

# Peripheral Code

## Writing in the Margins of Ars Magica

Issue 1, Winter 2016

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# PERAMBULATION PRESS





# The Winter of Our Discontent

*"Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this son of York."*

- Richard III



Welcome to the "proof of concept" issue of *Peripheral Code: Writing in the Margins of Ars Magica*. What does that mean? It means we're a fanzine devoted to the Ars Magica game, and while we will gladly publish articles on any subject of interest to Ars Magica players, we are especially interested in showing readers the unusual, unexplored, or non-canonical aspects of our favorite RPG. This issue includes a set of alternate Founders, female magi drawn from myth and literature; an introduction to Wizard World, a way to play Ars Magica using the Apocalypse Engine; alternate rules for your covenant library and for automata. We've got outlaw Flambeau to threaten your PCs, a valuable book for your library shelves, and a magical librarian to assist your magi. Our first issue is a snapshot of the sort of material we hope to bring you again and again, as often as submissions empower us to do so.

I will begin with a statement certain to be controversial: the Ars Magica RPG has entered Winter.

This year, the last book for the Ars Magica 5th edition product line (*Dies Irae*) was released. No one is quite sure what the future of Ars Magica is or, if they are, they're not telling. There are no plans for a 6th edition, though the conversation is ongoing. Meanwhile, games related to traditional Ars Magica are coming out: Cam Banks and Jeff Tidball have been developing the so-called "MagicShoe" project, in which Quaesitores and Hoplites investigate Hermetic crimes in Mythic Europe using the *Gumshoe* engine. Two separate *Fiasco* sets have been produced, one starring Grogs, both located in Mythic Europe. And there are, of course, still forty or so books out for 5th edition. Those books aren't going anywhere. New players can still come to the game, and current players still have plenty of material to explore. Atlas's lesson, learned from *Feng Shui*,

is that good games never die, they just go on the shelf for a few years (or fifteen).

Nevertheless, the end of the line has created a crisis in the Order. Established authors for the line, as well have fans, have had lively discussions about what to do next. Some writers came together on the official forums to try to create new material for the game — a revised Roman Tribunal, something long asked-for by fans — but the project stalled. Timothy Ferguson led the call for community, for the next round of the "meta-game," the game of making the game. *Sub Rosa*, a highly regarded magazine and direct inspiration for *Peripheral Code*, is now the foremost source for new Ars Magica material. Grand Tribunal, the annual fan-organized Ars Magica convention in the UK, has continued. Other Ars Magica projects, rumored but still mysterious to me, are being worked on behind the scenes by fans. Everyone wants the same thing: we don't want our game to die. But as seasoned players of Ars Magica know, pulling a covenant out of the downward slide into Winter is a heroic task. It requires many hands, but organizing all the disparate efforts is an intimidating tangle.

Frankly, I think organizing those efforts is impossible (barring an army of lawyers with C&D orders). The online age is too fractured. There are too many cameras and not enough eyes to watch them all. The online community is ephemeral; people vanish from it without warning. Life gets in the way. Work isn't delivered. Authors wander off. Promises aren't kept. And no one is surprised by this, because that's just how social networks are in the 21st century. There is an Ars Magica community, but practically speaking, creative projects are going to have to be organized and sustained in small(ish) groups, like covenants themselves. The membership of those groups is going to rotate in and out.

Timothy's call for fans to come together to keep the game alive resonated with me. I've gotten a lot of enjoyment out of *Ars Magica*. I GM one campaign (*HBO Ars Magica*) and play in another. I even enjoy all the book-keeping, the "homework." Indeed, if I didn't enjoy that stuff, I don't know if *Ars Magica* would be worth playing. I want to do my part to keep the game alive. At first, I thought I'd submit another article to *Sub Rosa* and, in fact, I did just that. But Mark and Ben are backed up there, and it might be a year or more before articles written today see print. I recognized a choke point, and the logical solution seemed to be to make that choke point wider. I spent a couple more days thinking about it, but when the name "Peripheral Code" came to me, I knew I had to do it.

I wrote to Mark, who patiently answered my questions and encouraged me. I wrote to Timothy, who agreed to write something. With his name to give me confidence, I reached out to the best *Ars Magica* gamers I knew — including the ones in my own campaign. I knew I wanted to give a voice to those gamers who liked *Ars Magica* but who weren't as fond of its simulationist rules; this led me (through Darren Miguez) to Jared Hunt's *Wizard World*, a well-playtested hack of *Ars Magica* using the *Apocalypse Engine*. Jeremiah Wishon wrote us a thorough re-examination of the rules for *Automata*, with an eye towards making them more consistent, more playable, and more fun. Jim Seals has

given us Athanasius, a magical librarian to assist your magi (and ask for their help in return). With the idea of "library" as a unifying concept, I created some house rules for describing covenant libraries in a way that doesn't require a spreadsheet, and a useful book for that library: the *Bonisagus Folio of 1227*. Since every *Storyguide* needs antagonists, I added a pair of *Flambeau* outlaws who need little incentive to give your magi trouble. As articles came in, I turned to Amber Elliot for graphic elements and Ade Smith for layout. I showed the issue to Cam and Atlas Games, seeking their approval and a one-page column. I've tried to make this first issue of *Peripheral Code* into a model. I can't say it has something for everyone. But it's a start and, I think, a good one.

*Ars Magica* players know the turn of the seasons well. Our game, with no new books on the horizon and no certain plan, has slid into Winter. But we all know what to do with a Winter covenant: somehow, we have to bring it to a new Spring. No single person, no single project, is going to accomplish that Herculean task alone. I want to contribute to the meta-game, and I'm hoping you do too. *Peripheral Code* is a way for you to do that. You'll find our submission guidelines on the last page of this issue.

Jason Tondro  
Editor



# UNKNOWN ARMIES

WHERE CRIME FICTION MEETS  
TRANSCENDENT HORROR

## WHAT WOULD YOU RISK TO CHANGE THE WORLD?

*Unknown Armies 3* is the newest edition of the cult-classic roleplaying game about broken people conspiring to fix the world through magick and obsession. It's a game about humanity, and how those among us who are the most damaged have the power to alter reality until it aligns with their fevered desires. It's a game about getting what you want despite others trying to keep it from you.



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A Word from Atlas Games

## An Update on "Magic Shoe"

Here at Atlas Games, our project to combine Ars Magica's Mythic Europe setting with the Gumshoe rule system has continued to make slow but steady progress as we press into the winter here in Minnesota.

In case you're not familiar with the general idea, in short, it's to create a new RPG where the players take the roles of a quaesitor and her comrades, who investigate crimes committed by and against the Order of Hermes. Ars Magica's background creates a deep setting ripe for such investigations, and Gumshoe provides a state-of-the-art set of tabletop rules for resolving those kinds of stories.

The state of development is entirely as expected, comprising elements both good, bad, and ugly.

The good news is that the game works! A fifty-odd page outline of the core rules of play has been circulating among my own group of local playtesters, as well as other key folks, for about a month, now, and it's possible to use them to play the game as intended. (In RPG development, this step fails more often than you'd think!)

Even better: It's fun! Characters use abilities to find clues, debate how to proceed in light of the uncovered dilemmas, use Hermetic abilities to cast spells, make tactical decisions to conserve or squander their Will and Concentration, fight battles with evil-doers, and so on.

The bad news—as my first playtest micro-campaign plays out—is that some elements of the adaptation of Hermetic magic to Gumshoe are mis-calibrated. Magic, as expressed in the fifth edition, is essentially an object-oriented programming language for reality, with the added complication that it must be internally balanced, produce interesting stories, and provide appropriate challenges inside a game. This, obviously, is much (much!) easier said than done. At the moment, spells are too hard to cast. There are two obvious (and probably more non-obvious) ways to tackle this problem. And tackle them we shall. This game is no one's first rodeo.

Which leads to the ugly news: It takes time. The core systems are not quite yet to the point where it's fruitful to farm sections of the core book out to other writers (which will eventually happen), so progress on this project must be split with the other creative projects I'm working on for Atlas, as well as the general management duties that also lie on my plate.

That said, I've assembled what I think is a likely schedule for design, editorial, crowdfunding, and downstream steps. It seems manifestly unwise to curse said schedule by sharing it at this point, so for the moment, it will hopefully simply give you some excitement to know that we're working on it, and we have a roadmap to avoid becoming lost in the process.

—Jeff Tidball





# Ars Magica Powered by the Apocalypse Wizard World

by Jared Hunt



**Editor's Note:** *Wizard World is an RPG that adapts the game system from Apocalypse World to play in the Ars Magica setting. Jared Hunt's work is thorough and impressive; the Wizard World PDF is over 70 pages! And this does not even include dozens of pages of play aids like character sheets and covenant tracking sheets. Since I couldn't include the entirety of Wizard World in Peripheral Code, I asked Jared to instead give us a "Director's Commentary" about the game and how it came to be. In his article, you'll find the links to the complete Wizard World, which you can download for free.*

## What is Wizard World?

The short answer is: an Ars Magica hack of Apocalypse World. It's possible that makes sense to you already, in which case you can skip down a few paragraphs.

If you're looking for a bit more information, here's the longer answer:

I'll assume that if you're reading this article, you're at least passingly familiar with Ars Magica. You may or may not be familiar with a game called Apocalypse World by Vincent and Meguey Baker. Further, you may or may not be familiar with the concept of "hacking" a game. The exact definition of hacking is a big discussion on its own, but for this purpose we'll just say that "hacking" a game means adapting its core concepts and/or rules to a new purpose - typically a new setting or genre.

## Why "Hack" Ars Magica?

Have you ever found yourself thinking something like: "Ars Magica is such a great game, but with school, work, relationships and everything else life throws at me, I just can't seem to coordinate the time and/or the right group of people to get a campaign going."

I know I did; many times. For years, I just accepted that Ars Magica would be one of those games I would get to run "some day" - maybe after I retire... I never gave up though. I love the setting, I love the concepts and I love the way the game logically incorporates so much medieval folklore.

After a lot of consideration, I divided my issues with running Ars Magica into two categories:

1. Learning curve. Over the years, I've tried introducing Ars Magica to many people with many different degrees of RPG knowledge. The universal response was that getting into the game was intimidating. Experienced players usually appreciated the beauty of the system, but they also recognized the relative complexity. Beginners had trouble figuring out how the flavour and story concepts related to the rules.
2. Homework. As the default GM (or Storyguide) for my groups, I'm accustomed to doing lots of prep between sessions. Most players, however, are not used to this additional time commitment. Lab work in particular requires players to do significant planning or game sessions devolve into rulebook reading and math exercises.

So, Wizard World is my attempt to take this game I love and do my best to address these two "issues".

## Why Apocalypse World?

The list of reasons for loving Apocalypse World is very long, and it is particularly loved by many game designers for its simple story-driven core mechanic that adapts very well to a variety of game design purposes. There are many, many hacks of Apocalypse World, collectively known as "Powered by the Apocalypse" (PbtA) games and you will also

see references to games powered by the “Apocalypse Engine.” I use those terms throughout the rest of this article.

I chose Apocalypse World as the foundation for my “hack” for two main reasons:

1. The core mechanic of the Apocalypse Engine is rules-lite and easy to work with.
2. It has a fantastic online community of game designers and “hackers” who are always eager to provide feedback and inspiration for new projects.

When I first started presenting the relatively complete version of Wizard World on Barf Forth Apocalyptica (the Apocalypse World forum), I put together the following blurb to try and explain my intent:

“Wizard World is my attempt to take the comprehensive beauty of Ars Magica and distill out the homework parts, hopefully leaving some belly-warming goodness that won’t make you go blind. Rest assured that any original thoughts you see in the work are entirely accidental, but I’m very proud of some of them and I hope they help you realize all your wizardly dreams.”

You can download the full game in its current state here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/lpxhvnt7p-w16c1l/Wizard%20World.pdf?dl=0>

and the reference sheets and playbooks needed for play are available here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/n2kue-faipvux6j4/Wizard%20World%20Playbook-s%20and%20Ref%20Sheets.pdf?dl=0>

Like any game design project, Wizard World went through more iterations than I can count, but I’ll do my best to walk you through the high points of the design process and explain my reasoning for the major elements that made it through to the end product.

