years ago you wrote about a Creo Vim spell that could create temporary vis for use in boosting formulaic spells. I did not know enough about Vim to learn it at the time, but now that I do, I cannot find it. I have searched my entire laboratory but to no avail. Could you send me the spell again?

Signed,

Immemorius in the Rhine

My Dear Immemorius,

I did indeed copy out such a spell several years ago, though the temporary vis it creates cannot in fact extend the range or duration of your formulaic spells. You see, true vis is essentially magic contained in a lasting physical form. By virtue of this permanency, vis can extend ("boost") a formulaic spell's potency, allowing it to last longer than a month or reach a greater range. This is also how Ritual magic can achieve more powerful





effects. Temporary vis, however, can only increase the magnitude of your spontaneous effects, and can generate more magical power when used with formulaic magic or in certamen.

Translator's note: The following is a general outline of the spell as it would be found in Ars Magica.

The Magical Essence of (Form)

CrVi Gen

R: Touch, D: Diam, T: Small

Requisites: Form of the temporary vis created.

This spell imbues a small object with raw magical power, which may later be used like a pawn of vis to increase magical effects. This temporary vis can be used to add to magic and certamen rolls, but cannot be used in the lab, study, Rituals, or to "boost" the Range or Duration of a formulaic spell. Magic effects using temporary vis cannot result in an effect of a greater level than the level of this spell. Certamen rolls boosted with temporary vis cannot result in a total greater than the level of this spell. The spell can be cast on the same object multiple times, though all vis stored in the object must be used at once.

This spell was originally invented by Artopa of Flambeau, who believed that to fight with magic, her fellow magi must be well prepared. Her wizard's sigil involves bread, and thus when cast, the object containing the vis grows slightly and becomes more rounded, as if it has risen.

Ten distinct versions of the spell theoretically exist, each creating vis of a different Form, though the only one I have is Vim. The spell is typically found at fifth magnitude or higher, and is quite valuable for use with spontaneous magic, if one is very daring or very confident; like using true vis, temporary vis increases your chances of disaster should your magic escape your control.

The spell is very similar to the Muto Vim spell *Wizard's Boost*, except that it stores the effect for use with one's own magic. If you are able to learn that spell, you may also find the effects of this one useful.



Dear Abelard,

Many of my "sodales" make rude comments about my breath and the odors that they say they can smell on my body. No one will sit near me at mealtimes or council meetings and I must always travel alone. I admit I am a reclusive magus, and I don't like to be bothered with such silly things as my outside appearance. I normally ignore this kind of treatment. But a young maga of House Jerbiton recently joined our covenant, and I don't know why, but it matters to me what she thinks of me. Do you have any suggestions on how I can improve my physical image?

Signed, Sordidus et Squalidus in Thebes

My Dear Squalidus,

There are many ways you can improve your appearance. I assume that you are not accomplished with the Art of Imaginem, but Muto and Rego effects of relatively low magnitude in this form can help you alter your scent and general



presence. You might also consider practicing the Arts of Auram and Corpus to aid you with these endeavors, to address the physical qualities of your body. However, magic only masks the man, as the followers of Jerbiton sometimes say, and to improve your image you may wish to work to improve yourself. There is no shame in practicing mundane methods of hygiene and grooming, and by learning to care for yourself you can begin to change the perception that others have of you.

Aniseed and mint may be used to freshen and sweeten your breath. Once daily, apply a paste of honey mixed with chalk or powdered egg shells and honey to a piece of cloth or twig and brush it across your teeth, taking care to scrape the gums. Bathe regularly; if you do not have a bath house in your covenant, a nearby town may have a public bath. At least submerge yourself in running water or a mineral spring once a week to remove the dust and scents that lab work can create.

Short hair is generally admired, especially when it is light-colored. Consider cutting your hair to a uniform length, about that of your shortest finger. If your hair is grey or white, a coloring formula made from the ashes of vine stems and ash wood boiled in vinegar will bring out an attractive light color. Wash your hair and treat it with olive oil to make it more supple. If you have a beard, rub it with wax before sleeping and wrap it in a cloth bag to protect it. Depending on the image you wish to convey, either careful combing or calculated mussing of your hair will improve your look.

I hope that these hints will help you win the positive attention of the maga in question. If any of my readers have other suggestions for how you might address this problem, I hope they will send them to me, and I will surely copy them into my next letter for you.

Confidential to Agnus Dei in Rome

I urge you to seek out a Quaesitor you can trust with whom you can discuss the matter. You must obey God's will and thus listen to your confessor, but I cannot advise you to break your Oath. A Quaesitor may be able to help you resolve your duty to the Order with your duty to God. Perhaps you need only limit your practice of magic, to free more of your time for your devotion and pursuit of God's will. Once you know your legal position, you can better heed the teachings of the Church. Do not despair, Agnus. It is a strange world we live in, but while its many contradictions and mysteries may be resolved after death, they may also be resolved in your heart.

Until next issue, my dear readers,

ABELARO

"Dear Abelard" is written by Lanatus, follower of Bonisagus, and his amica Moratamis, follower of Guernicus. To receive his regular correspondence, or to ask for his advice, please send your name, covenant and Tribunal to Dear Abelard, Scriptoris Socii, Normandy. Your confidentiality will be respected.

The Hermetic University

by Niall Christie (from an original idea by Stephanie van Willigenburg)

The three girls and two boys shuffled nervously on their seats as they waited for their teacher to arrive. Before them on a table lay the corpse of a human being, which bore no marks to indicate how it had died. Soon the classroom door opened, and Vayde Hengest of Verditius entered, a black-cloaked figure with craggy features and a disturbing smile.

"Good morning, class. Gather round, please."

Vayde began to explain the anatomy of the corpse, describing how bone and muscles interacted to make it move.

"And as you can see, the limbs move thus..."

Suddenly the corpse sat upright, glaring around at the apprentices with a baleful stare. Almost all of them screamed and jumped back, shaking from head to toe. Vayde's smile became a satisfied grin as he contemplated the reaction his zombie had caused.

"Now class, you weren't expecting that, were you?"

Introduction

The Hermetic University presents a tradition within the Order of Hermes of covenants that dedicate themselves wholly or partially to the fostering of a university atmosphere, often placing an emphasis on the training of apprentices. Thoughts are given on the position of such covenants within the Order, as well as guidelines for creating such institutions using the covenant creation rules from ArsM4 pp. 202-11. Some rules are also provided for training apprentices in groups.

History

The oldest known university covenant in the Order is the covenant of Literatus, in the Roman Tribunal (*Tribunals of Hermes:Rome*, pp. 68-75). Founded in 1001 by a group of Jerbiton magi, acting with the aid of the magus-pope Sylvester II, its revolutionary group-teaching methods, which enabled a number of apprentices to be taught at once, did not initially find a welcome within the Order. Two reasons may be given for this. Since the latter half of the 11th Century, the covenant has been on uncertain terms with the Quaesitores, which has not inspired confidence in its methods in the more legalistic circles of the Order. In addition, many magi of the Order are unwilling to share their apprentices with others, valuing both their assistance in the laboratory and the potential to have exclusive influence over a future magus.

This inauspicious start resulted in it being over 150 years before another magus attempted to found a university covenant. Then, in 1169, an exceptionally outward-looking senior maga of House Bonisagus, Stella Tironi, obtained permission to found a new university covenant. Stella dedicated her covenant, named Studium Hermae, to the training of apprentices in large numbers,

seeing in this the opportunity to help revitalize an order whose numbers were in decline. The covenant quickly passed from Spring to Summer, and remains true to its mission to this day. In 1182 a group of Jerbiton magi founded another university covenant, Schola Pythagorani in the Stonehenge tribunal, which devoted itself to the other major feature of the university environment, research (although Edward of Milton, the head of the covenant, has trained an unprecedented five apprentices). More details about this covenant may be found in *Heirs to Merlin: The Stonehenge Tribunal*, pp. 126-8. In recent years further attempts have been made to found university covenants, with varying degrees of success. However, Literatus, Studium Hermae and Schola Pythagorani remain the most well-known examples of the tradition.

Relations with the Order

The attitudes of other magi towards university covenants tend to be mixed, and such a covenant is never assured of universal support. It is not insignificant that the three major university covenants are headed by senior magi. A sample of the attitudes typical of each house is given below:

Bjornaer: These places encourage magi to spend too much time in dusty libraries, and not enough experiencing what the wilderness has to offer. In addition, the personal relationship needed between apprentice and parens to develop a heart-beast cannot truly be replicated in classes.

Bonisagus: A good way to gather information, but imagine all the research time which is lost to magi who have to teach!

Criamon: A class is not a clutch. Never has been, never will be. Being taught alongside others who have no interest in gaining true understanding? Stupid idea!

Ex Miscellanea: The universities reinforce the standard Hermetic system. We have no place there.

Flambeau: Universities both increase the number of apprentices being trained, and further research into magic. Both of these strengthen the Order, so they are a good thing.

Jerbiton: Provided the universities encourage apprentices to take a broad outlook, and research beyond the magical, they are to be encouraged.

Mercere: Universities do not really offer what we need our Redcaps to learn.

Merinita: A bit impersonal, and not exactly inspiring, don't you think?

Quaesitoris: A potentially unifying and standardizing force within the Order, provided they are supervised correctly.

Tremere: They are a useful means to reinforce our hierarchy, if they are run by the house, exclusively for the house. If other houses must be involved, we ensure that we have a hand in the covenants' development.

Tytalus: Any environment which encourages competition, be it between students studying in





the classroom, or magi researching in their labs, is definitely worth supporting.

Verditius: If a university encourages innovative thinking, we will be happy to participate.

Due to the fact that Hermetic universities are often involved with mundane ones, and equally often encourage cooperation between magi and mundanes, they are frequently home to a large number of Jerbiton magi. This is particularly true of Literatus and Schola Pythagoranis. To give themselves a stronger position within the Order, they also prefer to have a Quaesitor living on site. Of the three major university covenants, Literatus is the exception in this.

Apprentices trained at the universities normally spend the usual 15 years in apprenticeship, and then their entry into a Hermetic house is sponsored by one of their former teachers. Apprentices trained at Literatus and Schola Pythagoranis usually join House Jerbiton, but Stella of Bonisagus has made a particular effort to ensure that most houses are represented at her covenant, and she has nearby allies from the houses which are not. These allies also act as visiting teachers when their specialist knowledge is required. The magus Oak of Bjornaer, for example, supervises the training and induction of apprentices with heart-beasts. Teaching methods vary widely, but are usually geared towards group teaching, rather than individual instruction, although supplemental individual classes may be given if required.

Creating University Covenants

University covenants are created in the same way as normal covenants, using the rules presented in ArsM4, pp. 202-11. The following are suggestions for features which are common among these covenants:

Site: University covenants are often located in or near towns. This is particularly true of the ones that are dominated by House Jerbiton. This means that they have good access to supplies, but often have to deal with visitors at their gates. Magi of such covenants frequently masquerade as normal mundane scholars. Access should be positive, Seclusion should be negative, and Environment should reflect that of nearby towns.

Buildings: University covenants often have a number of minor dwellings inside the town, with a major hall or manor house located outside. The quality of these dwellings varies, but greater care is usually taken of the major building. Size should be positive to reflect the extent of the covenant's holdings, and Quality and Repair should be positive for the major building, and average or negative for the urban dwellings.

Defenses: The covenant's urban dwellings are likely to be very poorly defended, their position making them susceptible to riots and accidents. The major building, being located outside town, may be slightly better defended, but magi of uni-

versity covenants normally prefer to avoid attracting unwanted attention by building strongholds. Site, Extent and Repair are all likely to be negative.