## Where to Start?

Like almost every project I work on, Wizard World began as a note in Evernote (I referred to it as ArM World at that point). The other habit I’ve picked up over the last few years is to start each design by answering the questions on the list from Vincent Baker’s Sundered Lands game. Here is the exact content of that initial note:

- **Who are the characters, what are they doing, and what’s set against them?**

The characters are young wizards, fresh from their gauntlet. They are establishing a new covenant. Rival covenants, Order politics, meddling by mundane lords, interference from the Church and the threat of demonic, faerie and arcane beings are all set against them.

- **What are the players’ jobs?**

The players work cooperatively and competitively to improve their wizard and the covenant.

- **What are the characters’ goals?**

The characters want to increase their personal power while managing the many threats arrayed against them.

- **Who is the GM?**

One player.

- **What is the GM’s job?**

Force the players to make difficult decisions and learn more about their characters in the process.

- **What should the GM play to find out?**

How will the characters thwart his attempts to disrupt their work?

Once I answered the Sundered Lands questions, I did some brainstorming to determine what I wanted to get out of this hack. I knew Ars Magica was too big for me to replicate everything - and why bother? Ars Magica is a great game - I wanted to focus on some specific aspects rather than trying to rewrite the whole thing. My list was:

## What makes Ars Magica, Ars Magica?

- Wizards
- The Gift (Twilight, Longevity Ritual)
- The Order of Hermes
- Covenants (Companions, Groggs)
- Magic (Spontaneous Casting any





combination of technique + form; Formulaic Magic that is less flexible but more consistent)

- Laboratory (Rituals, Magic Item creation, Research)
- Politics (Order, Covenant, Feudal, Church)
- Mythic Europe
- Bonisagus
- Trianoma
- Redcaps
- Techniques and Forms
- Latin names
- The Church
- Demons
- Vis
- Teaching
- Writing books
- Parma Magica



I find it interesting to note that my initial list doesn't contain the Medieval Paradigm, which turned out to be one of the most important thematic elements.



I also kept a running list of ideas and elements that I wanted to work into the game. In the exact order they came to me:



- Spell moves should be divided into spontaneous, formulaic and ritual.
- Techniques and forms should factor in but not slow things down.
- Formulaic spells should grow out of use.
- Lab time should have half a dozen specific moves. Spells, Items, True Names
- This should be based mostly in AW rather than DW though I do enjoy many things about DW. Especially the writing style and clarity.
- Levels don't make sense in ArM.
- The covenant should be central to the fiction and therefore needs several specific moves. These moves can be moved almost verbatim from AW (chopper, hocus, hardholder).
- Most lab rules can be cribbed from the savvyhead.
- I think the harm scale makes much more sense than hit points.
- The basic moves cover many of the things spells would be used for.
- Should companions be controlled by other



players or just be modifiers to the mage? My instinct is to make them modifiers, but that breaks part of the covenant/troupe playstyle. It would also fail to take full advantage of Hx/Bonds that drive the game. Groggs can certainly be used like gangs from AW but companions are supposed to be above that. At the same time, the rules should be defined at a power level appropriate to the wizards so companions will get somewhat left behind.

Many of those initial concepts made it through to the final game, though seldom in the exact way I originally expected.

## Design Work

After my initial brainstorming, my notes tell me the next thing I nailed down was the set of Stats I wanted to use:

- **Body:** as in toughness, strength
- **Quick:** as in reflexes, agility, speed
- **Mind:** as in memory, awareness, learning
- **Spirit:** as in willpower, charisma, piety
- **Casting:** as in spellcasting - the ability to do magic (start with 1)
- **Book:** as in spellbook - the quantity and quality of the wizard's research (start with 0)
- **Parma:** as in parma magica - the wizard's ability to resist external magical threats (start with 0)

With the notable exception of Parma, which got dropped quite early on, the initial stats stuck around right up to the current version.

## Basic Moves

While it's certainly up for debate, I think the core player experience of a PbtA game is best conveyed through the Basic Moves that are available to all characters.

Since my original intent was to hack Apocalypse World's biggest successor, Dungeon World (as opposed to Apocalypse World itself) my early drafts used all of Dungeon World's Basic Moves nearly verbatim. One decision that informed nearly everything else in Wizard World was that there would be a separate set of arcane basic moves that would form the baseline for magi

actions. These Arcane Moves were intended to mirror the Basic Moves from Dungeon World, but use a different set of stats (the 15 Arcane Arts from *Ars Magica*). In other words, my starting place was that wizards have the same intentions as everyone else, they just use different tools to achieve their goals. This is another design feature that held true through every iteration.

## Playbooks

As the primary physical way (along with dice and pencils) the players interact with the game, playbooks (aka character sheets) were another important decision point. For better or worse, I stuck with my original concept of a playbook for each Hermetic House. If I were to go back, I would probably use more generic wizard types like War Wizard, Politician and Researcher rather than the Houses, but it's not a serious regret. Creating playbooks was one of the more tedious parts of the design and I put an incredible amount of time into silly things like compiling lists of Latin character names appropriate to each House. In retrospect, this was pretty low-leverage activity, but hopefully it contributes to the tone and feel I wanted to convey.

## The Covenant

While it would depend on the Storyguide, most *Ars Magica* players would agree that the Covenant is the centre of any *Ars Magica* campaign. I certainly wanted that to be the case in *Wizard World*, and I came up with a few concepts to try and cement this into the game's construction.

The first, and possibly most controversial, decision I made in relation to the Covenant was to develop a set of rules for the Covenant Council. While *Ars Magica* certainly mentions council meetings, the core game doesn't feature strong roles or rules to govern such meetings. By creating roles (and originally a separate set of moves) I hoped to put some mechanical weight behind the concept.

## Companions

Early versions of the game had each player maintaining separate playbooks for their companions. After a month or two of

playtesting, however, it became obvious that the game needed to focus on the wizards. From that point forward, companions became footnotes on the main playbooks. They added special moves and resources and personality to the wizards, but they were very clearly secondary in both power and presence at the table.

## Laboratory

The rules I came up with for lab work are well out of line for your typical PbtA game. They require resource management and tracking to a degree that probably infuriates your typical *Apocalypse World* devotee. However, I feel like they offer a reasonable balance between retaining the flavour and impact of lab activities while offering a significant reduction in homework when compared to *Ars Magica*.

## Beginning and End of Session Moves

The playtest campaign taught me how easy it is for these moves to become completely removed from the fiction. If I were restricted to one single piece of advice for potential *Wizard World* GMs, it would be work your ass off at integrating the events from the Beginning and End of Session moves into the ongoing story. It takes some work and some practice, but when you get it right, these moves will often let you get away with absolutely no prep at all. The repercussions of player rolls and decisions at these points can easily drive entire sessions.

## Harm & Healing

Astute critics will probably note that the way humours were integrated into the harm system is pretty hokey. I think this is a case where I probably should have killed one of my darlings, but for now it stays. The flavour of tying humours to character health fits so well with the Medieval Paradigm that I couldn't bring myself to drop it. Perhaps future iterations will lead me to a more elegant integration.

## Running the Game

The section on running the game is more or less a rehash of the agenda, principles and moves from *Apocalypse World* and its successors. I'm not sure that I added a huge



volume to the collective consciousness, but I think the section does provide enough guidance to run a game the way I intended.

## Conclusion

Wizard World is the crunchiest expression of the Apocalypse engine that I know of. While I often lament that fact, I take some solace in knowing that most people with a real love for Ars Magica will probably be part of the “more crunch” demographic.

Wizard World further diverges from typical PbtA games in that it really only flourishes over the course of a long campaign. Characters develop slowly and many of the coolest features (apprentices, familiars, the Covenant) only come into play after 15+ sessions. This is

absolutely intentional, and it's part of the game I really enjoy, but it does reduce the size of the niche within the story games market.

I frequently contemplate another revision to Wizard World - there's always more tweaks and improvements to be made - but so far I've managed to avoid committing to anything. For now, I just hope it finds some fans and manages to deliver on my original concept:

“Wizard World is an attempt meld the complex conceptual brilliance of Ars Magica with the simple elegance of the Apocalypse Engine.”





# Replacement Founders from Folklore and History

## Alternative Founders

by Timothy Ferguson

Ars Magica's Founders were the characters from a 1980s saga, played by people who were less interested in, and lacked the resources to perform, the sort of research that now goes into materials. If we replace some of the Founders with other figures from history, folklore, and mythology, many little irregularities in canon can be corrected. This article suggests a handful of new, female Founders, as simple replacements for current ones.

The intention, in this article, is that the rules for each House remain the same. The House Virtues, for example, do not change. The new Founders do, however, provide new colour, and give the Houses an alternative focus.

### Angelica replaces Jerbiton

Angelica appears in the Renaissance versions of the Roland Cycle. These works detail the adventures of the greatest champion of Charlemagne, who died in 778. Angela is a princess from Cathay, a Western projection on the limited information available about China. She comes to court overtly to act as an ambassador and adviser. Covertly, she wishes to cause chaos with her beauty. Angelica is Gently Gifted. She may have the Curse of Venus, or the Faerie Flaw of beauty that draws danger.

The Princess of Cathay is a strangely modern character, a breath of risqué Renaissance in the a medieval setting. She is Machiavellian, if not modern, in her view of power. Angelica is not a Christian or Muslim, and her paganism is nothing like that of the Europeans. She is unconcerned with piety: her gods, such as they are, either don't care what she does, or support her relentless power-seeking. Angelica is extremely comfortable with violence. She has so much wealth she sometimes prefers its use to magic. Her magic is entirely secular, which is scarce in Medieval Europe.

Angelica's spellcasting is rarely described, but favours illusions. She is particularly famous for a magical ring which was made by a magician from the North African tradition recently detailed in *Between Sea and Sand*. The ring makes the bearer invisible pressed to the lips, or placed within the mouth. When worn on the hand, the ring protects from other enchantments. This is a form of general magic resistance which could substitute as the origin for the Parma Magica.

Angelica also seems to have the talent of always having the right tool to hand. In one story, as an example, she gives a knight a wax block as he begins a quest, which he uses to gum shut the mouth of a dragon. How she manages this might be varied as a saga requires. It could be argued that she is a Creo specialist. Alternatively she may be able to see the future, so that she has time to prepare. A third option is that she is so powerful she creates the obstacles the characters overcome, staging their adventures for amusement or political advantage.

This maga's ability to travel magically is never explained. She seems able to regularly visit Europe, North Africa and Cathay, and yet not escape captors whose preparations are poor. This may indicate she travels using a magic item. She may have a Flaw which dampens her powers when bound, or when treated dishonourably. She may deliberately remain trapped to manipulate her rescuers. The indignities she suffers never become more bothersome than comfortable captivity and, on one occasion, being stripped naked. This would be scandalous for a European woman from any of the major religions, but we simply don't know what Angelica, or her gods, think about nudity. This scene, which is strongly reminiscent of the rescue of Andromeda, might also have been a mystery cult initiation, either for herself or her rescuer.





Angelica's name is clearly not Cathayan in origin. It is presumably a use-name adopted once she came West. It may simply be a derivative of "angel", which literally means "messenger" and suits her role as an emissary. It is also the name of a particular plant that was considered the most powerful of the medicinal herbs. The plant is also thought to be able to deflect curses from witches, tying her again to an alternative origin for the Parma Magica.

Her house symbol is an angel. This helped a secular witch, from a pagan country, disarm the suspicions of Christians. It also suited Angela's role as an emissary. The attributes of the angel change with each covenant, or magus, to reflect local resources or specialisations. Members of her house also often grow the plant after which their Founder is named.

Angelica had an estate near Charlemagne's capital at Aix-le-Chapelle (modern Aachen) but her followers always orbit mortal courts, so the Domus Magnus may have moved several times. She had little hideway castles, tucked improbably in mortal lands, so it is possible that her descendants have several centres of power, rather than a single one.

### **Aureua Respira replaces Verditus, Guernicus or Flambeau**

A simple change, with regard to the disciples of Hephaestus: the House is guided by the brides of living metal created by the god in ancient times. In standard *Ars Magica* the forgewives exist (see *Ancient Magic*), but they go undescribed and are apparently complicated machines. In the myths, though they are people. Various Greco-Roman gods created at least five versions of humans, not including "the gold that breathes." These women served, and learned from, the forge-god for decades, perhaps centuries: why not have them as the creators of magical items?

The forgewives are interesting as Founders for a House because there are at least three of them (perhaps as many as seven) and they can collaborate, compete, or have a complex filial relationship. As individuals, they presumably

have varying personalities, needs and goals. An interesting saga could be built around the seven forgewives as the only Founders.

The Gold That Breathes probably live in the forges of Hephaestus, but some may have traveled to other places, and made new lives. For example, one of the wives may have sought out the secret places sacred to the smith god Wayland. The Domus Magnus may remain beneath Etna, on the island of Volcano near Sicily, or it may have shifted to one of the secondary sites where a forgewive now lives.

The symbol of this House may be divided, if the Gold that Breathes do not work as a unit. One interesting choice is the candle. Vulcan is the god of work done by firelight. This symbol is unlikely to draw the attention of the Church. It is Mythic Europe's largest producer of, and consumer of, candles. Candles of different colours, or with odd holders, may differentiate covenants and magi.

The forgewives may be able to simulate many of the other things created by their husband and maker. These include ropes that can contain powerful faeries, the symbols of office of gods, hunting hounds of silver, and intelligent metal men, that speak, serve and fight. In their cosmology, all humans are descendants of his creation Pandora. They might even be able to make new types of humans by designing faerie wives, so that once crossed with a human, the offspring have both souls and useful, heritable adaptations. These are represented as Faerie Blood Virtues.

The Roman version of this god, Vulcan, ensured contracts and legal decisions were honoured. He was the god of avenging flame, and used the vast and terrible powers of the fires beneath the Earth to destroy transgressors in unobtrusive ways. An Order in which his creations are Founders may have a special group, part Guernicus and part hoplite, that carries his wrath-fire against those who break whatever passes for the Code in their world.

Vulcan was worshipped in a great festival on the 23rd of August. Great bonfires were lit and

small animals, or fish, thrown into them. This protected people from incineration, particularly in urban fires. A version of this ritual, led by the Gold that Breathes, may allow a worshipper to disregard damage caused by magical heat or flame. If used as a judicial ordeal, this harks back to the Flame Certamen of Second Edition.

### **Ganieda (Gwenddydd) replaces Criamon or Diedne**

Ganieda is the twin sister of Merlin, the famous adviser of Arthur of Britain. Like her brother, she is fatherless, in the sense that her sire was some sort of spirit. Various traditions call this creature a demon or a daimon (an airy spirit), and this would grant her one of the mystical blood virtues. She has a relatively quiet life compared to her famous brother, but is noted for her intelligence and attractiveness. She marries the local king, which indicates that if she either has the Gentle Gift or is able to compensate for it in some other way. Her brother, notably, does not seem to have the Gentle Gift in this version of the story: people around him clearly think him strange and dangerous.

The twins fall out because Merlin is responsible for the death of Ganieda's son, and he tells her husband she is unfaithful. This is true, but Ganieda uses a ruse to convince her husband her brother is a false prophet. After the death of Arthur, or another king depending on your version, Merlin is driven mad. He disappears into the deep woods, and the nobility are too busy slaying each other to care. Ganieda takes Merlin's role as leader of their magical tradition, then sends out her knights and servants, armed with a song she has composed. It uses her love for her brother as a balm for his mind, allowing him to rejoin society. The two reconcile, but Merlin does not take back leadership of the tradition, as he remains unstable.

Ganieda builds a tower for her brother in the depths of the Caledonian Forest. The tower has seventy doors. From it, he can view the stars, and study the meaning of creation. Merlin's madness increases his powers, but intertwines with them. Once his mind is cured

by a well in Brittany, he refuses to prophecy ever again, to prevent the return of his madness. He retires permanently to his tower.

Ganieda also drinks from the well, and her powers are increased. She rules Cumbria, beside her husband, Rhydderch the Generous (Latin: Rodarchus). He bears one of the Twelve Treasures of Britain: a sword which bursts into flame when carried by a good man. He regularly offers it to others, who refuse to take it. When her husband dies, Ganieda takes the sword and joins Merlin in his tower. After a time, Ganieda resigns her leadership of the tradition to their protege, the shapeshifter Talesin. The twins while away eternity in their researches and gentle disputations.

Ganieda is fascinated by astronomy, so perhaps the symbol of her house is a constellation. One option is Ursa Major, the great bear. This commemorates King Arthur, whose name means "bear".

The astronomical tower of the twins is, in a sense, an early covenant. It presumably still exists, hidden either by magic or a regio boundary. This would be the Domus Magnus of the Ganiedan tradition. It is almost certainly somewhere in the ancient kingdom of Strathclyde, over which Ganieda was queen. The Gaelic name for the kingdom (Alt Clut) is actually the name of the capital, which is modern Dunbarton in Scotland. The Forest lies to the north and west of the capital. The Druid Gwydion roused its trees to consciousness and commanded them in war in ancient times, and some of the oldest remember how to move, and fight.

### **Hypatia replaces Bonisagus**

Hypatia was the daughter of one of the librarians of Alexandria, and was murdered by a Christian mob. According to one version of the story, her skin was peeled away with sharpened seashells. This defilement of the body, destroying its appearance, is the best way of preventing the murder victim from becoming a akh. The akh, described in Lands of the Nile, are the immortal, Magical beings which are created by the ancient Egyptian mummification process. That the mob knew





this is less astonishing given that they were led by Coptic priests, many of whom are familiar with the writings of the ancients.



Although unable to return to the world as a corporal human, Hypatia may well persist and be able to make her influence felt in the world. She was killed, at least in some versions of the story, in the Serapium. This is a museum, which contains several doors to the West, and gives her easy access to a netherworld. Following her death, her spirit fled, and she now dwells in a palace in the depths of the Magic or Faerie Realm. Which afterlife she is operating from is an unanswered question, which may determine what resources she has available, and what her relationship with the practiced art of magic is.



Traditionally, doors to the west open on the Field of Reeds, where a person can store ghostly versions of their favourite possessions from life, provided they have a real-world analogue. For Hypatia to have a library of magical writings in this cosmology, there would have to be a physical representation of them somewhere. Even just an engraving that depicts her books suffices, but it can't be buried. Her name needs to be written in public, and read by people, to strengthen her connection with the world. A Hypatia trapped here could send out akh, if she had allies, or ubshanti. These are living statues, here either inhabited by a faerie under Hypatia's control, or directed remotely by her will. In this case, the symbol of her House may be a reed.



The Serapium is literally a temple to Serapis, the filial god of the Ptolemies. He offered a less constrained way of inhabiting the Egyptian afterlife than the Osiris, the King of the Field of Reeds. His followers, unlike the Osirians, don't take supplies with them to enjoy after death. Spiritual forces instead fulfil their wants. This may extend to sending minions into the mortal world. In this case, the primary agents of Hypatia are the mut, the pagan dead. They can sense those aligned to the magical realm, carry messages, and harm her foes with sickness or ill luck. In this cosmology, the symbol of her House is an image of Serapis.



At its most fundamental, the Serapium is a library annex, and so it was sacred to Sheshet, wife of Thoth. The Mistress of the House of Books is the goddess of knowledge and writing, and opener of the way to Heaven. She's also the goddess of Range and Duration, in her aspect of keeper of the true measures. She is the goddess of architecture, and her strings determine what a pace is. She is the goddess of astrology, and she decides the length of the day, year, and moment. A Hypatia versed in these teachings, might train human acolytes directly. The symbol of the priesthood of Seshat is an oddly asymmetrical seven-pointed star.

### Historical sources

Angelica is described in most detail in Orlando Furioso (<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/615>) and Orlando Immatorio (<https://archive.org/details/orlandoinnamorato00boia>)

The Aureua Respira are briefly mentioned in the Iliad. (<https://archive.org/details/homeriliadbooks00monrgoog>) and (<https://archive.org/details/iliadbooks1324wi1324homeuoft>)

Ganieda is best described in the Vita Merlini (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/vm/index.htm>)

Hypatia has several biographies, for example: M Dzielska, Hypatia of Alexandria (Harvard, 1995).



Magi of the Order

# The Flamboni Brothers

by Jason Tondro

"When in doubt, have a man come through a door with a gun in his hand." Raymond Chandler in *"The Simple Act of Murder," Saturday Review of Literature (April 1950)*

*Magi of the Order* is a regular column presenting a Hermetic magus at a single time of his or her life, with talisman, familiar, unique spells, story seeds, and any other required information. Submissions for *Magi of the Order* should be 1,500-2,500 words.

Sometimes you just need a well-armed bad guy to break down the door and open fire, and the Flamboni Brothers are those bad guys, the Mythic Europe equivalent of mobsters with a gat. They're neither planners nor thinkers, and are probably working for someone else — potentially within the Order but more likely a mundane power like Crusaders or a Norman lord. The Flamboni Bros first appeared on the official *Ars Magica* forums, where I got useful feedback from other players, and the initial draft has been substantially rewritten and expanded.

Not all magi of House Flambeau are chivalrous knight-wizards. In an era when the Crusades have pillaged Constantinople and burned the fields of Provence, it's not unusual for a God-fearing Christian to also be a greedy bandit. Add in the Gift and an immunity to flames, and pretty soon you have Andre and Hercule of House Flambeau.

The two men are twin brothers, born fifty years ago in Normandy and identified as Gifted thanks to the fires that erupted whenever they cried (a Turbulence effect which Flambeau talent scouts have seen many times before). They were apprenticed to the same master (Archmage Gierlaug of Montverte, described in *The Lion & the Lily*, makes a good candidate), and while other siblings might have tried to differentiate themselves from each other and seek their own destiny, Andre and Hercule knew their partnership was actually what made them

unique. Few magi of the Order could trust each other the way the two brothers could. They swore to always remain loyal and true, never to betray the other for the Order, for a woman, or even for gold.

That was twenty five years ago, and the Flamboni Bros (as they are sometimes known outside the Order) have made a name for themselves as raiders and outlaws within their House. Christian men (if flawed, as all men are), they participated in the Sack of Constantinople and nearly perished fighting a powerful Jerbiton who was defending the city, but they lived and plundered his corpse for vis. Andre and Hercule travel, and have taken work in Scotland, Iberia, and Thebes, but they prefer to spend their off-time in Normandy or Provence, where they can talk to priests, soldiers, and prostitutes. Recently, they've been active in the Albigenian Crusade and the Reconquista, picking off supernatural targets Crusaders were loath to approach. When they amass a treasure in vis, they spend it on enchanted items and lab rental, further enchanting their talismans. Andre and Hercule have armed themselves with a small arsenal of useful lesser enchanted devices, all purchased from other magi at Hermetic fairs or through the Redcap network. This includes impenetrable shirts, mail of sublime lightness, divining rods to find vis, portable tents, and jars of liquid which can put out unwanted fires. Their Study Requirement Flaw means any further improvement in Ignem will require elaborate preparation probably impossible for wandering outlaws. The Flamboni are facing a choice: find a covenant and settle down somewhere near a large source of flames (Castrum Solis won't let them join unless they forsake outlawry, which they refuse to do), or diversify into other Arts.





To many magi of the Order, Andre and Hercule are poor wizards indeed, content with an endless cycle of violence, prayer, penance, and carousal. They're basically thugs. But they enjoy the thrill of battle and the glory of victory, and they enjoy the wealth that follows even more. Among their own House, they are respected as successful outlaws. Outside the Order, they're known to certain nobles and high-ranking churchmen as magical mercenaries for hire ... If you're rich.