Stores: Magi of university covenants do not tend to put in major efforts to gather supplies, preferring to devote their time to more academic pursuits, and so Vis stocks and Supplies are likely to be average or negative. Reputations among magi are variable, according to the relations between the covenant and the Order as a whole, but reputations among mundanes are usually good, as university covenants normally attempt to stay on good terms with the local inhabitants.

Relations: University covenants that place an emphasis on teaching usually have positive scores in Allies and Contacts, as friendly magi will often be involved in the training of apprentices and the unending search for Gifted children. By the same token, the aggressive policy of such covenants regarding recruitment of apprentices means they are likely to have trodden on the toes of other magi at some point or another, leading to negative scores in Enemies. Research universities are unlikely to have the same sorts of Allies and Enemies, but are likely to make use of Contacts in their quest for books, giving a positive score.

Improvement: Improvement is almost always negative, as university magi often give little thought to securing their Income or Vis Supply. The latter, in particular, is not that important to an institution which revolves mainly around books. Inhabitants is also often negative, with the covenant lacking grogs in particular.

Library: Be they research or teaching institutions, Hermetic universities almost always have good libraries, reflecting in particular the interests of the magi. Thus the Library Characteristic is usually positive.

Mystical Attributes: The Supernatural Aura score of university covenants is often negative, as proximity to towns lowers the power of non-Divine auras. Magical Items and Laboratories scores are normally average. The magi are likely to have ensured they have the basic laboratories they require, but with no startling features, and are also unlikely to have spent much time creating items.

Group Teaching Rules

The training of apprentices at university covenants is spread out over the years, and is conducted by a number of teachers, but in game terms it is considered to occupy one season per year. Apprenticeship usually lasts for 15 years, during which period each Gifted child is considered to be the apprentice of one of the magi of the covenant, who is required by Hermetic law to be responsible for their behaviour, and to provide them with one season per year of teaching. However, if at the end of apprenticeship the apprentice wishes to join a different house, another magus of the appropriate house, either at the covenant or



living nearby, will be called in to administer the Gauntlet and sponsor their entry. This is particularly the case at Studium Hermae.

Training apprentices in groups in this way has both advantages and disadvantages. Provided that between them, all the magi at a Hermetic university have scores of at least 5 in each of the magical Arts, they do not need to match this requirement on an individual basis in order to teach the apprentices (contradicting the rule in *ArsM4*, p.100). On the other hand, regardless of how many of them there are, or what subjects are taught in any given year, every magus at the university is considered to spend one season per year teaching, and will not be able to use it for research. In addition, each of the magi must have a Communication + Lectio score which is equal to or greater than the number of apprentices at the university (since it is rare that a Hermetic university has more than five apprentices at a time, this is not often a problem, unless one of the magi has particular problems communicating).

Provided that these requirements are met, each apprentice at the university will develop as normal (see *ArsM4*, pp. 100-1 and *WGRE*, p. 37). If required, Study totals using Lectio and Communication are calculated using the average scores of the magi. Totals for training in other specialist Abilities conducted by individual magi (Faerie Magic and Will Over Form are two examples) are calculated using the scores of the appropriate magi. Players are encouraged to come to agreement as a group on what Arts, spells and Abilities they want each apprentice to develop each year.

A Sample University Covenant – Studium Hermae

Studium Hermae is presented below as an example of a university covenant. The covenant has been designed to fit easily into most sagas, with many of the specific details of its characteristics being left to the Storyguide's discretion.

The major building of the covenant takes the form of an average-sized manor situated at the bottom of a cliff, surrounded by forest. Its defences are totally insufficient, and although home to eight magi of the Order, it lacks an adequate number of grogs and covenfolk to match. Many of the rooms and outbuildings stand empty, while others have been turned over for use as classrooms and accommodation for the covenant's five apprentices. The covenant does have an exceptional library, the magi having stumbled upon the remains of the library of a previous covenant which occupied the spot. So far the magi have kept this find a secret, waiting for a suitable moment to use access to it as a bargaining chip in tribunal politics. The primary concerns of the magi are the search for apprentices and teaching. This has occasionally caused friction with other covenants, and has led others in the tribunal to

view them with contempt. However, while a senior Bonisagus is the covenant's leader, few magi will voice their dislike openly.

Studium Hermae Statistics

House Affiliation: (nominally) Bonisagus

Symbol: A book, the cover of which is marked with the symbol of House Bonisagus

Season: Summer

Founded: 1169

Members:

Magi

Stella Tironi: House Bonisagus

Geoffrey of York: House Jerbiton

Darius: House Flambeau

Joan Longshanks: House Mercere

Alexander: House Quaesitoris

Valens: House Tremere

Marcus the Red: House Tytalus

Vayde Hengest: House Verditius

Apprentices

Sarah: apprentice of Stella

Dominic: apprentice of Valens

'A'isha: apprentice of Geoffrey

Orchid: apprentice of Vayde

Philip: apprentice of Alexander

Site: +1

Access Quality: Equal to those of prosperous peasants (+1)

Access Distances: 20/80/0/0/0 (+2)

Seclusion: One visitor every 2 days (-2)

Environment: Average (0)

Buildings: +1

Size: Space for 8 magi, 20 specialists and 50 grogs (+1)

Impressive Structures: 3 houses in nearest town (+2)

Quality: Good quality quarters for Stella and Vayde, townhouses are all poor quality (-2)

Repair: Average (0)

Defenses: -3

Site: One side beneath overhanging cliff, remaining sides are surrounded by forest (-5)

Elaborate Structure: None (-1)

Extent: Average (0)

Repair: Average (0)

Stores: -3

Vis: 50 pawns (-1)

Supplies: Average (0)

Reputations: Wise scholars (local townsfolk) 1, Poor researchers (local magi) 3 (-5)

Relations: +4

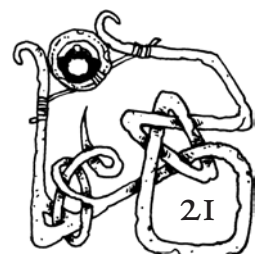
Allies: 3 moderately powerful magi – Oak of Bjornaer, Theodore Moon of Crialmon and Lissan of Merinita, each for 20% of their time (usually off and on over time as specialist knowledge is required) (+15)

Enemies: Nearby moderately powerful covenant for 10% of their time (-7)

Contacts: Local Redcap network helps with hunt for apprentices (4 redcaps) (+2)

Improvement: -1

Income: Average (0)





Vis Supply: 20 pawns per year (-2)

Inhabitants: 8 magi, 10 specialists and 25 grogs (0)

Library: +4

Spells: 2400 levels (+3)

Hermetic Books: 900 levels (+5)

Mundane Books: 540 levels (+4)

Mystical Attributes: 0

Aura: 1 (-3)

Magical Items: None (0)

Laboratories: Stella and Vayde each have labs with +2 bonuses (+3)

Total Scores: +38/-28

Acknowledgments

The author wishes to acknowledge the contributions of various individuals towards this article. Stephanie van Willigenburg provided the original idea for the saga on which the article is based, Trevor Tolhurst offered his thoughts on Vayde's class, and David Chart checked my Latin. Thank you all!

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Revised Book Rules

by David Chart

I am very fond of the book rules in Ars Magica 4th Edition, in no small part because I was largely responsible for them. However, several years' experience of using them has suggested a number of small revisions. In this article, I will explain the modifications, and the motivation behind them. The rules are given first, with numbers, followed by the motivations, with the same numbers. This format is so that it is possible to use the article for reference.

The original rules are in the 4th Edition rule book and Wizard's Grimoire, Revised Edition. Writing Spells: ArM4, p.80; Books: ArM4, pp. 188-190, WGRE pp. 122-125; Virtues and Flaws: ArM4, p. 34, p. 36

Rules

- 1 The Study Total is simply Intelligence + Quality. Concentration is not added.
- 2 A magus can only write a book about an Art if he has a score of at least five in that Art. A scholar can only write a book about a Knowledge if he has a score of at least three in that Knowledge.
- 3 The maximum gain from studying a *liber quaestionum* or a *liber quaestionum* commentary is three levels in one season. The maximum gain from studying a *summa* is two levels in one season. The maximum gain



from studying any other kind of book is one level.

- 4 The base quality of all books is the author's Communication + Scribe total. *Libri quaestionum* on Knowledges (not Arts) get a +6 bonus. *Summae* on Arts (not Knowledges) also get a +6 bonus. No other books get a bonus to the quality.
- 5 When writing or copying a *summa* on a Knowledge, multiply the level by five to calculate the time taken.
- 6 When writing a tractatus about a mastered spell, the author may choose which of the two Arts the tractatus is about. A character may write two tractatus about a given spell, one for each Art.
- 7 The quality of an Arts tractatus may not exceed the lowest of the author's Communication + Scribe, the magnitude of the spell, and the author's score in the relevant Art.
- 8 When writing a tractatus, the magus accumulates points equal to his Communication + Scribe total every season. When these points equal the quality of the tractatus, it is finished. It is possible to write more than one tractatus in a season, if your Communication + Scribe is up to it.
- 9 All Authorities have a quality of zero.
- 10 The quality of a commentary on a *summa* is equal to the lowest of the commentator's Communication + Scribe, the quality of the *summa*, and the level of the *summa*.
- 11 An author may only write one commentary on a given text. *Summae* by one author on a single Knowledge or Art count as one text for these purposes, even if they have different levels or qualities.
- 12 A commentator on a *liber quaestionum* must have a score in the Art at least six higher than the target of the *liber quaestionum*.
- 13 Glossing

An author may only gloss a text if he has spent at least a season studying it. His Art must be at least equal to the score of a *summa*, and at least three greater than the target of a *liber quaestionum*. In order to gloss a commentary on a *summa*, the author must have spent at least a season each studying the commentary and the *summa*, and his Art score must at least equal the level of the *summa*. The quality of a *summa* commentary is still limited by the quality and level of the original *summa*. In order to gloss a commentary on an *liber quaestionum*, he must have studied both texts, and must have an Art score at least six points higher than the target of the *liber quaestionum*. It is not possible to gloss Authorities, tractatus, or tractatus commentaries.

For every season spent glossing a text, the text's quality accumulates a number of 'experience points' equal to the glossator's Communication + Scribe. These are used as if buying an ability, starting at the current quality of the book. The highest level of quality it can attain is calculated from the glossator's Communication + Scribe as if he were writing the text. 'Experience points' are not saved from one glossator to another, and need not be recorded with a text.

For example, Scribo of Jerbiton, with a Communication + Scribe total of 9, is glossing a *summa* on Ignem with a quality of 10. The highest level to which he can raise the quality is 15, his own Communication + Scribe + 6. After one season of glossing, the *summa* has a quality of 10, with nine 'experience points'. After a second season, it has a quality of 11, with seven experience points.

Any text can be glossed for a single season. A text may be specially prepared to allow two seasons' glossing without any extra cost; it merely has to be noted at the time. Every additional season of glossing adds 10% to the size of the book, as extra wide margins and space between lines need to be left. (Marginal Illustrations count as one set of glosses.)

Glossing does not affect the maximum gain from a text.

Authors may gloss their own texts to take advantage of an increase in Com + Scribe.

- 14 Writers copy texts three times as fast as they can write them. Glossed texts are copied in the same way as unglossed texts, based on their glossed quality.
- 15 It takes one season to copy an Authority.
- 16 Virtues & Flaws. These are all general virtues and flaws, not Hermetic.