### Andre and Hercule, "the Flamboni Brothers"

**Characteristics:** Int +2, Per 0, Pre +1, Com -1, Str +1, Sta +1, Dex +1, Qik +1

**Size:** 0

**Age:** 50 (43; longevity ritual with a +6 modifier)

**Decrepitude:** 0

**Warping Score:** 3 (10)

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues and Flaws:** Hermetic Magus; the Gift; Puissant Ignem; Flexible Formulaic Magic, Greater Immunity (Fire), Affinity with Ignem, Fast Caster, Life Boost, Puissant Penetration; Study Requirement, Chaotic Magic, Careless Sorcerer, Close Family Ties, Avaricious, Pious  
**Personality Traits:** Loyal (Brother) +6, Avaricious +3, Pious +3, Hot-Headed +2, Passionate +2

**Reputations:** Mercenaries 3 (nobles and clergy), Respected Outlaws 2 (Flambeau), Glorified Thugs 2 (non-Flambeau magi)

#### Combat:

Dodge: Init: +1, Attack —, Defense +5, Damage —

Excellent Dagger: Init: +1, Attack +8, Defense +6, Damage +4

Fist: Init: +1, Attack +4, Defense +4, Damage +1

**Soak:** +13 (Sta 1, doublet 3, armor 9)

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-5), -3 (6-10), -5 (11-15), Incapacitated (16-20), Dead (21+) The Flamboni Bros usually avoid fatigue and wound penalties thanks to enchantments in their wand talismans.

**Abilities:** Artes Liberales 3 (rhetoric), Brawl 3 (dodge), Carouse 3 (soldiers), Church Lore 2 (churches), Code of Hermes 1 (avoiding crime), Concentration 3 (Ignem), Finesse 3

(Ignem), French 5, Guile 3 (cover stories), Intrigue 2 (planning crime), Latin 5, Magic Theory 4 (20) (enchanting), Order of Hermes Lore 3 (Flambeau), Parma Magica 4 (Corpus), Penetration 3+2 (Ignem), Stealth 3 (in armor), Theology 1 (penance)

**Arts:** Cr 10, In 3, Mu 8, Pe 5, Re 8, An 5, Aq 1, Au 1, Co 7, He 5, Ig 19+3, Im 5, Me 0, Te 5, Vi 5  
Twilight Scars: Clothes catch on fire when they are angry; Light fires when they have bad dreams.

**Equipment:** Silk shirt enchanted with *Doublet of Impenetrable Silk*, excellent (+2) full mail enchanted with *Armor of Sublime Lightness*, excellent (+2) dagger looted from Constantinople, *Wand of the Flamboni*, *Potion of Vulcan's Appeasement* (puts out a fire the size of a house, see *Magi of Hermes* 29), *Vis Divining Rod* (allows the user to hear vis within 30 paces, see *Through the Aegis* 94) and a *Cloak of Wilderness Refuge* (transforms into a large tent with room for 3; see *Magi of Hermes* 142). Each brother carries 8p Ignem on their doublets, in the form of jeweled buttons.

**Encumbrance:** None

**Appearance:** The Flamboni are stout middle-aged men of modest height but thick limbs. Their brown hair is shoulder-length and curls at the end, occasionally smoking when they get excited. Both wear a thick mustache. Although twins, they aren't as indistinguishable as they used to be; Hercule bears an acid scar on his hand and Andre's face shows signs of an old struggle with acne. Their silk shirts are worn beneath simple tunics in dark red colors, but if garbed for battle they look very intimidating in full suits of high quality mail.

**Casting Sigil:** The smell of burning pork  
**Spells Known**

T = This spell's casting total is improved by the caster's talisman.

*Doublet of Impenetrable Silk* (MuAn 15) +14

*Bind Wound* (CrCo 10) +18

*Eyes of the Cat* (MuCo[An] 5) +14

*Disguise of the New Visage* (MuCo 15) +16

*Endurance of the Berserkers* (ReCo 15) +20T

*Wizard's Leap* (ReCo 15) +21T, Mastery 1: Fast-Cast (only +9T when Fast Casting with requisites)

*Palm of Flame* (CrIg 5) +37T

*Pilum of Fire* (CrIg 20) +39T, Mastery 2:  
 Multiple Casting, Penetration  
*Arc of Fiery Ribbons* (CrIg 25) +37T  
*Coat of Flame* (Cr[Re]Ig 25) +35T  
*Ball of Abysmal Flame* (CrIg 35) +37T  
*Leap of the Fire* (ReIg 10) +35T  
*Veil of Invisibility* (PeIm 20) +15T  
*Demon's Eternal Oblivion* (PeVi 10) +15T  
*Circular Ward Against Demons* (ReVi 10) +19T  
*Scales of the Magical Weight* (InVi 5) +11  
*Sense the Nature of Vis* (InVi 5) +11  
*Wizard's Communion* (MuVi 20) +14

## Wand of the Flamboni

Andre and Hercule enchanted their talismans at the same time, using standard labs they rented from amenable Flambeau. Each wand is made of hickory with a brass "firing stud", a magnet tip, and a spherical pommel of clear glass. They worked together in the lab for a year to enchant both wands with invisibility, and another year to add an Endurance of the Berserkers effect. The wands were opened with 10 pawns, 5 of which are full.

### Shape/Material Bonuses

- +4 Ignem
- +4 invisibility
- +4 demons, devils and angels
- +4 Rego Corpus

### The Vanishing Flamboni

PeIm 20

24/day

The bearer of the wand presses the firing stud, utters the word "vanish," and disappears. His shadow is still visible.

Base 4, +1 Conc, +1 changing image, +5 levels for device maintains concentration, +5 levels for 24/day

### Endurance of the Flamboni

ReCo 24

### Constant Effect

As the spell *Endurance of the Berserkers*, but the spell works only on the talisman's owner and is sustained by the wand. To trigger the effect, the bearer of the wand presses the brass firing stud and utters the phrase, "Brothers to the end."

Base 10, +2 Sun, +1 level for 2/day, +3 environmental trigger

## In Action

At their current age, Andre and Hercule can't reliably threaten magi with Ignem Resistance over 25 without using Arcane Connections and sympathetic magic. And *Pilum of Fire* is good, but +15 damage isn't usually lethal if the target has any bonus to Soak. All this means the Flamboni Bros are mostly dangerous to young magi who haven't raised their Parma much and aren't Ignem specialists. They're flashy, scary, and impressive, but they're not completely beyond what young magi can handle, especially if those magi have shield grogs and some way to detect invisible foes. *Wizard's Leap* will run out their fatigue, and *Careless Sorcerer* means the Flamboni are one botch away from a very bad day.

The Flambonis prefer to go into battle invisible, with layers of magical armor, and able to ignore fatigue and wound penalties; since they can't see each other when they're invisible (and they're Careless Sorcerers) there are occasional accidents, but that's yet to be something their Parma or immunity to fire can't handle. When fighting enemies with Magic Resistance, their standard attack is a multi-cast *Pilum of Fire* (with three castings and a penetration of around 25); when an enemy can see through, negate, or otherwise bypass their invisibility, they escape harm with a fast-cast (and often fatiguing) *Wizard's Leap*. Enemies who don't have Magic Resistance can be easily destroyed with a low-Penetration *Ball of Abyssal Flame*. With Flexible Formulaic Magic, they can do a lot with a short spell list, adjusting their spells to account for high (or low) Magic Resistance on the part of their targets. While the brothers both have the Life Boost Virtue, they use it only in life-or-death situations, usually when one brother is hurt and the other must rescue him. Because of their Chaotic Magic, they avoid spontaneous effects.

**Stories:** Consider using Andre and Hercule as mercenaries hired by enemies of the PC covenant. Their mission: make life difficult for the magi, potentially even killing them. Banditry might begin by targeting the covenant's mundane resources. Teamsters





bringing supplies are murdered, their wagons plundered and burned; guards on patrol are ambushed and killed. Eventually the magi are either drawn into a fight, or else they find out where the Flamboni are hiding and counter-attack.



It's also possible for the PCs to get stuck in the middle between the Flamboni and the brothers's current objective, whatever that is. They might be attacking the Order of Suleiman in Iberia, pro-Cathar forces in Provençal, Egyptians in the Levant, or Jerbiton in Thebes. In their attack on the region's magical defenders, the Flamboni stumble across the PCs. This is an especially good opportunity for the players, because the Brothers won't be expecting or prepared for attack by the young magi; if the PCs can find a way to overcome invisibility, Parma, and a Soak of +13 (no small challenge!), they can potentially save the day and make an important friend.



But they'll also make an enemy. In a story with two brothers loyal to each other until death, the logical development is for one of those brothers to die and the other to swear



vengeance on the PCs, whom he blames for his brother's death. Whoever survives this battle, Andre or Hercule will need to withdraw to a safe place — probably joining a covenant at last — and spend a couple of years improving his weakest Arts before taking an apprentice. That apprentice will be trained to replace the dead brother, and will be instilled with all the rage the surviving brother can pass on. All of this will take time, giving the PCs a chance to create their new covenant and start working on their own abilities. They might hear rumors of the surviving Flambeau, and if they're wise they'll prepare for his eventual Wizard's War.

Finally, it's not uncommon for a story involving the Order to require a large group of combat-worthy magi. Certamen tournaments, a Wizard's March, Normandy's Hermetic Tournament, a Crusade against demonic adversaries... There are a lot of situations that call for fighting magi. The Flamboni are good for all these things, though if you're using them as Hoplites you might want to clean them up a bit and de-emphasize their mercenary ways.



# An Alternate take on the House Verditius Mystery

## Fixing Craft Automata

by Jeremiah Wishon

**Automata at a Glance:** Introduced into 5th edition *Ars Magica* through *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, automata are mechanized people or animals that serve as laborers or entertainment for their owners. As the mechanical creations of Hephaestus provided the original inspiration for the constructs, the secret of crafting automata is unsurprisingly a Mystery of House Verditius. With an appropriate Mystagogue, magi of House Verditius may be initiated into the Major Mystery of Craft Automata, allowing them to create unthinking but animate servants – with appropriately high vis and time costs for such greater enchanted items.

**The Problem:** Unfortunately, Craft Automata is not a popular Mystery for players of Verditius magi (or of other houses, which would risk the wrath of the Verditius magi by learning the Mystery) simply because the Virtue is not particularly useful. The rules for Craft Automata have two basic problems: (1) Automata have arbitrary limitations making them unnecessarily weak, and (2) The example crafted automata does not fully conform to the rules given in the text of the Mystery, to the rules for the Verditius Outer House Mystery, or to the rules for enchanted items.

As written, automata are extremely limited in their capabilities. By design, they are greater enchanted items but a maga may instill into them only a small range of effects. Specifically, all powers instilled into an automaton must be Range: Personal, all powers must be Target: Part, and no powers may be Duration: Concentration (most are Duration: Sun or Moon). The explanation for this set of rules is that: “Lacking intelligence, automata cannot maintain concentration, so unlike other magic devices, the maga may not instill Concentration Duration effects” (*HoH: MC*, pg. 130). Standard enchanted devices, such as a levitating belt, however, have no intelligence but can maintain concentration if designed

and enchanted to do so (*ArM5*, pg. 99). This rule for automata was probably intended to reflect the independent movement of the constructs (or perhaps a balancing issue), but in play automata operate on rules that are anomalous with how other items created with Hermetic magic function. The core rules explicitly allow for enchanted items to produce an effect through triggers not touching the item (environmental triggers) and to use non-Personal Range powers (*ArM5*, pg. 98).

In regard to the incongruence of Craft Automata rules with other established guidelines, the existing write up in *HoH: MC* features some apparent problems. The text for the Craft Automata write up indicates that Verditius magi may “inscribe lesser Verditius runes on the automata and add their Philosophiae scores” to the Craft: Automata roll (*HoH: MC*, pg. 129). Here, the phrase “lesser Verditius runes” refers to the “Verditius Runes” that are part of the Outer Mystery of Verditius Magic (and are “lesser” because they are not part of the Verditius Elder Runes Minor House Inner Mystery). For other enchanted items, these runes have several functions: they add a maga’s Philosophiae score to the Material and Shape bonus (capped at the Magic Theory score of the maga) of a lab total, plus they reduce the vis cost of opening an enchantment by the maga’s Craft score in the relevant mundane ability used to create the item. A Verditius maga opening a magically-created ring for enchantment, for example, would add her Craft: Silversmith score to her Lab Total and reduce the vis cost (in pawns of vis, to a minimum cost of one) of opening the enchantment by the same amount. Allowing magi to add their Philosophiae to a crafting roll rather than a Lab Total is odd, but the rules get even more muddled by the example in the text. In the “Automaton Example” entry in the book, (*HoH: MC*, pg. 132), the sample





magus Hephaestion does not add any bonus from Philosophiae to his crafting roll, nor does he reduce the vis costs by his Craft score (either Craft: Automata or a mundane Craft). His Lab Totals are surprisingly low for being 15 years out of apprenticeship, suggesting that no Philosophiae or Shape/Material bonuses are being applied. Finally, the automata requires a ritual spell to close, which is inconsistent with other enchanted items (though the ritual does add some flavor to automata).