+1: Clear Writer. The character gets +3 to all Communication + Scribe totals for the purposes of calculating qualities. This virtue has no effect on writing speed, and thus no effect on spells.

+1: Fast Writer. The character gets +3 to all Scribe totals for the purposes of calculating speed of writing. This includes speed of writing up spells. This virtue has no effect on the quality of books produced.

-1: Poor Writer. Subtract 3 from all Scribe totals when writing. This affects both the speed of writing and the quality of the finished text. It also affects speed of writing spells, but the character can always write out a minimum of 10 levels per season, or copy a minimum of 30 levels.





-1: Poor Insight. The character can only write *libri quaestionum* with a target up to one quarter of his score, *Summae* with a level up to one third of his score, and Arts tractatus with a quality up to one half (rounded up) of the magnitude of the spell.

-2: Incomprehensible. All Study Totals to learn from the character are halved. This includes totals for studying books written by the character, and totals generated in Lectio and Disputatio. The character also gets a -6 penalty to any rolls made to explain complex subjects in an informal setting. Note that commentaries on books written by the character are not affected, but a glossed version of an Incomprehensible book is.

Motivation

- 1 This change slows down the rate of improvement in Arts, and also makes Book Quality much more important.
- 2 Under the old rules, it was possible to write a book from which you could, in principle, learn. This change makes that impossible. It also blocks characters with a score of zero writing *libri quaestionum* with that target.
- 3 *Libri quaestionum* are supposed to be the ideal introductory texts, with *summae* being used for the middle ground and tractatus at the higher level. This modification means that a character with no knowledge of an Art will want to use a *liber quaestionum* for her first season of study.
- 4 This rule makes *libri quaestionum* ideal introductory texts for Knowledges as well as Arts. The bonus to the quality of *summae* on Arts encourages magi to switch to using them, and to use them in preference to tractatus.
- 5 This is simply a point that got missed in the original rules.
- 6 Mastering spells becomes a bit more useful with this change.
- 7 The addition of the score in Art as a limit is necessary now that magi can write tractatus about both the Arts of a spell.
- 8 It seems unreasonable for brilliant writers to spend a season producing a quality one tractatus. Note that tractatus on Knowledges take a season to produce, as they have a quality equal to the author's Communication + Scribe.
- 9 Without the addition of Concentration to the Study Total, a quality of -5 would render Authorities useless to almost everyone.
- 10 This change blocks the abuse of writing a series of level 1 *summae*, purely so that other magi can write useful commentaries on

them. The commentaries can still be written, but they will be little use.

- 11 This change blocks the less serious abuse of having a magus write several high-level *summae* for the purposes of commenting.
- 12 This rule is necessary to avoid the possibility of writing a commentary which would create a *liber*/commentary pair from which the author could learn.
- 13 Glossing was too useful in the original version, allowing two seasons' effort from a good writer to completely wipe out any unclarity in the original author. Thus, incomprehensible geniuses would write books, which would be glossed by the clear, in order to get the best of both worlds. With these rules, it is still worth glossing books with a very low quality, or a very high level or target, but it is much less of a quick fix.

Tractatus and their commentaries cannot be glossed, because that is equivalent to writing your own text on the subject.

- 14 This is implicit in the original rules, but bears generalising.
- 15 There wasn't a rule for this. Oops.
- 16 Strong Writer is too valuable for a +1 Virtue; this splits it in two. However, Poor Writer is only a -1 flaw, because it primarily affects other people. Poor Insight is also a -1 flaw. Poor Writer combines elements of the original Incomprehensible and Weak Writer flaws, while Poor Insight contains the other elements of the Weak Writer flaw, with some extras.

The 4th Edition version of Incomprehensible was too easy to work around. This version is a permanent blot on any book written by the character with the flaw, and seriously damages his ability to train apprentices. Thus, it is worth -2. Since commentaries on an Incomprehensible *summa* are still based on its nominal statistics, and don't suffer from being halved, there may be Incomprehensible *summae* with lots of valuable commentaries on them. Just don't expect the commentaries to agree with one another.

Thanks

Thanks to Neil Taylor for consultation on these rule revisions.

Constantin avec sa mere hyrene comença lan de mcs? vii. m. et iii. et s'aperçut ensemble p. ans. et puis constantin prua sa mere de l'empire et s'en tint seul vii. ans. Et quant hyrene qm estoit moult courroucée se trouua apert une fois en huiant son filz; constantin elle lestrangla. et demoura toute seule. et peux m. ans.

Py comença la translation de l'empire des grecs a ceulx de germanie desqueuz charlemaine fut le premier





Heretic's Corner

by Michaël de Verteuil

Less is More

Heretic's Corner was originally conceived as an ongoing column for the late and lamented Mythic Perspectives. As Mythic Perspectives is no more, we have decided to revive the column here in Hermes' Portal, which we hope will prove to be a worthy successor.

In my last article, *The Magic of Simplification*, we looked at trying to help clear up the clutter of Ars Magica rules by reducing the number of different types of die-rolls (Simple, Stress and Quality) from three to one (Stress). We did this by proposing to replace Quality rolls with Stress rolls (with the number of botch dice set at 0), and by replacing Simple rolls in most cases with an automatic 4 if this (when modified by Characteristics, specializations or other modifiers) produced an assured success for the roller. We also discussed the move from a d10 to a modified d6 for those wanting to reduce the random factor in die rolls. This last change would not, of course, actually simplify the game, but was offered as a "simple" solution to a perceived problem. In this article I propose to follow the same general approach with respect to Abilities.

A Rationalization of Abilities

The 4th edition has already taken some steps in reducing the plethora of Abilities found in the 3rd. It did away, for example, with Alertness, Charisma, Debate, Diplomacy, Drinking, Evaluate, Fantastic Beast Lore, Hermes History, Intimidation, Meditation, Pretend, Scan, Subterfuge and Track. The underlying principle is that all these activities could be subsumed within or merged with other wider or closely related Abilities (see Ars Magica 4th edition page 262). This permits characters to have access to the same range of activities while spreading their scarce experience points over a smaller number of different Abilities. So far as I can tell, no one has complained about the change.

I propose to take it one step further. Using the motto "Less is More" I propose a partial re-jigging of the Abilities and a reduction of their listed number (excluding Play (Instrument), Craft (Type), (Area) Lore, (Organization) Lore, and

Speak (Language), which are really multiple Abilities, and Exceptional Abilities which I will treat separately) from 58 to 49, or by about 15%. So in this virtual game of musical chairs, which are the ones that fall by the wayside when the music stops?

Penetration

(I can hear the gasps of dismay already.) Is it really necessary to have two Arcane Talents to represent a mage's practical capacity to manipulate magic effectively compared to one Arcane Knowledge (Magic Theory) for his capacity to do so theoretically? I say merge it with Finesse and give those poor non Tremere/Flambeau/Tytalus guys a break. An argument could be made for merging in Certamen as well, but I think that would be going too far. Certamen can obviously be taught whereas Talents cannot. I believe that the distinction between Talents, Skills and Knowledges is a valuable and appropriate one that should be preserved.

Climb

Just merge this with Athletics. There are no specialized rappellers, mountain climbers or human flies in Mythic Europe, and if you can climb walls you are probably in pretty good physical condition.

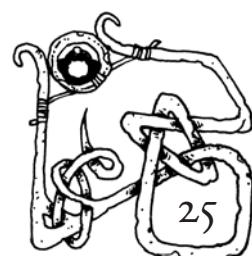
Lectio

With all due respect to medieval academia, I don't see much point in having two formal teaching skills. I will already take credit for having contributed to blurring the distinction between Lectio and Disputatio in Ordo Nobilis. I haven't heard a murmur of dissent. Let's go all the way and merge Lectio with Disputatio.

Scribe (Language)

This is one of my pet peeves. I am not suggesting a merger here so much as a reshuffling. Right now Scribe is a counter-intuitive bundling of "script" and "composition" as if these were different facets of the same coin. This does not make a whole lot of sense. If you can scribe in Latin, what prevents you from using the same script to write down any other language you happen to know? All spelling in Mythic Europe is phonetic, and grammar is covered under Artes Liberales. Composition, on the other hand, should be a function of your capacity to Speak (Language) and not of the neatness of your handwriting.

As the Abilities are currently structured, you can have a Scribe Latin of 8 while having no Speak





Latin at all. So you can read and write the language as beautifully as Virgil while not being able to speak or understand a word of it, even if your life depended on it. Doh! It doesn't take a brainiac to see there is a problem here, especially as the only practical current difference between scores of 3 and 10 in Speak (Language) appears to be the flexibility of your accent.

I would prefer to see Scribe (Language) changed to Scribe (Script) and be a function of your capacity to transcribe verbal sounds in a given alphabet (Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, Cyrillic, runic, whatever...), to take shorthand, to inscribe and copy clearly, to read a known language effectively, and even to draw clear maps. Books should be composed using Speak and not Scribe. You don't even need scribe to write a book as you can always dictate to an amanuensis. Scribe should only affect a book's physical Quality, not its underlying Quality.

Combat Skills

Ordo Nobilis has already proposed merging Single Weapon and Shield and Weapon. So far the only griping I have heard is over what to call the consolidated Skill ("Single Weapon" of course!). I don't like Throwing Weapon as a separate Skill. Rock and Throwing Knife should be covered by Brawling. Javelin should be tossed in with Long Shaft weapon (along with Polearm and Quarterstaff. What were the designers thinking?). Throwing Axe could go under Single weapon. What does that leave us? Caber? (Get real!) Sling is a problem, but it isn't really a thrown weapon now, is it? Presumably you need separate skills for slings, bows and crossbows as they all work very differently. And don't even get me started on Siege Equipment, which is so obviously a Craft (Type) Skill that no combat stats are provided.

Forgery

This should be merged with Scribe (Script) as above. Note that forgery, as we understand it today involves a generalized faith in the legal authority of written documents. To say that this faith was not widely shared in the 13th century would be an understatement. Most charters include long lists of witnesses who are to be resorted to in person to verify the document's contents. As the witnesses die out and are less able to perform this role, new, even identical charters are issued with new witnesses, usually at the request and expense of the original parties or their successors. Your supposed hundred year old title deed is not going to hold much weight if the current holders of the property have enjoyed undisturbed possession during those hundred years.

Carouse

Do we really need a separate Skill for how to have a socially acceptable good time at a party? Surely this can simply be considered a low form of Etiquette.



Hunt

Does this really have to be separate from Survival?

Chirurgy

I am not suggesting this be eliminated or merged with Medicine. In fact, I would like to see the distinction made clearer and eliminate the overlap. Chirurgy should be the treating of wounds and injuries. This is not the sort of thing that you can just learn from a book. Medicine, on the other hand should be the treatment of illnesses and diseases. It should not be asking too much that a physician trained in Medicine should also have to learn Chirurgy separately.

Wagoneering

This is at best a Craft (Type) Skill if it involves repairing and maintaining wheels and carts. If it just means leading an ox, it is Animal Handling. Otherwise, it is no Skill at all and anyone with half a brain can do it.

Hermetic Law

Excuse me? Why can't this be subsumed under (Order of Hermes) Lore? Are Quaesitors expected to know the Code but nothing about the Order? Can you know a lot about the Order and its history and not be familiar with the Peripheral Code? I don't think so.

Exceptional Abilities

As they stand, I think all the Exceptional Abilities in the main rules are fine, though some of them are clearly not worth a whole Virtue point (more on this in a future article).

"New Stuff"

One of the problems with trying to simplify the main rules is the natural tendency of sourcebooks to introduce "new stuff". Everybody likes "new stuff". Authors like it. Players like it. Storyguides like it (sometimes). And new Abilities are one type of "new stuff". Hey, I plead guilty too. Even Ordo Nobilis introduced two new optional Casual Knowledges (Strategy and English Common Law). One should be careful in doing so, however, as the list of standard mundane and Hermetic Abilities listed in the main rules is meant to be comprehensive. Sometimes there is a slight gap here and there, but these are best filled by extending the scope of an existing Ability instead of adding a new one. Using existing Abilities in new ways can be "new stuff" too.

One thing that should be avoided at all cost, from a simplification perspective, is the carving out of a new Ability from the range already covered by an existing one. The most egregious example of this sin was accidentally committed in Hedge Magic. In the main rules, Second Sight has a potentially very broad range. Explicitly it permits you to see "ghosts, demons and other invisible spirits", but we know that this is not all you can see with it, because on page 96 the rules say that those

with Second Sight can also see the Bonds between a mage and a familiar, even though the Bonds, quite obviously, are not spirits. From this we could infer that Second Sight gives you a limited ability to see all invisible things and potentially even pierce other illusions. The rationale for this would be that illusions (of which invisibility is one) affect a specific set of senses (usually sight). Second Sight, on the other hand, is a sixth sense unique to each person possessing it. So while you could develop a spell affecting one specific person's Second Sight, you could not develop one that affected all forms of Second Sight. If Second Sight were to be a relatively common Exceptional Ability amongst mundanes or semi-mundanes (as it is in my sagas) this would seriously cut back on frequent and (in my view) often abusive uses of invisibility spells (not to mention Parmas). I find it to be an excellent game-balancing feature that encourages magi to greater subtlety.

Now what happened with Hedge Magic that made this carefully reasoned interpretation go "Crash, Bang"? Faerie Sight was introduced as "new stuff". Not only did this blow away Second Sight as a useful Exceptional Ability (otherwise well worth the Virtue point cost and the experience point investment) by excluding Faerie Glamour from its remit, it also indirectly attempted to narrow the original Ability further by explicitly linking it "with the Realm of Magic", even though the core rules explicitly state that Second Sight lets you see demons (which are Infernal and not Magic). The end result was to replace one arguably useful Exceptional Ability with two largely useless ones which few if any players would waste Virtue or experience points on. Now this had certainly not been the intention of the authors. I suspect they misread the Second Sight Ability and simply thought they were filling a gap. My suggestion to future authors is, wherever possible, to fill gaps by extending existing Abilities rather than by adding new ones.

Another similar problem is introduced when Hermetic variants of existing general Exceptional Abilities are introduced as in *The Mysteries*. Hermetic Alchemy is a variant of Alchemy, and Hermetic Astrology and Augury are variants of Divination. How then do these variants relate to the standard Exceptional Abilities? As they are meant to be "mysteries", you cannot just assume that experience points already invested in the original Abilities are simply transferred to the new ones. But is there really no overlap? I think it would have been preferable to simply introduce new Virtues that modified the Virtue cost and features of standard Alchemy and Divination for those acceding to the relevant "mysteries", instead of introducing whole new Abilities. Another approach would have been to introduce Hermetic Alchemy as an Affinity that could be applied to standard Alche-

my, and Hermetic Astrology and Augury as Affinities that could be applied to Divination.

A New Look at Specializations

If taken to logical extremes, simplification through the reduction in the number of Abilities would lead to there being only two of them left: Do "Stuff", and Know "Stuff". I am not proposing this, though someone made an interesting case on the Berklist recently for a single Combat Skill. Nonetheless, some players might argue that consolidation tends to be at the expense of specialization. It is true that the mere +1 specializations already provided for in the rules don't leave much scope for really focused expertise. It is, for example, impossible to be a brilliant astronomer under the current rules without also being an excellent grammarian, and rhetorician. There is a "simple solution" to this but, as with the d6 proposal outlined in "The Magic of Simplification", it does not "simplify" the game. In fact, it complicates it, and I have no intention of introducing it in my own saga (I would get rid of the d6 too, but my players seem to like it, so I'm stuck with it). But here is the "simple solution", for what it's worth.

Get rid of the current +1 specializations and replace them with "Specializations" in which you can place experience points just like in Abilities. To distinguish them from Abilities, however, I would put an asterisk in front of them like "*Astronomy" or "*Canon Law". In a way, this would be reintroducing through the back door all the Abilities we have already purged through the front, but it would still permit characters to perform the tasks concerned using the broader underlying Abilities, which is something they couldn't do before. Characters wouldn't have to specialize in everything relating to a core activity to enjoy a general proficiency, as was the case before rationalization.

So how would this work exactly? The Specialization could be added in like an Affinity to all appropriate rolls or formulae that used the underlying Ability. A player could decide to add an acquired experience point either to the underlying Ability or to one of its Specializations. Usually he would opt for the Ability because of its broader applicability, but if he only uses the Ability to do one thing, like using *Artes Liberales* to figure out solar eclipses, the time, the calendar, and the movement of the planets, it would become cost effective after a while to put the extra experience points in *Astronomy instead, at least until his *Astronomy score equalled his *Artes Liberales* score. Books could count as being either in the overall Knowledge or a specific Specialization. In the latter case, it could be studied as a source either for the Knowledge at a reduced effective Quality (-3?), or for the Specialization at full Quality. Anyway, it's just a thought for you readers to chew on. That's it for now, but stay tuned for the next installment of the Heretic's Corner.





Customizing Flaws for Your Saga

by Andrew Gronosky

Choosing Flaws is one of the hardest parts of creating an Ars Magica character. The player needs to select enough Flaws to balance their choice of Virtues. He must integrate those Flaws into his character's background and persona, while avoiding any Flaws that detract from the fun of playing the character.

Players often restrict themselves to the easy choices: six or seven -1 Flaws instead of a few, more serious Flaws. The tendency to avoid some of the high-cost Flaws is understandable: after reading descriptions of -3 or -4 Flaws, many of them seem hard to play, and they seem to so dominate a character as to interfere with the character's concept. Should a Storyguide blame players for making playable choices? Yet choosing many, low-cost Flaws is unsatisfying; it's difficult for the player to justify so many Flaws in terms of the character's background, and difficult for the Storyguide to keep track of so many Flaws and bring them into play.

The costs of Flaws sometimes seem arbitrary. Flaws of equal cost do not always have equivalent effects. For example, Missing Ear (p. 47) and Missing Eye (p. 47) are both -1 Flaws, but Missing Eye has more serious effects in terms of game mechanics — it entails combat penalties. Are Non-combatant (-3; p. 50) and Mute (-3; p. 50) really equivalent?

The answer depends on the saga. Every Ars Magica troupe has its own style of play. Think of how the characters behave in your own saga. Do they avoid violence, or do they readily attack any who oppose them? Do they rely more on magic or on Abilities to solve problems? Do the stories more often involve puzzles and mysteries, physical challenges, or dramatic role-playing?

The troupe's playing style will dictate which Flaws are trivial and which are debilitating. Social Flaws might not be a big problem in a saga set in the remote wilderness, but they could be much more important in a saga centered around a noble court. Flaws that entail combat penalties might be insignificant in a saga that eschews violence, but the same combat penalties could be deadly in a saga centered on a second Schism War. The costs of Flaws should take the conditions of the saga into account. Otherwise, there will always be some Flaws whose costs are out of step with their effects.

Much as the spellcasting guidelines in 4th Edition facilitate designing creative and consistent spell effects, a set of guidelines for Flaws can help troupes tailor Flaws — and thereby overall character designs — to their saga's setting and style of play. Although they may seem complicated at first,

the guidelines are designed to be straightforward to apply. The most important step in tailoring a Flaw is to understand the nature of the saga.

The Basic Rating System

Flaws can be complicated. They often have effects that bend the normal rules of the game. Some Flaws have multiple effects, or single effects that are very general. Before considering such difficult examples, consider a basic Flaw with a single, well-defined effect.

The system for rating a basic Flaw consists of five steps:

- 1 Decide whether the Flaw is Physical, Social, or Mental.
- 2 Assign an Intensity.
- 3 Assign a Frequency.
- 4 Multiply Intensity times Frequency to get "Flaw Points." Keep any fractions.
- 5 To find the cost of the Flaw, compare the Flaw Points to the familiar "pyramid scale".

The "pyramid scale" is the same relation used to convert Experience Points into Art or Ability Levels (see the Ability Cost Table, Ars Magica, 4th Edition, p. 52). Flaw ratings are negative, so they give a negative final cost. Just imagine minus signs in front of every number on the Ability Cost Table, and it becomes a Flaw Cost Table.

Example: Dark Secret (p. 47) is a Social Flaw with Intensity -5 and Frequency 0.5. The method for assigning these numbers will be explained later. This gives $-5 \times 0.5 = -2.5$ Flaw Points. Comparing -2.5 to the "pyramid scale" yields a result of -1, because -2.5 falls between -1 (cost -1) and -3 (cost -2). Keeping the fraction until the end makes a difference; if we had rounded the Flaw Points to -3, Dark Secret would have increased in cost to -2.

The more complicated Flaws can be rated by variations on this procedure. For Flaws with multiple effects, simply rate the Flaw Points of each effect (keeping the fractions) and add up all the Flaw Points before comparing to the pyramid scale. Specific guidelines for rating complicated Flaws are given under "Special Cases," below.

Table 1 shows this rating system applied to the non-Variable Flaws in Ars Magica, 4th Edition. Since the rating system is based on adapting Flaws to a particular saga, Table 1 contains certain assumptions about what a "typical" saga is like (see "the Baseline Saga," below). The Flaw costs in Table 1 may or may not be appropriate for your saga. You may use Table 1 "as-is," or as a starting point for your own customizations.

Understanding Table 1

Since Flaws so commonly have more than one effect, Table 1 lists the Physical, Social, and Mental effects of each Flaw separately. In addition to these three categories of effects, Table 1 also has a "Misc." column. The "Misc." rating is simply a catch-all for special cases: Flaws that have multiple effects within the same category, Flaws that expire, and so on. Guidelines for rating these special cas-



Old Value	Name	Physical		Social		Magical/Mental		New value	
		Int.	Freq.	Int.	Freq.	Int.	Freq.	Misc.	
-1	Blatant Gift	0	0	-3	0,5	0	0		-1
-1	Creative Block	0	0	0	0	-1,5	1		-1
-1	Disjointed Magic	0	0	0	0	-2	0,5		-1
-1	Flawed Parma Magica	-2,5	1	0	0	0	0		-1
-1	Follower of Verditius	0	0	0	0	-10	0,25	1	-1
-1	Hedge Wizard	0	0	-3	0,5	0	0		-1
-1	Incompatible Arts	0	0	0	0	-10	0,25		-1
-1	Incomprehensible	0	0	0	0	-3	0,25		-0
-1	Infamous Master	0	0	-3	0,5	0	0		-1
-1	Loose Magic	0	0	0	0	-3	1		-2
-1	Necessary Condition	0	0	0	0	-1	3	-2,5	-2
-1	No Familiar	0	0	0	0	-3	1,5		-2
-1	No Sigil	0	0	-10	0,25	0	0	1	-1
-1	Poor Reader	0	0	0	0	-2	1,5		-2
-1	Poor Student	0	0	0	0	-3	1		-2
-1	Tormenting Master	0	0	-1	1	0	0		-1
-1	Twilight Points	-1	1	0	0	-2	0,25		-1
-1	Unimaginative Learner	0	0	0	0	-1	1		-1
-1	Vis Obligation	0	0	0	0	-4	2		-3
-1	Warped Magic	0	0	0	0	-1	1		-1
-1	Weak Writer	0	0	0	0	-5	0,25		-1
-2	Clumsy Magic	-3	1	0	0	-3	1		-3
-2	Discredited Lineage	0	0	-7	0,5	0	0	-1	-2
-2	Lack of Concentration	0	0	0	0	-3	1	-0,75	-2
-2	Lack of Control	-5	1	0	0	-5	0,5		-3
-2	Limited Magic Resistance	-5	1	0	0	0	0		-2
-2	Rigid Magic	0	0	0	0	-7,5	1		-3
-2	Short-Lived Magic	0	0	0	0	-7,5	1,5		-4
-2	Slow Caster	-5	1	0	0	-5	0,5		-3
-2	Stingy Master	0	0	0	0	-2	3	3	-2
-2	Weak Magic	-5	1	0	0	0	0		-2
-3	Magic Addiction	0	0	0	0	-6	2		-4
-3	Old	-10	1	0	0	0	0		-4
-3	Painful Magic	-2	2	0	0	-2	2		-3