## Proposed Solutions and Reasoning

### Option 1 - Mild Revision for Clarity, Consistency, and Utility.

Much of the write up on automata is already thematically appropriate and mechanically solid (forgive the pun), needing only mild revisions in order to increase clarity of the rules and consistency with other game mechanics, as well as to offer greater reward for time and resources committed. One possible revision would be to change the automata rules to be consistent with the text, the House Virtue of Verditius Magic, and other greater enchanted items: permit any Ranges, Durations, and Targets for powers imbued into the automaton. Any power allowed for other greater enchanted devices would then be allowed for automata. The crafting roll would be a clear: Intelligence + Craft: Automata + Philosophiae + stress die vs. the Automaton's Magic Might (in other words actually apply the Philosophiae score but avoid the muddle of talking about arbitrarily adding lesser Verditius runes to crafting rolls).

Next, the clarified lab total formulas for Verditius magi imbuing powers into automata would be: Intelligence + Shape/Material/Philosophiae (capped at Magic Theory) + Magic Theory + Aura + Arts + Craft: Automata + Hubris + Virtues. As usual, any maga would add the appropriate bonuses for the magnitude of known spells being imbued, plus any bonuses from her lab, familiar, apprentice, and Forge Companions. While the maga would be creating the automaton with Craft: Automata, she would be able to use Forge Companions with an Ability relating to

the material base of the automaton (those with Craft: Silversmith for silver automata, those with Craft: Mason for stone automata, those with Craft: Blacksmith for iron, etc.). Naturally, a non-Verditius maga with Craft Automata as a Virtue, lacking Verditius Magic, would not add her Philosophiae score to the Shape/Material bonus nor could they benefit from Forge Companions.

The revision would specify that Faerie Blood: Dwarf applies to the Ability of Craft: Automata as it does all non-Supernatural Craft Abilities. Note that in the main text of *HoH: MC*, the Ability appears as "Craft Automata" (i.e. as a skill distinct from mundane Craft Abilities) but in the "Automaton Example" text block (pg. 132), it appears as "Craft: Automata" (i.e. as a subset of Craft). For sake of consistency, the Virtue should be "Craft Automata," while the Ability should be "Craft: Automata."

The revision would also reduce the cost of preparing the automaton by 1 pawn of vis per point of Craft: Automata the maga has (or, alternately, subject to the decision of the troupe, it would permit a single appropriate mundane Craft Ability to apply - such as Craft: Silversmith for silver automata), making it consistent with Verditius Magic for other instilled items. Please note that Verditius Magic does nothing to reduce the cost of the imbued spell or Ability effects, which would be added in subsequent seasons. Automata would remain expensive in both vis and time. Magi without Verditius Magic, of course, would not receive this discount at all.

Finally, a clarification would be added to the statement that automata are facsimiles of "men or beasts." Specifically, automata would be allowed to be a facsimile of any living creature, including a magical or fantastical man or beast such as a drake, cyclops, or unicorn. The shape, however, would not grant any extraordinary effects beyond what a natural beast of the same size and shape would possess, nor would it gain any means of locomotion (flight, swimming, or even walking) based on its shape.

Overall, despite these changes automata would retain their distinctive characteristics. They would be greater enchanted devices (nearly) exclusive to House Verditius, they would have Magic Might scores, they still cost silver and vis (10 Mythic Pounds per point of Magic Might to construct, plus the vis costs for both the body and the automaton's powers), they still would have physical Characteristics and Ability-like powers, they still would be unthinking but autonomously moving machines which could perform simple tasks, and they still would begin to break down over time. As an Inner House Mystery, someone hoping to learn Craft: Automata still would need to get their Verditius Cult Lore to a score of 5 or greater before they could even become initiated into the Mystery and thus begin investing in the associated Ability - unless they learn the Virtue outside of the normal methods and risk facing the same fate as Icilius the Traitor.

### Exemplia Gratia

Polumeta of House Verditius decides to craft an automaton to serve her as an untiring Forge Companion. She selects the shape of a human (Size +0) made of iron (Material Base Points 5). The automaton's Magic Might is 15 (Base 10 + Size 0 + Material 5). In Spring 1220, she enters her laboratory to make the body of the construct, paying 150 Mythic Pounds in raw materials.

At the same time, she rolls to craft the automaton's body with a bonus of 17 (Int 3 + Craft: Automata 6 + Philosophiae 8) added to a stress die, vs. Ease Factor 15 (for Magic Might 15). Failure would cost her 10 Mythic Pounds (or the cost of a pawn of vis in the saga) in wasted materials but would grant a cumulative +1 bonus to her next attempt at the task.

Assuming success for her crafting roll, Polumeta opens the automaton for enchantment in the same season, using only 9 pawns of Vim vis (Magic Might 15 - Craft: Automata 6) due to her Verditius Magic Virtue. The automaton has a vis capacity of 15 pawns.

The automaton also gains the average physical Characteristics of the species it resembles, granting it Str +0, Sta +0, Dex +0, and Qik +0. As an object, the automaton would not have a Soak value and instead would roll Stress Checks to resist damage from story events (per the rules in *City and Guild*, pg. 77). As all Hermetically enchanted items should be Superior Quality or better, the automaton would have +1 to Stress Check rolls and have 4 damage levels.

Note that a non-Verditius magus with the Craft Automata Virtue (but not Verditius Magic) would not be able to craft the automaton's body and prepare it for enchantment in the same season.

In Summer 1220, Polumeta imbues the automaton with Freedom of Movement, granting it the ability to walk. The spell effect is base 25, with an additional 1 level for 2 uses per day and 3 levels of effect for the necessary trigger, in this case sunrise/sunset (Base 5, +2 Sun, +1 Part, +1 Mentem requisite, +1 level for 2 uses/day, +3 triggered at sunrise/sunset). As the effect is Rego Terram (due to the iron body), she pays 3 pawns of Rego or Terram vis for the final effect level of 29.

As her lab total is 81 (Int 3 + Shape/Material/Philosophiae 8 + Magic Theory 9 + Aura 5 + Rego 10 + Terram 12 + Magical Focus 10 + Craft: Automata 6 + Hubris 2 + Virtues 3 + Lab 10 + Forge Companions 3), she imbues the effect in a single season of work.

The automaton retains 12 pawns of vis capacity for further spell effects. While she plans to imbue additional effects into the automaton to make it helpful as a Forge Companion, it is functioning and mobile. The magnitude 6 imbued effect would increase the automaton's bonus on Stress Checks to reduce damage to +7.

In subsequent seasons, Polumeta imbues the automaton with Ability-like effects meant to replicate Craft: Blacksmith and Craft: Silversmith. The level of effect for each is 54 for a score of 6 (Base 5, +2 Sun, +1 Part, +1



Mentem requisite, +5 for additional magnitudes of score, +1 level for 2 uses/day, +3 triggered at sunrise/sunset).

With her lab total of 81, each enchantment requires 2 seasons of work and costs 6 pawns of vis. The automaton retains 0 pawns of vis capacity for further spell effects. As a Superior Quality item with 28 magnitudes of Hermetic effects imbued into it, the automaton has a +29 bonus to Stress Checks.

In the final seasons of her project, Polumeta would invent a ritual spell Tie the Threads that Bind for her creation. As the automaton is a Magic Might 15 construct, her ritual would need to be level 30.

With her lab total of 50 (Int 3 + Magic Theory 8 [No bonus from Specialty] + Aura 5 + Rego 10 + Vim 10 + Magic Focus 10 + Virtues 3 + Lab 1), she would create the spell after 2 seasons of work. For subsequent recreations of this model of automaton, she could simply cast this newly invented ritual rather than invent a new variant of Tie the Threads that Bind.

Note that if the troupe still found the cost of automata to outweigh the utility, two other changes could be applied. First, in terms of mundane costs, crafting the body of the automaton could only cost 1 Mythic Pounds per point of Magic Might, rather than 10 Mythic Pounds per point (bringing their construction cost much closer to the 1 Mythic Pound per Might point cost that is standard for Awakened Devices created through a Hermetically-integrated Mechanica of Heron Virtue). Second, the troupe could remove the need for the ritual spell Tie the Threads that Bind on the automaton. At present, a bit of flavor aside, this spell serves little purpose except to inflate the vis cost and time commitment of crafting automata – both of which are already prohibitively high for players in many sagas. Without this ritual as the final step in the creation of an automaton, the maga would have the option of continuing to add enchantments to the automaton over time – as long as the vis capacity of the construct is not exceeded.

## Option 2 – Replace the Craft Automata rules with Mechanica of Heron.

As a more radical deviation from the existing Craft: Automata rules, a troupe could allow Verditius magi to create “simulacra” Mechanica of Heron (instead of automata) using Craft: Automata in place of the Mechanica of Heron Ability per the rules on Ancient Magic, pg. 77-80. The system pushes the limits of Hermetic Magic further than Craft Automata and the mechanical products are better (they can learn and do not break down over time), but they are often incredibly expensive in vis. The House Verditius Inner Mystery of Elder Runes is almost obligatory for large simulacra. During play, the troupe would still call the simulacra “automata” and make them compatible with Hermetic theory, simply substituting one set of rules for a more popular alternative.

Under these rules, a Hermetically-integrated Craft Automata Virtue that replicates Mechanica of Heron’s “Awaken Device” usage would be to set the process as follows:

First, the Verditius maga would need to craft her automaton (or “simulacrum”). She would select an appropriate size, shape, and material. The process would not have a roll associated with it but would cost a number of Mythic Pounds equal to its Material Base Points and Size.

She would then add a value up to her score in Magic Theory to this total to determine the automaton’s Magic Might score.

Since Verditius Magic allows a maga to forge an item from raw materials while preparing a device for enchantment (*ArM5*, pg. 93), the maga would open the device for enchantment and “awaken” it in the same season. This process would require pawns of Vim vis equal to a standard enchanted device of its material and size, plus 1 pawn of Creo or Form-specific vis per point of Magic Might, minus the maga’s Craft: Automata score (per the standard rules for Verditius Magic).

The process would require no roll but “awakening” the device would require an



appropriate Lab Total. The “awakening device level” would be the automaton’s Magic Might score + (Size x5), while the Verditius maga would use the following Lab Total: Intelligence + Creo + Form + Shape/Material/Philosophiae (capped at Magic Theory) + Magic Theory + Aura + Craft: Automata + Hubris + Virtues + Lab bonuses. The process of awakening the automaton could take more than one season, per the standard rules for enchanted items. This awakening process would not utilize Forge Companions.

At the end of this process, the automaton would gain an Intelligence score of +0 and could learn languages and Abilities through subsequent instruction, but could not be made into a familiar without a further Hermetic Breakthrough. Note that Awakened Devices in Ancient Magic may be bound as familiars, but that rule is not necessary for this proposed rule substitution.

Next, the maga could imbue the automaton with powers, Abilities, means of locomotion, etc., per the rules in *HoH: MC*, pg. 130. The automaton could have powers of any Range (max: Voice), Target, or Duration, as long as they are valid for greater enchanted devices. The maximum capacity of powers within the automaton would be based on the material and size of the enchanted device (*ArM5*, pg. 80).

When imbuing powers, the maga would use Forge Companions with an Ability relating to the material base of the automaton (those with Craft: Silversmith for silver automata, those with Craft: Mason for stone automata, those with Craft: Blacksmith for iron, etc.).

### Exemplia Gratia

Polumeta of House Verditius decides to craft an automaton. She selects the shape of a large drake made of silver (Material Base Points 6), which is the size of a bull (Size +2). In Spring 1220, she makes the body of the automaton, paying 8 Mythic Pounds (Material Base 6 + Size 2). As her Magic Theory score is 9 (counting specialization), she sets the construct’s Magic Might score as 15 (Material Base 6 + Magic Theory 9).