Can prevent spellcasting

Higher for common combinations

Unable to gain a substantial power

2 Mental effects (inconvenience, can prevent spellcasting)

Usefulness of familiar is about 1 time/chapter

«Can't vote; expires»

Equivalent to -2 on non-magical die roll

Assumes master is not actually dangerous

«Assumes 2 Twilight points; affects aging and magic»

Assumes obligation is 40% of standard income

Affects combat spellcasting

2 Social effects (Reputation, harassment)

2 Mental effects

50% penalty to spell rate, affects combat

Assumes non-boosted spells 75% weaker

50% penalty to spell rate, affects combat

Expires

Increase for important Arts

Treats each aging roll as -2 Intensity

Affects combat spellcasting



Old Value	Name	Physical		Social		Magical/Mental		New value
		Int.	Freq.	Int.	Freq.	Int.	Freq.	
-3	Study Requirement	0	0	0	0	-5	1,5	-3
-3	Weak Parma Magica	-5	1	0	0	0	0	-2
-4	Chaotic Magic	0	0	0	0	-5	2	-5
-4	Susceptibility to Divine Power	0	0	0	0	-3	1,5	-2
-4	Susceptibility to Faerie Power	-5	0,5	0	0	-3	0,5	-2
-4	Susceptibility to Infernal Power	-5	0,5	0	0	-3	0,5	-2
-4	Unpredictable Magic	0	0	0	0	-1	3	-3
-6	Non-spontaneity	0	0	0	0	-10	2	-5
-6	Personal Magic	0	0	0	0	-5	3	-5
-6	Unstructured Caster	0	0	0	0	-10	2	-6
-1	Magic Deficiency	0	0	0	0	-5	1	-2
	(uncommon, minor)							
-4	Magic Deficiency	0	0	0	0	-10	1,5	-5
	(technique, major)							
-1	Branded Criminal	0	0	-1	1,5	0	0	-1
-1	Outcast	-3	1	-1	1	0	0	-1
-2	Outlaw Leader	0	0	-7	0,5	0	0	-2
-4	Infamous Outlaw	0	0	-7	0,5	0	0	-3
-1	Bad Reputation	0	0	-2	1	0	0	-1
-1	Black Sheep	0	0	-2	1	0	0	-1
-1	Compulsion	0	0	0	0	-1	1	-1
-1	Dark Secret	0	0	-5	0,5	0	0	-1
-1	Deep Sleeper	-9	0,25	-3	0,25	-1	0,5	-2
-1	Delusion	0	0	0	0	-1	1	-1
-1	Dependent	0	0	-3	1	0	0	-1
-1	Disfigured	0	0	-3	0,5	0	0	-1
-1	Driving Goal	0	0	0	0	-1	1	-1
-1	Dutybound	0	0	0	0	-1	1,5	-1
-1	Evil Eye	0	0	-3	1,5	0	0	-2
-1	Expenses	-3	1	0	0	0	0	-2
-1	Faerie Enmity	0	0	-1	1,5	0	0	-1
-1	Favors	0	0	-3	0,5	0	0	-1
-1	Fragile Constitution	-3	1	0	0	0	0	-2
-1	Hated	0	0	0	0	-1	1	-1

Nominally consumes over 30% of wealth

«Consumes 25% of training time; expires»

Sometimes affects combat

Expires
5 Social effects, see Extended Examples
2 Social effects

2 effects: spellcasting and lab work

2 Mental effects
2 effects: spellcasting and lab work

3 Mental effects

Assumes typical aura is 3

3 Mental effects

Resistance due to Forms still works



Old Value	Name	Physical		Social		Magical/Mental		New value	
		Int.	Freq.	Int.	Freq.	Int.	Freq.	Misc.	
-1	Hunchback (M)	-3	0,5	-3	0,25	0	0		-1
-1	Infamous Family	0	0	-3	1	-1	0,5		-2
-1	Judged Unfairly	0	0	-3	1	-1	1		-2
-1	Lost Love	0	0	0	0	-1	0		-0
-1	Low Self-Esteem	-1	1	0	0	-1	1		-1
-1	Magical Air	0	0	-3	1,5	0	0		-2
-1	Magic Susceptibility	-3	1	0	0	3	0,5	-3	-2
-1	Meddler	0	0	-1	0,5	-1	1		-1
-1	Missing Ear	0	0	0	0	-3	0,5		-1
-1	Missing Eye	-3	1	0	0	0	0	-2,5	-2
-1	Oath of Fealty	0	0	-1	1	-2,5	1		-2
-1	Obese	-3	1,5	0	0	0	0	-1	-2
-1	Obligation (C&G)	0	0	0	0	-2,5	1		-1
-1	Obsessed	0	0	0	0	-1	1,5		-1
-1	Offensive to Animals	-3	0,5	-3	1	0	0		-2
-1	Oversensitive	0	0	0	0	-1	1		-1
-1	Poor Armaments	-4	1	0	0	0	0	3	-1
-1	Poor Eyesight	-6	1	0	0	-3	1		-3
-1	Poor Hearing	0	0	0	0	-3	0,5		-1
-1	Poor Memory	0	0	0	0	-6	0,5		-2
-1	Reclusive	0	0	-3	0,5	0	0		-1
-1	Short Attention Span (C&G)	0	0	0	0	-5	0,5	-1,5	-2
-1	Simple-Minded	0	0	0	0	-1	1,5		-1
-1	Social Handicap	0	0	-3	1	0	0		-2
-1	Soft-Hearted	0	0	0	0	-1	1		-1
-1	Tainted with Evil (M)	0	0	-3	1	0	0	-1,5	-2
-1	Uncommon Fear	0	0	0	0	-3	1		-2
-1	Weakness	0	0	0	0	-1	1		-1
-1	Weak-Willed	0	0	0	0	-3	0,5		-1
-2	Clumsy	-3	1,5	0	0	0	0	-1	-2
-2	Common Fear	0	0	0	0	-3	1,5		-2
-2	Curse of Venus	0	0	-3	0,5	0	0	-1	-1
-2	Decrepit	-1	1	0	0	0	0	-1	-1
-2	Diabolic Upbringing	0	0	-10	0,5	-1	1	1	-2



Old Value	Name	Physical		Social		Magical/Mental		Misc.	New value	
		Int.	Freq.	Int.	Freq.	Int.	Freq.			
-2	Haunted (C&G)	0	0	-1	2	0	0		-1	
-2	Haunted (M)	0	0	-1	2	-1,5	2		-2	Affects lab work
-2	Hunchback (C&G)	-3	1	-3	0,5	0	0		-2	
-2	Infamous	0	0	-4	1	0	0		-2	
-2	Lame	-6	1	0	0	0	0	-9	-5	4 Physical effects
-2	Lycanthrope	0	0	0	0	-10	0,5		-2	Value depends heavily on Frequency
-2	Missing Hand	-3	1,5	0	0	0	0		-2	
-2	Noncombatant (M)	-3	1	0	0	0	0	-4,5	-3	
-2	Obligation (M)	0	0	0	0	-2,5	2		-2	Primary effect is ban on combat spells 25% penalty to lab time
-2	Overconfident	0	0	0	0	-3	1		-2	
-2	Poor	-3	1	0	0	0	0	-4,5	-3	Affects combat and profession. Does not expire
-2	Poor (Characteristic)	-1	2	0	0	0	0		-1	This is a Physical example
-2	Sheltered Upbringing	0	0	-3	1,5	0	0	-2	-3	«2 Social effects; expires»
-2	Small Frame (C&G)	-2	1,5	0	0	0	0	-2	-2	2 Physical effects (Body Level, Fatigue Level)
-2	Tainted with Evil (C&G)	0	0	-6	1,5	0	0		-3	2 Social effects
-2	Terrors	0	0	0	0	-10	0,5		-2	
-3	Arthritis	-3	1	0	0	0	0	-1	-2	
-3	Feral Upbringing (C & G only)	0	0	-3	1	-3	1		-3	
-3	Fury	0	0	0	0	-9	1		-3	
-3	Mute (C & G only)	0	0	-9	2	0	0		-5	
-3	Noncombatant (C & G)	-9	1	0	0	0	0		-3	
-3	Sense of Doom	-12	0,25	0	0	-10	0,5		-3	
-3	Small Frame (M)	-2	2	0	0	0	0	-2	-3	
-4	Dwarf (C)	-8	1	0	0	0	0	-6	-4	3 Physical effects
-4	Feeble (Characteristic)	-2	2	0	0	0	0		-2	This is a Physical example
-4	Plagued By (Supernatural Entity)	0	0	-7	1	0	0		-3	
-5	Age Quickly	-10	1	0	0	0	0		-4	
-5	Blind (C)	-10	1	0	0	-10	2		-7	
-5	Dwarf (M)	-8	1	0	0	-4	2		-5	
-5	Enfeebled (C)	-10	1,5	0	0	0	0	-3	-5	2 Physical effects
-5	Pathetic (Characteristic)	-3	2	0	0	0	0		-3	This is a Physical example
-6	Enfeebled (M)	-10	1,5	0	0	-10	2		-7	
-6	Poor Memory (M)	0	0	0	0	-5	2	-13	-6	3 Mental effects

Int.: Intensity; Freq.: Frequency; M: Magi; C: Companions; G: Grogs



es are given under “Special Cases,” below. The “Misc” column is simply a sum of all the modifiers due to the special cases. The brief comment after each entry in Table 1 explains why the “Misc” ratings appear.

The Baseline Saga

Since the Flaw guidelines are designed to rate the importance of a Flaw in the context of a particular saga, creating Table 1 required a “baseline” saga as a point of reference. The baseline may or may not coincide with your troupe’s style of play. The following premises describe the baseline saga:

- The covenant is located in a rural area, but not in the wilderness. Characters will encounter, and have important interactions with, mundane NPCs at least once per chapter (game session).
- Magi have poor social skills, and have an even harder time relating to mundanes because of their Gift. Grog and companions are available to act as magi’s spokesmen in most social situations, so magi do not often need to deal directly with mundanes.
- Combat is a frequent risk, but it is often preventable. Violence is occasionally necessary or unavoidable. A battle, or the risk of a battle, occurs in most stories, but not in every chapter (game session).
- The saga is composed of discrete stories, each with a constant cast of characters and each with its own beginning, middle, and end. A story usually takes from 2-4 game sessions to complete.
- The story challenges are varied. Some stories call for combat prowess, some require social acumen, and others require the clever application of Abilities and/or magic. These elements are all about equally important in achieving story goals.

Adjusting the costs of Flaws for sagas that differ from these assumptions is discussed under “Customizing the Ratings.”

Foundation for the Guidelines: What is a Flaw?

In order to effectively rate a Flaw in the context of a saga, one must first establish what a Flaw is, and what it is not. A clear definition of a Flaw will provide a framework for the Flaw guidelines presented later.

The main purpose of a Flaw is to make the character more fun to play. They’re a source of characterization and, occasionally, comic relief. More importantly, Flaws add an element of drama and challenge to the saga. The heroes of literature and folk-tales, from King Arthur to Cinderella, are characters who overcome their circumstances and their human weaknesses to achieve mythic triumphs. From a storytelling point of view, a character’s weaknesses are as important as his strengths.

A different, more game-mechanical purpose for Flaws is to “balance” Virtues. Characters need to take as many points’ worth of Flaws as they choose in Virtues. The design rationale seems to be one of basic fairness: characters cannot obtain special advantages (Virtues) unless they also accept special disadvantages. “Game balance” is less important in *Ars Magica* than in many other games — magi are vastly more powerful than grogs, for instance — but a sense of fairness is important in any game. Flaws help ensure that characters can have interesting Virtues without becoming too powerful compared to other PCs of their own type (magus, companion, or grog). Properly chosen, Flaws can be interesting character features in their own right.

But Flaws don’t “balance” anything if they don’t come up in play. A Flaw that doesn’t affect the story is merely an excuse for a free Virtue: it adds nothing to the game. Flaws also don’t enhance role-playing if their effects occur only during the down time between stories. There are many problems that can afflict a character without affecting the story at all. For example, a character may have an overbearing, nagging mother-in-law. As much as one can sympathize with his plight, this would only be a Flaw in unusual circumstances: if the mother-in-law were an important character in the story.

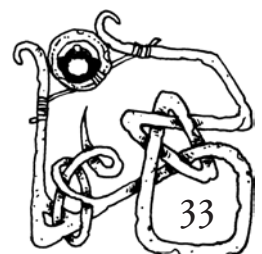
A working definition of a Flaw, incorporating the foregoing ideas, is: *a Flaw is a limitation or weakness that makes a character more fun to play by providing challenges that are meaningful to the story.*

The exact criterion of meaningfulness to the story must be determined by the troupe or Storyguide. Keep in mind that a Flaw doesn’t have to affect the plot directly to make itself felt. For instance, an Obligation (p. 49) keeps a magus from studying at least one season each year. This slows his advancement in the Arts. Even if he fulfils the Obligation outside of the story, the magus is a little weaker than he would normally be because of the lost study time. This can certainly affect the outcome of a story.

The Categories

The three major categories for the effects of Flaws are Physical, Social, and Mental. These were chosen not merely for convenience, but because they parallel three major elements of role-playing gaming: combat and physical challenges, role-playing and interactions with NPCs, and skill use and problem-solving. Dividing Flaw costs into these categories will help your troupe customize Flaws to your saga.

Some Flaws have effects that cannot easily be described as Physical, Social, or Mental. The basic categories have been broadened a little to include most of the common types of effects. The constituents of the three categories are not, therefore, altogether self-explanatory.





Physical

The Physical category includes Flaws that affect

- Physical Abilities such as Climb, Ride, and all weapon skills
- Combat
- Health and Body Levels
- Fatigue (including fatigue from spellcasting)
- Wound recovery and aging
- Money and equipment
- Magic Resistance

Money and equipment are included in the Physical category because they dictate the quality of the character's armaments, and hence his combat effectiveness. Magic resistance is considered Physical because hostile spells are a serious threat to the character's life and limb. Even non-destructive spells such as Rego Mentem effects are overtly hostile actions that will often lead to a fight, even if combat isn't underway when the NPC casts the spell. Magic resistance is generally most important in sagas that emphasize action and combat.

Social

The Social category includes Flaws that affect

- Social Abilities like Guile, Bargain, and Leadership
- Social rank or status
- Reputation
- Relationships with NPCs, such as a Dependent (p. 47) or Enemies (p. 46)

The Social category is presumed less important to magi than to mundanes. This difference is reflected in the ratings in Table 1: adjust the Social ratings of Hermetic Flaws in sagas where magi often find themselves in social situations.

Mental

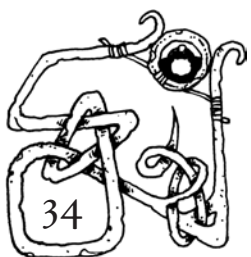
The Mental category is something of a catch-all that includes most activities that are not clearly Physical or Social.

- Spellcasting
- Laboratory work
- Certamen
- All Knowledges
- Experience Points, training and study
- All Abilities that are not clearly Physical or Social, e.g., Pick Locks, Craft skills

Because Art scores tend to be higher than Ability scores, the ratings of Flaws that affect magic are calculated somewhat differently from Flaws that affect Abilities. This is explained below.

The Mental category also covers an important group of effects that influence a character's behavior, often contrary to his best interest. These effects include:

- The character is inclined to behave a certain way, with no game-mechanical effects or die rolls, e.g., Oversensitive (p. 48)
- The character has an undesirable Personality Trait, e.g., Reclusive (p. 48)



- The character must make a die roll to keep self-control, e.g., Fury (p. 50)
- The character is temporarily compelled to act a certain way, regardless of the player's desires; e.g. Terrors (p. 49) and Lycanthrope (p. 49)

The Ratings

To compute Flaw Points, list the effects of the Flaw, then determine a Frequency and Intensity for each effect. Multiply Frequency times Intensity for each effect to get the Flaw Points for that effect. The cost of a Flaw is the "pyramid value" of the sum of all Flaw Points.

Intensity

Intensity describes how pronounced an effect the Flaw has. Stronger effects have higher negative Intensities and make the Flaw cost more. Generally, the Intensity of an effect ranges from -1 to -10, but larger negative values are possible.

The Intensity of a Flaw that affects die rolls is straightforward to determine. Each -1 to a standard, non-magical die roll (either stress or simple) is -1 point of Intensity. A Flaw that gives -3 to social rolls would thus have a (Social) Intensity of -3.

Intensity has the same value whether the Flaw affects all die rolls in a category or just a few special kinds of rolls. Whether the Flaw affects common rolls or uncommon rolls, a broad category of rolls or a narrow category, is described by Frequency. Intensity simply rates how powerful the Flaw's effect is when that Flaw is affecting the story.

The Intensity for Flaws that affect magical die rolls is calculated differently. A magical roll is typically a die + Characteristic + Form + Technique, whereas a non-magical roll is typically a die + Characteristic + Ability. Magical Arts tend to be much higher than Abilities, so the random factor of the die roll has less relative importance for magical rolls. Halve the die-roll penalty to get the Intensity for magical rolls.

A -3 penalty to a non-magical roll is a significant disadvantage. A normal person with no relevant Ability has a 5 in 10 chance to succeed at a nominal simple roll of Difficulty 6. With a -3 penalty on the same roll, the chance of success drops to 2 in 10: the player must roll a natural 9 or 10 for the character to succeed. The probability of success is reduced by $(5-2)/5 \times 100\% = 60\%$ (not by 30%!). The revised Flaw ratings in Table 1 are designed to reflect how harsh a -3 penalty can really be.

Of course, not all Flaws have effects that are represented as die-roll penalties. As a rule of thumb, if a Flaw gives a measurable penalty of some kind, the Intensity should be -1 per 10% of penalty. Consider a hypothetical Flaw that gives a character one fewer Body Levels than normal (without affecting Fatigue Levels). A normal char-

acter has five body levels, so losing one is a $\frac{1}{5}$ penalty, or 20%. (Note: generally the Intensities for Body Levels and Fatigue Levels are considered different effects. See “Multiple Effects” under “Special Cases,” below, for guidelines.)

Some Flaws, such as Hatred (p. 47), have effects that aren’t even represented by game mechanics. Flaw effects do not always have anything to do with numbers. Flaw effects do, however, break down into several general types. Guidelines for rating their Intensity are given by type. These guidelines are not comprehensive, but they do cover the most common types of effects. Troupes should be able to rate an effect’s Intensity by analogy to one or more of these sets of guidelines.

Percentage Penalty or Disadvantage

- Each 10% penalty is -1 Intensity.
- Consider Inexpensive equipment to be 30% less useful than Standard equipment.

Example: Expenses (p. 47) makes a character pay 25%-50% of his income. The Storyguide decides he’ll aim for taking 40% of the character’s money. The (Physical) Intensity is -4.

Penalty to Non-Magical Die Rolls

- For non-combat rolls, the Intensity is the same as the die-roll penalty.
- For combat rolls, the Intensity is the same as the sum of all modifiers to each of the basic combat scores: Init, Atk, Def, Dam, Soak.
- Inability to make the roll is a 100% penalty: -10 Intensity.

Example: Missing Hand (p. 49) gives a -3 penalty to combat rolls (among other effects). Interpreting this to mean -3 to everything except Damage and Soak (which aren’t rolled), the (Physical) Intensity due to combat penalties is -9.

Penalty to Magical (Form + Technique) Die Rolls

- Intensity is half the die-roll penalty. Keep any fractions.
- Each 10% disadvantage is -1 Intensity.
- Inability to use an Art or other magical power is a 100% penalty: -10 Intensity.
- Consider Form and Technique to contribute equally to the roll.

Example: A Minor Magical Deficiency in Terram (p. 35) makes a magus halve his Terram score before adding it to a magical roll. This is a 50% penalty to Terram, but the Form constitutes only half the roll. The Deficiency is really like a 25% penalty. Its Intensity is -2.5.

Penalty to Magic Resistance

- Intensity is half the die-roll penalty. Keep any fractions.
- Each 10% disadvantage is -1 Intensity.
- Consider the Form and Parma Magica to contribute equally to Magic Resistance.
- Natural resistance rolls are non-magical rolls (Physical or Mental).

- For Frequency, consider how often characters need to resist hostile spells (do not use the Frequency corresponding to the affected Arts).

Example: Limited Magic Resistance (p. 36) makes the Form score not count toward Magic Resistance. This is a 50% disadvantage, so the Intensity is -5.

Role-Playing Effects

- 1 if the character is inclined to behave a certain way, but there’s no game-mechanical enforcement.
- 3 if the behavior is very strong but there is no game-mechanical enforcement.
- 1 for each chance in 10 the character will be forced to act according to the Flaw.
- 10 if the character cannot resist the effect or has no self-control when the effect is active.

Example 1: Obsessed (p. 48) influences a character’s behavior, but there are no rules that enforce the obsession; Intensity is -1.

Example 2: Uncommon Fear (p. 48) strongly influences a character’s behavior, but there are no specific rules governing the fear; Intensity is -3.

Example 3: Fury (p. 50) causes a character to fly into a rage on a stress roll of 8 or lower. There is an 8 in 10 chance the Fury will “activate,” so the Intensity is -8.

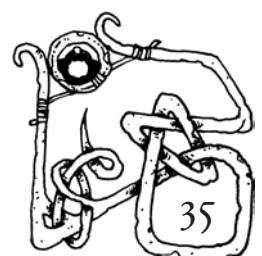
Example 4: Terrors (p. 49) completely take control of the character and force him to flee, when they are active. Since there is no chance of self-control, Intensity is -10.

Danger

Flaws that put the character in danger should cost more than Flaws that merely thwart or inhibit him. Some Flaws endanger the character as their primary effect (e.g., Enemies (p. 46)). In other cases, danger is an extra effect in addition to the Flaw’s primary effect (e.g., Oversensitive (p. 48) can lead to fights in addition to its normal effects). See “Special Cases,” below, for guidelines on how to add an extra Danger rating to a Flaw. Never add a “danger factor” to Flaws that include combat penalties — the Intensity for combat effects already takes the risks into account.