She pays 15 pawns of Creo or Terram vis (Magic Might 15) to awaken the automaton, but must first open it for enchantment, using 24 pawns of Vim vis ([Material Base 6 x Size Multiplier 5] – Craft: Automata 6). In total, she spends 39 pawns of vis in the season. Fortunately, the Verditius maga has Verditius Elder Runes, allowing her a seasonal vis usage maximum of 72 pawns (Magic Theory 9 + Philosophiae 8)!

The automaton’s “awakening” level is 25 (Might 15 + Size 10 [Size +2 x 5]). Her lab total is 76 (Int 3 + Creo 9 + Terram 12 + Magic Focus 9 + Shape/Material/Philosophiae 8 + Magic Theory 9 + Aura 5 + Craft: Automata 6 + Hubris 2 + Virtues 3 + Lab 10), so she has no trouble completing the process in a single season.

For many seasons from autumn 1220 onward, she imbues the automaton with powers and Abilities like flight, fire breath, and so on, until the automaton has 30 pawns worth of powers and Abilities. The automaton also learns languages and Abilities through instruction.

### War Automata

As presented in *Houses of Hermes: Mystery Cults*, the primary role of automata is in entertainment, with crafting as a less viable alternative for the constructs. At present, automata have no natural weaponry or defenses (though they are durable), cannot use most (if any) spell effects designed to damage enemies, and can gain only limited combat Ability scores. A maga designing an automaton may imbue it with either Brawl or Martial Abilities as Ability-like effects, but the limit of the score imbued into the automaton is the Ability score of the maga herself.

Revising the rules for Craft Automata, however, could easily permit automata to have more combat utility than the current rules are designed to allow. Some possibilities include:

- Allowing the maga to apply the one or two most appropriate natural weapons and defenses (but not Virtues) from the mundane Qualities list for the species of





which the automaton is a facsimile (from *HoH: MC*, pg. 40-43). The automaton would not gain any behavioral or biological Qualities, such as Amphibious, or Venomous. A mechanical bear, for instance, would gain Large Claws and Tough Hide, but not Berserk, Extra Natural Weapons, Ferocity, Grapple, or Tough.

- Human-shaped automata would get no natural weapons or defenses.
- Represent all natural weaponry and defenses of the automaton as options for imbued effects, following the general guidelines established by familiar bond enchantment (see “Razor-Sharp Steel Claws” in *ArM5*, pg. 105).
- The level of effect for a natural weapon or defense would be 19 for most non-metal automata or level 24 for metal constructs (base 4 or 5, +1 for Touch, +2 for Sun, +1 level for 2 uses/day, and +3 levels for an environmental trigger). The effect would use Creo and the Form appropriate to the material of the automaton, which would usually be Terram.

The specific choice of the above options can be left to individual troupes based on their goals for their saga.

### Exemplia Gratia

Polumeta of House Verditius decides to craft a silver automaton in the shape of a stag (Material Base Points 6, Size +2). It also gains the average physical Characteristics of the species after which it is modeled, granting the automaton Str +2, Sta +2, Dex +0, Qik +2. It also gains Large Antlers, granting it +3 to Attack, +2 to Defense, and +3 to Damage.

With those base Characteristics and the Large Antlers Quality, the stag automaton has the natural attack of Antlers: Attack +3, Defense +4, Damage +5. In order to maximize the efficiency of the construct, in future seasons the Verditius maga will likely want to imbue it with Ability-like effects for Brawl, plus possibly some additional magical defenses.

Note that the natural attacks of automata should not usually have an initiative value, as they should act on the turn of their master.

Polumeta creates a silver stag automaton, then “activates its spirit,” and finally returns to the lab in a third season to add some weaponry.

In this later season, she grants it large antlers for +3 Attack, +2 Defense, and +3 Damage (per the “Natural Weapons Table” in *HoH: MC*, pg. 43). This attack is a level 24 effect (Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 for 2 uses/day, +3 for the trigger sunrise/sunset), which she can easily enchant into the automaton in a single season. She pays 3 more pawns of Creo or Terram vis.

Regardless of any optional rules adopted to make automata better suited for combat, troupes playing in a saga featuring automata should specify the basic conditions under which the constructs must face a Stress Check. According to *City and Guild*, objects must check versus harm when the story demands such a roll. The passage notes, “When a story event threatens to break an item, the player makes a stress check to see whether that item survives the incident intact or is damaged” (pg. 77). The passage then specifies that such rolls are required under two circumstances, when they are used improperly or when the user/wielder botches. Of course, automata always roll a simple die and are incapable of botching, so the latter case cannot apply (*HoH: MC*, pg. 130). The remaining condition then is “improper use,” so the troupe should decide whether being struck in combat constitutes improper use of the automaton. Some possibilities for the frequency of Stress Checks include, any time the automaton is struck in combat, once after each combat in which the automaton participates, or only when struck by formidable combatants (such as trained groups, powerful supernatural beasts, exceptionally strong opponents, etc.) or by magic. A hostile Flambeau magus, for instance, would certainly threaten a Stress Check with Creo Ignem effects (many of which would apply a “Severe Weather” penalty of -3 to the roll).

### Conclusion

Overall, what we as players (and/or Story Guides) should want out of a Major Virtue like Craft Automata is for it to offer a rewarding

but somewhat unique path for characters to walk in Ars Magica sagas. As currently written, the rules for Craft Automata are certainly unique and add flavor that is both welcome and appropriate to Ars Magica. They do not, however, offer a great deal of reward to players who choose to dedicate their characters to the construction of automata. By adopting either the “mild” or the radical (i.e. Mechanica-substitution) rules, by contrast, players could maintain most of the desired flavor but also get outcomes that are much more appropriate for the costs (both absolute and opportunity) involved in the pursuit of creating these magical constructs.

In the case of Option 1’s example, our Verditius maga would produce an automaton that is expensive in both time and vis, but the end product is a literal crafting machine capable of laboring tireless in the forge for decades or even centuries so long as it receives regular maintenance. Moreover, the creation

would yield valuable laboratory texts, allowing Polumeta to reproduce the imbuing of Craft: Blacksmith and Craft: Silversmith into automata of identical size and materials at a fraction of the time commitment. The Verditius maga, while investing more in the project than most sane non-Verditius magi would be willing to commit to the quest of obtaining a skilled craftsman, would find herself in a position to produce subsequent creations (much more quickly and slightly more cheaply) that she could sell to other magi – even other Verditius – and then profit from regularly repairing those constructs. For Option 2, our example maga would create a much more wondrous product, leaving few practitioners of Craft Automata feeling as if their endeavor were merely a gimmick. Finally, by adopting some set of rules for adapting automata to a combat role, troupes could expand upon the possible uses of automata without deviating too egregiously from the existing designs for the constructs.





## The Folio of 1227

by Jason Tondro



*Illuminations* is a regular column of books and spells. Submissions of individual books and spells should be about 250 words, while an entire column should be 1,000-2,000 words. In addition to complete game rules for the book or spell, story seeds and background information are especially appropriate.

Every seven years, House Bonisagus, through the auspice of a five-person committee called the Colentes Arcanorum, oversees the publication of a Folio, a collection of the very best tractatus and laboratory texts. These books and spells are submitted from throughout the Order to the five members of the Colentes and brought to a pre-selected Regional Tribunal meeting where the Colentes make the final decisions. Over the next season, the Folio is prepared and then sent to Durenmar. Three copies are made: one goes to Magvillus, Domus Magna of House Guernicus. The second goes to the covenant that housed the Colentes in the season after Tribunal, when the Folio was compiled. The third goes to Harco, where it begins a tour of covenants throughout the Order. It takes about a year for professional scribes to copy a Folio, and so negotiation over who gets to see the Folio — and how long it stays at a covenant — is fierce. There is, however, nothing to prevent a covenant from, once it has its hands on a Folio, selling copies of it to other covenants; Folios are not normally covered by the Cow & Calf.

Much more about the method by which Folios are compiled and distributed can be found in *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages*, pages 10-11 and 22-23. A sample Folio is partially described there; for the purposes of this article, I assume that is the Folio of 1221. It's not stated in *Houses of Hermes: True Lineages* how long the Folio tradition has been maintained, and this will determine how many Folios have been produced in your saga. The end of the Schism

War is one helpful milestone; if the Folios have been produced since that time, they should be on about their 25th edition. But if House Bonisagus instituted Folios much earlier, there could be as many as twice that number. A long, or even complete, run of Folios would be a treasure indeed, even for a mature covenant.

### Credit Where Credit is Due

My first efforts to create a sample Folio took place on the official Ars Magica forums. Many people submitted texts. Some of those submissions are included here, with minor editing, expansion or revision. These contributors, whose work is greatly and sincerely appreciated, are:

- maine75man: "Corpus Truum Falsum" and "Deambulanti per Lapidem Coruscante"
- Stephen Coffey of Artemis Games: "Bodies Are All the Same"
- lamech: "Ward Against Grime" and "Pure Water"
- Jonathan Link: "Gentle Touch of Aesclepius, Reinvented"
- ezzelino: "Fruits of the Dead"

### The Folio of 1227

The editorial staff of the Folio of 1227 is made up of:

- Archmage Petrus (*Tales of Power* p70), Magic Theory 12
- Conscientia (*Magi of Hermes* p27) age 65, Magic Theory 12
- Richard Strabo (*Legends of Hermes* p80), Magic Theory 10
- And two additional younger Bonisagi: Alphonse (from the Rome Tribunal) and Bete Noire (from Normandy), each with Magic Theory of 8

These five magi were chosen in 1221 and, over the course of seven years, received various submissions in the form of tractatus and lab

texts. Ordinarily, they would meet seven years later in 1228, but because Grand Tribunal is scheduled for 1228, Regional Tribunals were held a year early and the Colentes met in 1227 instead (perhaps at the Regional Tribunal where your PC covenant is located) to review the submissions and decide the final makeup of the Folio. Once the content of the Folio was certain, the workload was assigned, with the younger magi getting the bulk of the copying work. Everyone remained at the covenant which hosted Tribunal for one season, assembling the Folio's chapters into a single opus which was then sent on to Durenmar for copying.

## Contents

Perhaps because of its unusual size, the Folio of 1227 contains more tractatus than is usual for a Folio. Each chapter of the Folio contains biographical notes on the author as well as notes and observations by the Colentes Arcanorum. Reading a chapter of a Folio grants 1 XP in Order of Hermes Lore in addition to the chapter's normal benefits.

### Chapter 1, “Deambulanti per Lapidem Coruscante” by Giraldus of Bonisagus

A Quality 12 (11+1) commentary on Bonisagus's *Art of Magic*. (See *Covenants* p90 for details on commentaries.) Giraldus is a middle aged wizard now living in the Greater Alps Tribunal but who was fostered for a time at Durenmar. He is a skilled writer and his “Walk In Shining Stone” is a worthwhile read for any magus who has spent at least one season studying Bonisagus's classic text. Giraldus's work was given pride of place in the Folio thanks to its nostalgic references to the House's Domus Magna and its famous great work, the library.

### Chapter 2, “Bodies Are All the Same” by Tibor Milos of Tremere

A Quality 6 tractatus, with half the XP going to Corpus and the other half to Animal. Tibor (*Through the Aegis* p15) has begun a research effort to combine Corpus and Animal into a single Art. His motivation is simple: he's a lycanthrope. Reading *Bodies Are All the Same* grants 6 breakthrough points towards the goal of creating a new Form combining Corpus and

Animal (a Hermetic Breakthrough). Because the purpose of Folios is to disseminate knowledge gained by House Bonisagus, in fulfillment of their Oath, it is unusual for other Houses to be represented here. The inclusion of this text may represent an attempt to curry favor with House Tremere or the Covenant of the Northern Seas. Tibor probably submitted it to the Colentes only after being commanded to do so by his superiors.