- 1 Inconvenience. An enemy who is more an annoyance than a threat.
- 3 Slight danger, risk of story setback. An enemy who is about equal to your power.
- 5 Moderate danger, risk of injury. An enemy more powerful than yourself but weaker than the combined strength of you and your allies.
- 7 Serious danger, risk of death or defeat. A powerful enemy equal to the combined strength of you and your allies.
- 10 Deadly peril. An overwhelmingly powerful enemy.

Example: Infamous Outlaw (p. 39) makes the character hunted by the authorities. Since punishment in Mythic Europe is often carried out by hanging, this is a deadly risk. Intensity is -5.





Denied a Power or Ability

Some Flaws prevent a character from progressing in certain Abilities, or from gaining other advantages that most characters accrue through play.

- 1 Cannot start with one Ability, but may gain it later.
- 2 Cannot advance in one Ability.
- 3 Cannot start with a group of Abilities.
- 6 Cannot advance in a group of Abilities.
- 3 Prohibited from gaining a substantial power or advantage.

A group of abilities is one boldface heading on the Abilities Table (p. 53), e.g., “Performance Skills.” When several Abilities are affected, use either the cost for a group of Abilities, or the sum of the costs for the individual Abilities — whichever gives a lower Intensity.

Being unable to use an Ability is only a Flaw if the character would normally be entitled to that Ability. Grog’s don’t get points for being unable to start with Scribe Latin, because grogs can’t normally start with that Ability anyway.

A “substantial advantage” is some power or privilege that the character could normally gain, and that most characters of his type would normally gain. Examples include a familiar for magi, land ownership for companions, etc.

Example: Noncombatant (p. 49) makes a character unable to learn combat skills (among other effects). Combat skills are a group of Abilities, so the Intensity for this effect is -3. Noncombatant also has other effects; see “Special Cases,” below, for how to rate Flaws with multiple effects.

Frequency

Flaws that affect the story more often should have a higher overall cost. Remember that, accord-

ing to the definition of a Flaw, above, the important factor is how often the Flaw affects the story, not how often it affects the character.

Some Flaws aren’t used in play, but instead affect a character through season-to-season aging, lab work, and character development. These Flaws are assigned a Frequency based on how many seasons of the year they have their impact.

A nominal Flaw comes into play about once per story. A “story” for this purpose consists of 2-4 chapters (game sessions) that comprise a single, continuous plot. If your stories are longer or shorter, you may need to adjust the Frequency of Flaws accordingly. Flaws that arise more than once per story have higher ratings than normal; those that arise less often have lower ratings.

More so than Intensity, the Frequency of a Flaw is likely to vary from one saga to the next, depending on the troupe’s style of play, the setting, and the troupe’s interpretation of the Flaw’s description. See the “Baseline saga,” above, for the premises that were used to assign the Frequencies in Table 1.

Players will usually take steps to avoid having their Flaws come into play. For example, a character who has a Missing Eye (p. 47) will probably avoid using missile weapons. Choose the Frequency based on what is normal or representative for your saga, not according to the player’s or the character’s individual behavior.

Frequency is a factor from 0.25 to 3. Multiply Frequency by Intensity to get the Flaw Points of an effect.

Special Cases

Flaws are, by their nature, complicated, often working outside the normal rules of Ars Magica or

Value	In-Play Frequency	In-Play Examples*	Seasonal Frequency	Seasonal Example*
0		Effect does not meaningfully affect the story		
0.25	Less than once every 2-3 stories	Casting Rituals, Certamen	Rare activities	Lectio, Disputatio, Writing books
0.5	Less than once a story	Form/Technique Combination Using Social Skills (M.)	Once every 2-3 years	Enchanting item
1	About once per story	Combat, Wound Recovery, One Form (not Corpus or Vim)	About once per year	Aging, Inventing spells, Learning spells
1.5	About once per chapter	Using Social Skills (C. & G.), Fatigue (C. & G.), Corpus or Vim, One Technique, Important resources (cash, vis)	Several times per year	Studying books, Training, Practice, Studying vis, Using Lab Total
2	Several times per chapter	All social interactions, All formulaic magic, All spontaneous magic, all skill use, Fatigue (M.)	Every Season	All seasonal activities
3	Frequently	All spellcasting, Vision, Speech, Walking	N/A	

M: Magi; C: Companions; G: Grog
* Examples are applicable to the “Baseline Saga” (see above). Frequency of the same activity in your Saga may vary.

interacting with the rules in complex ways. The following guidelines help accommodate complicated or tricky Flaws.

Multiple Effects

Many Flaws affect the character in more than one way. For example, Obese (p. 47) has three effects: it gives a penalty to rolls for “moving quickly or gracefully,” a penalty to Fatigue rolls, and an extra Body Level. The Flaw guidelines were designed to accommodate Flaws with multiple effects. Simply rate each effect separately and add the ratings.

Flaws that affect combat should generally have their combat effects rated separately from any other Physical effects they might have. For instance, a hypothetical Flaw that gives -2 to all Dexterity-related rolls, including Attack rolls, would have two physical ratings: one for the Dexterity penalty and one for the Attack penalty. The reason for rating the combat effect separately is that combat might have a different Frequency than other Physical rolls. See “Customizing the Ratings,” below.

Some Flaws have beneficial effects embedded in them. Follower of Verditius (p. 35) includes a powerful Ability that works like a Magical Affinity (Variable Virtue, p. 34) with enchanting items. Precise ratings for this kind of beneficial effect would require a full set of guidelines for rating Virtues; such a system is beyond the scope of this article. The best estimate for beneficial effects is to consider a Flaw with the opposite effect, and add its absolute value in Flaw Points as a positive value.

It is difficult to display multiple-effect Flaws in table form. For convenience, multiple-effect Flaws in Table 1 show only the highest-rated effect in each column. Additional ratings are grouped together in the “Misc.” column.

To summarize, the guidelines for Flaw with multiple effects are:

- Rate each effect separately.
- Add the ratings together.
- Rate beneficial effects by analogy to Flaw ratings.
- Usually consider combat penalties separately from other Physical effects.
- Remember that combat effects are exclusive with an Intensity rating for danger.

Example: Obese (p. 35) has three effects — four, counting combat. The penalty to moving quickly or gracefully has (Physical) Intensity of -1 and Frequency 1. The Storyguide rules that this effect also applies to Init and Def, so it is also a combat penalty of Intensity -2, Frequency 1. The -3 penalty to Fatigue rolls is also Physical, with Intensity -3 and Frequency 1.5 (Fatigue rolls are important in long-distance travel as well as in action scenes). Finally, the extra Body Level is a 20% advantage, so it has (Physical) Intensity +2 and Frequency 1. The final rating of this complicated Flaw is $(-1 \times 1) + (-2 \times 1) + (-3 \times 1.5) + (2 \times 1) = -4.5$ Flaw Points. Comparing -4.5 to the “pyramid scale,” the revised cost of Obese is -2.

Single Effect Affecting Multiple Categories

In some cases, a single effect of a Flaw can cause a penalty that crosses the broad categories of Physical, Social, and Mental. An example would be a Flaw that affects “all rolls.” Treat these types of Flaws as if they were multiple effects. Remember to count combat penalties and general Physical penalties separately.

Flaws that Expire

Many Flaws affect the character forever, but others do not. Enemies (p. 46) can be defeated or reconciled; a Dependent (p. 47) may grow up or pass away; a Curse (p. 46) can be lifted. Flaws that affect starting Experience Points, spells, or equipment gradually lose their impact as the character develops in normal play. Flaws that are easy to overcome should cost less than Flaws that persist.

Expiration is reflected in the Flaw rating by a positive adjustment from +1 to +3. The more easily a character can overcome the Flaw or the more rapidly it loses its impact, the higher the positive modifier. Flaws that are very easy to overcome should not be considered Flaws at all.

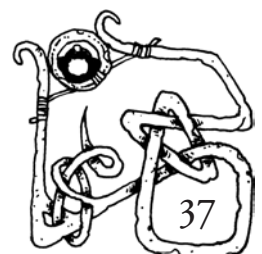
- +1 The Flaw requires great efforts, many years, and/or a long and harrowing story to overcome.
- +2 The Flaw can be overcome eventually if the character dedicates himself to the task.
- +3 The Flaw wears off or expires normally over the course of the saga.

Customizing the Ratings

The Flaw guidelines are most beneficial when the troupe uses them to re-evaluate the cost of a Flaw that seems over- or under-valued in their saga. The guidelines break down Flaw Points in detail to allow the troupe to make individualized changes and re-calculate the cost of the Flaw.

The three categories of ratings — Physical, Social, and Mental — loosely parallel three different playing styles. Physical ratings correspond to the elements of action and physical danger in the saga. Social ratings correspond to relationships and interactions with NPCs during role-playing-intensive scenes. Mental ratings correspond to problem-solving and inventive use of magic. If one or more of these playing styles has special prominence in your saga, you may want to customize the costs of relevant Flaws accordingly. The “baseline saga” assumes all three categories of activity are about equally important; that is, they affect the outcome of a story about equally often (though they do not necessarily occupy equal amounts of play time).

To customize a Flaw’s cost, change its Frequency rating(s). Replace the “baseline” Frequency in Table 1 with an estimate of how often the Flaw will affect the story in your saga. Re-calculate the total Flaw Points and derive a new Flaw cost.





Example: In the baseline saga, magi need to interact with mundanes only occasionally — they have grogs and companions to act as their spokesmen. In the saga of Arx Lucis, the magi need to deal with mundanes directly because the covenant has no capable servants on hand. The troupe decides to re-evaluate the cost of Blatant Gift (p. 35) accordingly. In the “baseline saga,” the rating is Social with Intensity -3, Frequency 0.5. The troupe agrees magi in Arx Lucis will need to interact with mundanes as often as do companions in the “baseline saga”; about one NPC interaction per chapter (game session) will be significant to the story. Therefore, they change the Frequency of Blatant Gift to 1.5 (as per the Frequency guidelines). The new rating of Blatant Gift in Arx Lucis is $-3 \times 1.5 = -5.5$, so its cost is -2.

There are two approaches to customizing Flaw ratings: to adjust them on a case-by-case basis, or systematically for the whole list. If the differences between your saga and the “baseline saga” are minor, it’s easier to customize Flaws one at a time, as the need arises. Even if the differences are more extensive, you need not throw away Table 1 and start from scratch. Your changes will probably be confined to one category — simply scan down that column and pencil in a new Frequency for the non-zero entries. Then re-calculate the cost of those Flaw where you’ve made changes.

The guidelines are designed so only Frequency will need to be changed. Since Frequency is a multiplier, a one-step change in Frequency is likely to change the final cost of the Flaw. You may, of course, alter the Intensity ratings as well — especially in the ambiguous cases where one must assign a number to an inherently numberless effect. The Intensity guidelines contain assumptions of their own, for instance, that the Parma Magica skill and the Form score contribute about equally to Magic Resistance. Most of these assumptions were made for simplicity — feel free to change them if you find them questionable.

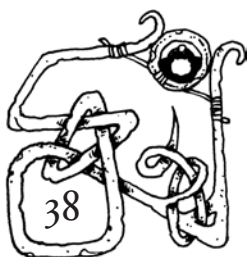
Extended Examples

The following examples illustrate how to rate complicated Flaws and how to customize ratings to your saga.

Outlaw Leader, Baseline Saga

The Companion Social Class, Outlaw Leader (p. 39) is a complicated Flaw with several effects. Taking the Flaw description one sentence at a time, the effects are:

- You have 3-6 followers who look up to you and do what you say (a beneficial Social effect).
- You must provide for the group and occasionally stick up for its members.
- You have to deal with challenges to your leadership.
- You are well known as an outlaw (level 3 Reputation).
- You are actively sought by the local lord or sheriff.



In the “baseline saga,” these effects can be rated as follows:

Having 3-6 followers is a beneficial effect. Without a set of guidelines for Virtues, the best way to rate a beneficial effect is to rate the opposite Flaw. The opposite of having 3-6 reasonably loyal followers would be having 3-6 reasonably serious enemies; that most closely matches a description of “Danger,” and has an Intensity of -3 (assuming the outlaws are collectively weaker than the leader’s PC comrades). Frequency will depend on how often the outlaws can help: Once per story sounds reasonable. Therefore, the positive effect has a rating of $-1 \times (-3 \times 1) = +3$.

Providing for the group is a burden, but it won’t affect play too often. The Storyguide decides that taking care of a bunch of outlaws might provide interesting story hooks, so he assigns an Intensity of -1 (behavioral quirk, no game-mechanical enforcement) and a Frequency of 0.5 (less than once a story), for -0.5 Flaw Points.

The challenges to leadership require some judgement. Usually, the challenges will be verbal — the outlaws will balk at following their leader’s instructions. There is, however, a chance that the challenge will turn violent. The Storyguide decides that the Flaw description indicates the challenges will be frequent, so he decides that they are usually not dangerous, if dealt with properly. He assigns an Intensity of -1 (Inconvenience) and a Frequency of 1 (about once per story): $-1 \times 1 = -1$ Flaw Points.

Being well known as an outlaw carries a Social penalty. The Reputation of 3 has an Intensity of -3. The standard Frequency for social interaction (for non-magi) is 1.5. The Storyguide decides that the penalty doesn’t apply to all Social rolls — after all, being considered an outlaw is not always a disadvantage. He reduces the Frequency to 1, so the Reputation is worth $-3 \times 1 = -3$ Flaw Points.

Finally, being hunted by the authorities is probably the most serious effect of this Flaw. The Storyguide decides that the local sheriff or lord is a match for the whole covenant — not necessarily meaning he would win a pitched battle against the covenant, but that he has enough soldiers, informants, wealth, and guile to be a worthy opponent. This is a danger of Intensity -7. The Frequency really depends on how often the Storyguide wants to bring the authorities into play. He decides he won’t do so too often, because he doesn’t want to distract too much attention from the main plot of the saga. Frequency will be 0.5, for $-7 \times 0.5 = -3.5$ Flaw Points.

The Flaw Points of Outlaw Leader in this saga are therefore $+3 -0.5 -1 -3 -3.5 = -5$, for a final cost of -2. (Note: Only the strongest effect, -3.5 for being hunted by the authorities, appears in the Social column of Table 1. Everything else is lumped together in the “Misc” column.)

Small Frame (magus), non-violent Saga

In the saga of Arx Lucis, combat has minimal importance. Instead, the main conflicts in the saga are political intrigue, both mundane and Hermetic. The troupe wants to re-evaluate the Physical ratings of Flaws in order to reflect the diminished role of action in the saga.

Small Frame usually has two effects, both of them Physical:

- One fewer Body Level than normal,
- One fewer Fatigue Level than normal.

(Note: Size also affects Soak and Defense, but the modifiers -1 and +1, respectively, cancel out.)

Since a normal person has five Body Levels and five Fatigue Levels, one level fewer than normal is a 20% disadvantage. The Intensity for each effect is therefore -2.

The nominal Frequency for combat-related effects in the “baseline saga” is 1. In the saga of Arx Lucis, combat is considerably less common than in the baseline. The troupe decides to assign a Frequency of 0.25 to all combat-related effects; the missing Body Level therefore is worth $-2 \times 0.25 = -0.5$ Flaw Points. (If the saga of Arx Lucis avoided combat entirely, then the troupe should have chosen a Frequency of 0 for combat effects, eliminating them from consideration entirely).

The Frequency of Fatigue-related effects for magi is 2, because Fatigue is a likely outcome of most (but not all) spellcasting. The troupe decides that, although combat and physical action are uncommon in the saga, Fatigue is still very important to magi. They decide to keep the Frequency at 2, so the Flaw Points for the missing Fatigue Level total $-2 \times 2 = -4$.

In the intrigue-ridden saga of Arx Lucis, the troupe feels that Small Frame might also have some noticeable Social effects. It makes the magus easier to recognize and harder to disguise. The Storyguide rules that the Disguise skill (p. 55) can’t change a person’s apparent Size. This is more of an inconvenience than a serious restriction — the magus can still disguise himself as a youth or other small person, and of course MuCo spells can work around the Disguise skill’s limitations. Intensity is -1 for inconvenience; the troupe guesses that disguise will be important in less than $\frac{1}{3}$ of their stories, so Frequency is 0.25. The effect is worth $-1 \times 0.25 = -0.25$ Flaw Points, not enough to make much difference.

Small Frame for magi in the saga of Arx Lucis is worth $-0.5 - 4 - 0.25 = -4.75$ Flaw Points, for a cost of -2 (instead of the normal -3).

Small Frame, magus, violent Saga

In the saga of Llewellyn’s Vengeance, House Diedne has returned from Arcadia to wage war on the Order of Hermes. Magi will be involved in combat frequently.

The missing Body Level still has Intensity -2, but the troupe raises its Frequency to 1.5 because

of the prevalence of combat. This effect is now worth $-2 \times 1.5 = -3$ Flaw Points.

Because combat is more common than in the “baseline saga,” Fatigue is also more common. The troupe increases the Frequency of all Fatigue-related effects by one step, from 2 to 3. The missing Fatigue Level is worth $-2 \times 3 = -6$ Flaw Points.

The overall rating of Small Frame for a magus in the saga of Llewellyn’s Vengeance is $-3 - 6 = -9$, for a cost of -3. Although Small Frame has more Flaw Points than in “baseline saga,” the change is not enough to make a difference on the pyramid scale.

Conclusions

To properly rate a Flaw’s relative importance in a saga, one must anticipate a priori the events likely to occur in a typical story. Although this is difficult for novice players, established troupes probably have some understanding of their own playing style. The important thing is to get a general idea of how the characters behave in a story and what actions they take to pursue story goals. The Storyguide should have an idea of what types of conflicts and obstacles he will tend to present in the saga.

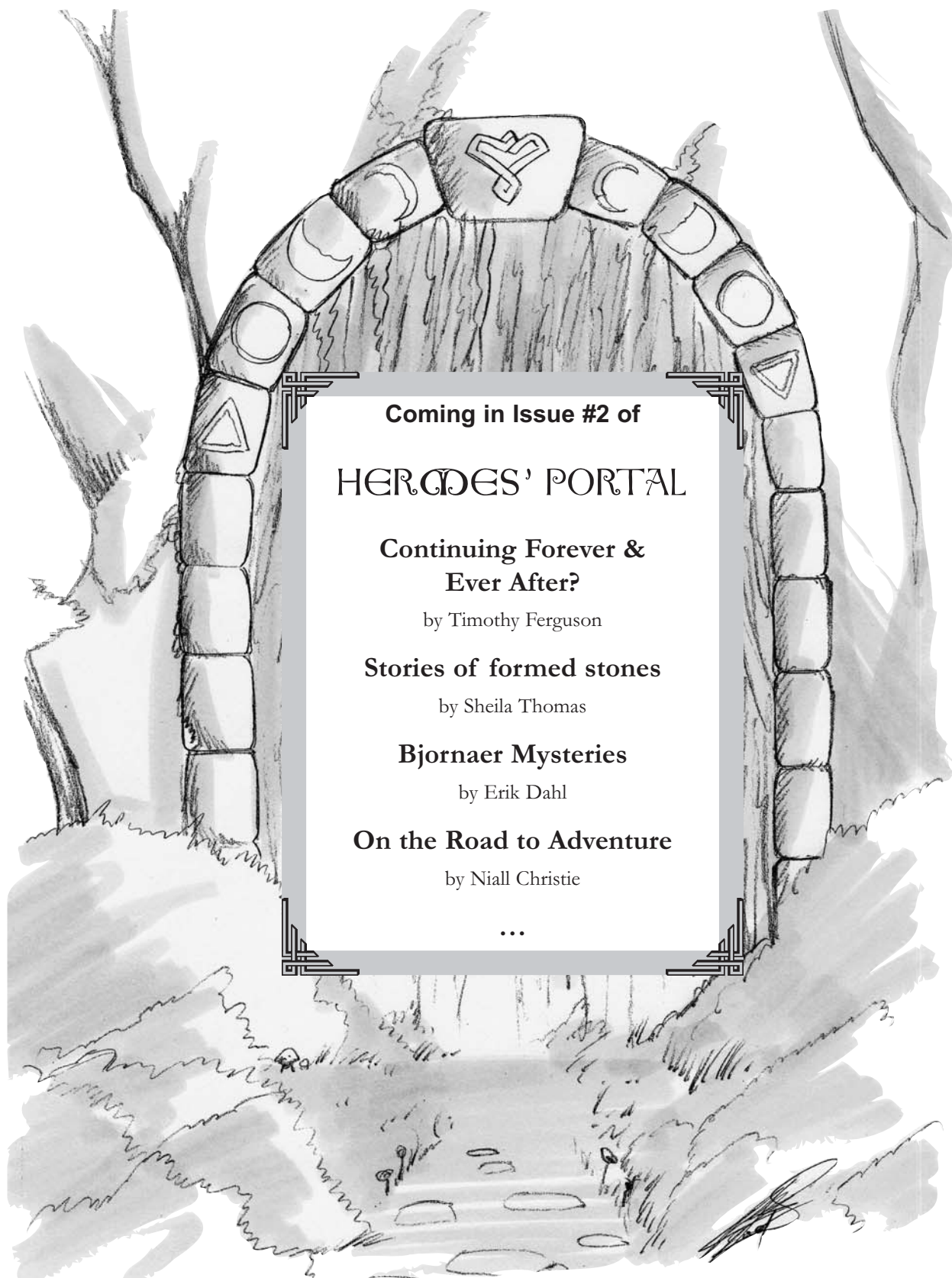
The Flaw guidelines make no attempt to edit or modify the descriptions of Flaws in 4th Edition. A few of the descriptions do seem to need some changes. Flaws with multiple effects are difficult to rate and could, in many cases, be simplified. Some Flaws could benefit from clarification — Flaws that confer Physical penalties often don’t specify whether those penalties extend to combat rolls. Troupes undoubtedly make their own decisions about how to interpret Flaws’ descriptions, and the guidelines can help ensure the costs of the Flaws are consistent with the troupe’s interpretation.

Applying these guidelines need not be a time-consuming process. Much of the work has already been done in Table 1. In customizing Flaw costs, concentrate on Flaws that seem over- or undervalued according to the troupe’s interpretation of their descriptions. Usually, there will only be a few of these.

The guidelines are also useful for assigning costs to Variable Flaws or to any new Flaws the troupe invents. Sometimes, even different manifestations of the same Flaw might have different costs. For example, a character who is Oversensitive (p. 48) may tend to start fights. If so, the Flaw may well cost more than it would for a character who is less prone to violence. The guidelines blur the distinction between standard Flaws and Variable Flaws, allowing the troupe to assign fair costs even when they wish to try a non-standard interpretation of a stock Flaw.

*M*ECENAS ATAVIS • TOTI REGIBUS
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