### Chapter 3, “Corpus Tuum Falsum” by Scatabra of Tytalus

A Quality 7 tractatus on Corpus. Rivalries among Magi are nothing new, but few conflicts in recent memory come close to the rivalry between Scatabra of Bonisagus and Pistrix of Tytalus. Scatabra was a much sought after longevity expert and healer while Pistrix was equivalently infamous as a necromancer. For over fifty years the two Maga bickered and fought. When their rivalry finally devolved into wizard's war it was Pistrix who was left broken and bleeding. Scatabra, true to her healing nature, stayed her hand and revived her rival... then brought Pistrix up on charges before tribunal for improperly prosecuting the war. The fine in vis levied against Pistrix was nearly as epic and historic as the rivalry itself. It would take years for her to repay the debt.

When Scatabra recently succumbed to aging (she was always either unable or unwilling to benefit from her own expertise) many thought the final chapter of the rivalry had been written. Then a strange package was delivered to the Colentes Arcanorum. *Corpus Tuum Falsum* was accompanied by a rook of Corpus vis and was submitted in the name of Scatabra of Tytalus. It was a bound collection of correspondences covering the art of Corpus between the two less-than-friendly experts in the art. Once the reader gets past the harsh criticism and oneupmanship in the correspondences, a remarkable level of respect and shared insight is revealed. The final inscription reads, “The Last Rook, For the Genius to Whom I Owe Everything.”



## Chapter 4, "The Gentle Touch of Asclepius, Reinvented" by Ra'am of Bonisagus

Lab text. Ra'am of Bonisagus is researching methods for those under the effect of Longevity Rituals to remain fertile, a Minor Breakthrough. He has two daughters, both of whom are Gifted. Ra'am's elder daughter is his apprentice, and his younger daughter was apprenticed to a Mercere magus pursuing a breakthrough to make the longevity ritual as effective for mundanes as for people with supernatural abilities and flaws.

Ra'am chose *The Gentle Touch of Asclepius* as an object of research because of the spell's unique approach to curing the body as a whole, rather than curing individual wounds. Along the way, he experimented, and the final spell gained a useful side effect.

*The Gentle Touch of Asclepius, Reinvented* (CrCo 30)

The effects of this spell are identical to those described in the original (see *Houses of Hermes: Societas* p). In addition, as a result of experimentation, this spell removes the Eunuch Flaw.

## Chapter 5, "Water Without Limit," by Nihilo of Bonisagus

Lab text. This spell is part of an ongoing research project by Bonisagus magi scattered throughout the Order; their goal is to break the Lesser Limit of Creation and invent ritual spells which create permanent objects (or heal wounds) without requiring vis. This project has spanned several generations of magi, and this Hermetic Breakthrough may, in fact, be unattainable. Nihilo, a relatively young Bonisagus and Seeker, was exploring in Scandinavia when he found a magic ring with the power to create water. Using it as a source of inspiration, he invented a spell which mimicked the ring's effect.

*Water without Limit* (CrAq 20, Ritual)

R: Touch, T: Ind, D: Mom

This spell fills a jug with water; if the jug is large enough, the spell will create enough water to fill a small pond. The water is pure and clean. Unlike other Hermetic rituals, this spell does not require vis to cast.

Base 2, +1 touch, raised to level 20 because it is

a ritual.

## Chapter Six, "Ward against Grime," by Porcus of Bonisagus

Lab text. Porcus ("Pig") of Bonisagus is a hard-working magus determined to make life better for the grogs and companions who reside at his covenant. Frustrated by the fact that long-lasting magical effects cast upon his allies inevitably warp them, he has begun original research to break the Limit of Warping. This would be a Hermetic Breakthrough, and may not even be possible, but his research has resulted in some promising effects anyway.

These laboratory notes describe neither a spell nor an enchanted item, but rather an enchantment of the familiar bond. Porcus tested this effect on himself and his boar familiar before submitting the text for publication. Experimenting on your own familiar bond is incredibly dangerous and, to traditional Bonisagus, unethical. The inclusion of these laboratory notes in the Folio could only have come after an intense debate among the Colentes Arcanorum.

*Ward against Grime* (ReTe 24)

Constant Effect

Dirt, including grimy dirty that would unbalance the humours or otherwise spread disease, is warded away from either the caster or the caster's familiar; for both individuals to benefit from this spell, the familiar bond must be enchanted twice. The target of this spell receives a +1 living conditions modifier. Enchanting the familiar bond using these laboratory notes for the first time grants 5 Breakthrough points towards the invention of Hermetic effects which do not cause warping on the individual they were designed for, even when the effect is long-term.

Base 5, +1 Touch, +2 Sun, +1 level for 2/day, +3 levels for environmental trigger.

## Chapter Seven, "The Fruits of the Dead," by Eurydice of Rome

A Quality 5 tractatus on Magic Theory. Eurydice is a reclusive and aging Bonisagus maga whose covenant lies near a portal to the Homeric underworld, almost certainly a



Faerie regio. The result of her latest visit there, this obscure text details the interplay between various necromantic techniques and the limit of the soul. Anyone studying it learns a new Shape & Material bonus, Pomegranate, granting a +3 bonus when used in connection with the dead.

### Chapter Eight, "Gemini Magic," by Pollux of Bonisagus

A Quality 6 tractatus on Magic Theory. Pollux and his brother Castor are identical twin magi; Castor was trained by a Trianoma magus, but Pollux is dedicated to laboratory research. The Gift of both men is oriented towards the constellation of Gemini (see *Astrological Magic in The Mysteries: Revised Edition* p36-37 and 56-57). This tractatus represents the successful conclusion of several years of original research on Pollux's part, while his brother wandered Mythic Europe. The text describes a new Target: Pair, which covers two individuals. When determining level and magnitude, Pair is equivalent to Part. Inventing Target: Pair was a Lesser Breakthrough. Anyone reading "Gemini Magic" gains access to this new Target.

### Folio Cost

If purchasing the Folio of 1221 with build points, the book costs 50 points. This places no additional value on the various new targets, Breakthrough points, Shape/Material bonuses, or other effects in the Folio, and is based solely the Quality of the tractatus and the magnitude of its laboratory texts.

If purchasing this Folio with vis, 13p might be a fair price (2 for each tractatus and 1 for each spell). This price also places a fairly hard cap on the amount of vis which might be used to bribe House Mercere to put a covenant higher on the list of stops the Folio makes while it is being copied; if a covenant can purchase a copy of the Folio for 13 pawns, it is unlikely to spend more than this to negotiate a year-long visit by the Folio and its Redcap handlers.





# Alternate Rules for Libraries

by Jason Tondro



**Peripheral Code's** regular column for house rules spotlights unofficial additions, changes, or clarifications to *Ars Magica* 5th edition. Rules should be play tested before submission and submissions should include examples illustrating the new rules. Discussion of how you developed, implemented, and revised your submitted rules is welcome. Submissions of less than 1,000 words will be gathered with other small submissions into a single column; longer submissions can stand on their own.

Libraries have always been important to *Ars Magica*, but the game has not always chosen to model those libraries in the way it now does. In 5th edition, every book in a covenant's library is tracked individually. This creates story seeds and unusual texts which might, for example, give minor benefits in edge cases. But it also creates considerable paperwork and requires time and effort to track. *Transforming Mythic Europe* includes a system for abstracting very large libraries, but that system is neither designed nor especially effective for libraries on the scale of most covenants.

The rules proposed here turn a library into a collection of Art scores, Abilities, Virtues, and Flaws. The library is further described with a few basic characteristics: Size, Upkeep, Research, and Reputation. The system has some similarities to the system for laboratories found in *Covenants*.

Note that nothing in this system prevents a covenant from still keeping track of noteworthy, curious, or rare volumes. Characters can still seek out the Branches of the Arts, trade books, and do everything they normally do, but they can also simply purchase five Quality 8 tractati and dump 40 XP into their library without having to describe each book with a title and an author.

This system has one other unintended but welcome benefit: tractati and summa with a below-optimal Quality are useful again. In the current rules, a Quality 6 tractatus (for example) is unlikely to be read and a PC who writes such a book is wasting his time. But with the rules presented here, all books placed in a library add to the library's score in that Art or Ability. If a PC writes a Quality 6 tractatus, those 6 XP will count in the library's score and contribute to the overall usefulness of the library.

There is a lot of room for expansion in this system, particularly when it comes to Virtues and Flaws. It's also possible that a library might benefit from additional characteristics. If you try these rules out in your saga, let me know how it worked out. Suggestions are welcome.

**Summary:** A library, whether it belongs to a covenant or some other institution, is described by its score in Abilities and Arts, by Virtues and Flaws, and by four characteristics: Size, Upkeep, Research, and Reputation. As books are added to the library, its score in the appropriate Art or Ability rises. The higher these scores, the more people can study at the library at the same time, and the higher the readers can raise their own Arts and Abilities.

## Building the Library

- **Arts and Ability Scores:** Libraries begin with all Arts and Abilities at 0; as books are added to the library, the library's scores rise.
- **Tractatus:** Every tractatus contributed to a library gives it XP equal to the quality of the book, raising the library's Art or Ability score. Example: a Quality 10 tractatus on the Art of Auram is donated to the library; the library gains 10 XP in Auram. If it had 0 Auram before, it now has Auram 4.

● **Summa:** Each summa contributed to a library gives it XP equal to the quality of the summa. If, after this addition, the summa is higher in level than the level of the library in that Art or Ability, raise the library's score to the level of the Summa. Some summa grant the Virtues Sound Summa, Roots of the Arts, or Authority. Check to see if the Art or Ability qualifies for the "Thin Selection" Flaw. Example: A Root of the Art in Corpus, with Quality 21 and Level 6, is donated to the library, which previously had Corpus 4. The library gains 21 XP in Corpus, for a total of Corpus 7 (3). This is higher than the level of the new summa, so that level is not raised; if the library hadn't had any Corpus until now, it would gain Corpus 6.

● **Laboratory Texts:** Lab texts should still be tracked individually. Adding a lab text to a library does not increase the library's Abilities or Arts. Lab texts should, however, still be counted when determining the library's Size characteristic. Unless otherwise detailed, assume each lab text is a single book.

● **Virtues and Flaws:** Libraries have Virtues and Flaws, similar to characters. However, a library's virtues and flaws do not need to balance. They are assigned, added, and removed as appropriate to the events of your saga. Example: The magi of Semita Errebunda keep a small collection of books in their council chamber. This grants the library the "Magic Aura" and "Hermetic" Virtues.

● **Characteristics:** Libraries have four characteristics. Size measures how much physical space the library occupies; it is initially determined by the number of books in the library, but can rise or fall depending on Virtues and Flaws. Upkeep measures how many Mythic Pounds need to be spent each year to maintain the library. Reputation determines the library's positive or negative reputation. Research is a modifier applied to all attempts to use the library to research a question.

## Size

A library's base size is determined by the number of books in the collection. The base Size is modified by Virtues and Flaws. A Size 0 collection is one armarius, or book closet, holding about 20 volumes displayed with their cover facing front. When determining base Size, round up.

| Number of Volumes | Size | Approximate Size                     |
|-------------------|------|--------------------------------------|
| 1                 | -4   | One book                             |
| 3                 | -3   | A small box                          |
| 5                 | -2   | A large box                          |
| 10                | -1   | A chest                              |
| 30                | 0    | One armarius                         |
| 50                | +1   | Two book closets                     |
| 100               | +2   | A small room lined with book closets |
| 300               | +3   | 300 square feet                      |
| 500               | +4   | 500 square feet                      |
| 1,000             | +5   | 1,000 square feet                    |

## Upkeep

A library costs silver to maintain. If you are using the system for covenant finances detailed in Covenants, a library's upkeep does not include the salary of any staff, who should be counted separately as Specialists (in the case of literate librarians or copyists) or covenfolk (for illiterate guards or servants). The presence of a scriptorium greatly expands the size and cost of a library, but can also generate a useful income.

A library's base Upkeep is equal to its Size, after base Size has been modified by Virtues and Flaws. Virtues and Flaws can also modify Upkeep, after base Upkeep has been determined.





| Upkeep Score | Annual Cost |
|--------------|-------------|
| Less than 0  | —           |
| 0            | £1          |
| +1           | £2          |
| +2           | £4          |
| +3           | £7          |
| +4           | £11         |
| +5           | £16         |
| +6           | £22         |
| +7           | £29         |

## Reputation

A library gains a reputation based on its Virtues and Flaws. Multiply the library's Reputation score by 5 and treat that as XP in the library's final Reputation. If the library's Reputation score is positive, the reputation is a good one; if the score is negative, the library's reputation is bad.

## Research

Some libraries are more conducive to research: they might be comfortable, well-organized, or easy to access. Conversely, libraries with limited access, distracting environments, or magical menaces contained therein make it hard for a scholar to focus on research. Whenever the library is used to research, add the library's Research characteristic to the die roll.

Some libraries have Arts and Abilities with specializations; remember to include this bonus if the specialization applies during research.

## Using the Library

- **Studying in the Library:** A reader can study a topic in the library for a season and gain XP. The library must have a positive score in the Art or Ability that is being studied.

- **Number of Students:** The more books a library has, the more people can study that topic at once. Divide an Art by 5 or an

Ability by 2, rounding up in both cases. This is the maximum number of students who can study that Art or Ability at the same time. Virtues and Flaws can affect the number of students who can study a particular topic, or in the library as a whole.

- **Source Quality:** The Source Quality of a library depends on what sort of book is being read, represented by the library's Virtues and Flaws.

- If the student is reading a Root of the Art, the Source Quality is 20, but the student cannot raise this Art over 6.
- If the student is reading a Sound Summa, the Source Quality is 15, but the student cannot raise the Art or Ability over that of the library.
- If the student is reading an Authority, the Source Quality is 15 if the student's Art or Ability is less than the library's, or 10 if the student's score is equal to or higher.
- If the student is not reading any of these special types of books, but his Art or Ability is less than the library's score, the Source Quality is 10.
- Otherwise, the Source Quality is 5.

- **Research:** The Library's Arts and Abilities indicate how useful it is when used to research a specific question, problem, or topic. When researching a topic, use the Library's Art or Ability instead of yours, but this takes time based on the Library's Art or Ability score: typically 1 hour per point of Art or 3 hours per point of Ability.

## Library Virtues & Flaws

A library's Virtues and Flaws come in various categories, such as Collection (relating to the books themselves), Facilities (furniture, tools, and equipment in the library, as well as the library building itself), Staff (those who work in the library), and Supernatural (magical aid and hindrances to the library).

## Library Virtues

- **Acquisitions Budget (Minor or Major Staff Virtue):** The library has a full-time staff member whose job is to add books to the library, and his or her work is supported with a budget of silver and vis. Every year, the library gains 30 XP over and above any additions arranged by the PCs. If taken as a

Major Virtue, the library gains 30 XP every season. *Upkeep* +1 (if *Minor*) or +3 (if *Major*)

- **Authority (Major Collection Virtue):** The library has a copy of an especially famous book, widely recognized as the authoritative book on a given Art or Ability. These books are typically summa with a Build Point cost of 32-35, and they are protected by special security measures. If a reader can gain access to this book (not certain, because it is often in demand), his Source Quality is 15 if he has an Art or Ability less than that of the library; otherwise, his Source Quality is 10. This virtue can be taken multiple times, each time describing a different book with one associated Art or Ability. *Upkeep* +1 *no matter how many times it is taken*, *Reputation* +1, *Research: Give the library's Research characteristic a specialization in the relevant Art or Ability*
- **Dedicated Building (Minor Facilities Virtue):** The library is its own structure, perhaps a tower or stone building. This makes it easier to secure and eliminates distractions. Add +1 to Advancement totals. *Upkeep* +1, *Reputation* +1, *Research* +1
- **Diverse (Minor Collection Virtue):** The library's collection is particularly diverse, so a reader who comes across a mention of a given book or author in his studies of a text can find that book on the shelves and study it himself. In this way, the study of a particular problem often sheds light on other related topics. When studying in this library, you may also take 1 XP in three other Arts or Abilities. *Reputation* +1, *Research* +1
- **Divine Aura (Major Supernatural Virtue):** The library is located within a Divine aura which not only protects the library but also makes it a spiritually nourishing place to study. Libraries in divine auras are usually decorated with stained glass windows of heavenly artistry which illuminate the place in sublime radiance. The air is clear, cool, and pure. Supernatural forces from other realms do not dare enter. Virtuous personality traits are encouraged. Add +1 to Advancement Total. *Reputation* +2
- **Famous (Minor Collections Virtue):** The library is famous for its books, and this fame makes it both a source of pride to its owners

and a bargaining chip useful when negotiating with those who desire access to the library. *Reputation* +3

- **Folios (Minor or Major Collections Virtue):** The library has copies of the folios, special collections of the most noteworthy innovations in Hermetic theory distributed by House Bonisagus every seven years. Over the history of the House, the folio series now numbers dozens of volumes. As a Minor virtue, the library has scattered folios, an incomplete set which, while useful, cannot be relied upon. As a Major virtue, the library's collection of folios is complete, at least back to the founding of the library. If *Major*, *Reputation* +3

- **Guards (Minor Staff Virtue):** The library is protected by one or more full-time mortal guardians. This could be something as subtle as the covenant's resident hound, or something more overt — such as an armed grog at the door. *Upkeep* +1, *Size* +1, *Reputation* +1

- **Hermetic (Minor Facilities Virtue):** Hermetic libraries shelve their books spine-out rather than front-facing. This saves space. *Size* -2

- **Law of Alexander (Major Collections Virtue):** The library operates under the law of the famous library of Alexandria, which had the right to seize any book passing through the town, copy it, and return it promptly in good condition. The library gains 30 XP every season, provided the library is located on a busy trade route. The story guide decides how the XP is spent; Area Lore and Organization Lore are especially common, while Academic Abilities are likely if the library is near a cathedral school or university. *Upkeep* +1, *Research* +1, *Reputation* +1

- **Living Quarters (Minor Facilities Virtue):** The library is equipped with small cells where a researcher can sleep, albeit uncomfortably. This aids research, but isn't very healthy. Add +1 to Advancement totals, but inflict a -2 living conditions modifier. *Size* +1, *Research* +1

- **Magic Item (Minor Supernatural Virtue):** Enchanted items typically replace mundane lighting or heating, or serve as mobile lecterns. As a rule of thumb, every 20 levels





of an enchanted item adds +1 to *Reputation* or *Research*, or subtracts -1 from *Upkeep*.

• **Magical Aura (Minor Supernatural Virtue):** The library is located inside a Magic aura. This is beneficial to magi, whose personal defenses and utility spells work well there. Objects in a Magical aura also tend towards perfection, so books are naturally well preserved. *Upkeep* -1, *Reputation* +1

• **Regio (Minor Supernatural Virtue):** The library, or part of it, is located in a regio, making it secure from accidental intrusion. If there are multiple levels to the regio, this Virtue can be taken more than once. *Reputation* +1

• **Research Library (Minor Facilities Virtue):** The library is especially well equipped for research. This can take many forms; there may be staff members assigned to researchers, to help them find books and to suggest titles from the collection. There may be magical aids to research, such as the ghosts of dead magi who answer questions when asked. *Upkeep* +1, *Reputation* +1, *Research* +3

• **Roots of the Arts (Minor Collections Virtue):** The library has a collection of books on the Arts specifically designed to bring newly-Gauntleted magi up to the level of skill required to train an apprentice. When studying from a Root, the Source Quality is 20 but the student cannot raise the Art over 6. (There are only 9 Arts covered by the Roots, but no canonical list of which ones; the following are suggested: Cr, Pe, Re; Co, Ig, Im, Me, Te, Vi.)

• **Scriptorium (Minor or Major Staff Virtue):** The library has an attached scriptorium where copies are made of its books. This makes it possible for more people to study in the library at the same time, since there are likely to be duplicate copies of the most important books. Double the number of people who can study a given Art or Ability in the library. If using the rules for covenant finances found in Covenants, the work of a Major Scriptorium serves as a Lesser source of income. *Minor: Size* +2 and *Reputation* +1; *Major: Size* +3 and *Reputation* +2

• **Secure (Minor Facilities or Major Supernatural Virtue):** The library is especially secure. While most libraries have locks on the exterior door, this library chains books to the shelf or to the podium or lectern where it is being read. If the library is large enough, it is divided into chambers, each of which has its own locked door. During the day, when the library is in use, there is at least one full-time staff member whose primary task is keeping an eye on the books to ensure they are not stolen. As a Major Supernatural Virtue, the library's doors are magically locked, books are magically kept on the shelf and trapped with spells, and those who attempt to take books past the library's doorways are struck with curses. If *Minor*, *Upkeep* +1 and *Reputation* +1; if *Major*, *Reputation* +2

• **Sound Summa (Minor Collections Virtue):** The library has at least one summa of sound quality, defined as a book with a Build Point cost of 28-31. When a student uses this book over the course of a season, the Source Quality is 15 but the Art cannot be raised over 15 and an Ability cannot be raised over 5. If the library has only one sound summa for a given Art or Ability, it may have also the Thin Selection Flaw. This Virtue can be taken multiple times, each time for a different Art or Ability.

• **Specialization (Minor Collections Virtue):** The books in the library are focused on a particularly narrow field within a larger topic. Give the Art or Ability a specialization, and for all purposes (including Research) the Art or Ability is 1 higher within this specialization. This virtue can be taken more than once; each time, add a specialization to a different Art or Ability. *Reputation* +1

• **Special Collection (Major Collections Virtue):** The library has a large collection of books on a single very narrow topic, a category equivalent to a specialization. The library's Art or Ability is 3 higher for this topic, including Research. This bonus cannot be combined with the Specialization Minor Virtue. This Virtue may be taken more than once, each time applying to a different Specialization. *Size* +1, *Reputation* +2

• **Supernatural Guardian (Minor or Major Supernatural Virtue):** The library is guarded by a creature with Might 5-15 (if a Minor virtue) or 20+ (if a Major virtue). If one or more of the magi's familiars is usually present in the library, it is appropriate to take this Virtue. *Size +1 if the Guardian is Size -1 or larger; if Minor: Reputation +1; if Major: Reputation +2*

• **Trapped (Minor or Major Facilities Virtue):** The library has been constructed with traps to dissuade intruders. As a Minor Virtue, these traps are designed to frighten off or capture trespassers, but as a Major Virtue the traps inflict harm and can even kill. *If Minor: Reputation +1, Upkeep +1; if Major: Reputation +2, Upkeep +2*

• **Vis Source (Minor Supernatural Virtue):** The library is home to a naturally occurring source of vis. Intellego is common, as are the Forms of which books are made: Animal (for parchment), Herbam (for bindings and ink), and Terram (for gold and gems). If located in an aura other than Magic, the vis will suit that aura. *Reputation +1*

• **Warded (Minor or Major Supernatural Virtue):** The library is magically warded against fire, flood, vermin, bad air, or something else. If taken as a Minor virtue, this is enough to protect the library against all but the most extreme (usually magical) examples of the warded condition. Small fires are no threat, but if the entire library goes up in flame, a Minor ward will be overwhelmed. Taken as a Major Virtue, even extreme and magical threats will be rebuffed by the ward. This virtue can be taken multiple times; each time, select a different object for the ward. *Reputation +1 if Minor or +2 if Major*

• **Well Organized (Minor Collection Virtue):** The books in this library are kept in alphabetical order by author or title, and the library catalog is always up to date and accurate, probably with the help of magic. Research in this library takes half the usual amount of time. *Research +1, Reputation +1*

• **Wide Selection (Minor Collections Virtue):** The library has a large number of books on a single topic, probably including multiple copies of the same works. Double the number of people who can study this Art

or Ability at once. This Virtue may be taken more than once; each time apply it to a different Art or Ability. *+1 Reputation*

## Library Flaws

• **Damaged (Minor Collections Flaw):** A part of the library's collection has been damaged, perhaps by fire, rot, or use. Select one Art or Ability. Anyone studying that Art or Ability reduces Advancement Totals by 3. This Flaw can be used when the most important books on a given topic are of low Quality. This flaw can be selected multiple times; each time it applies to a different Art or Ability. *Reputation -1*

• **Distracting (Minor Facilities Flaw):** Something about the library keeps readers from focusing on their books. This may be because the library is poorly heated and very cold, because its windows are few or poorly positioned (forcing readers to quit early), or simply because the other occupants of the library won't shut up. Regardless of reason, studying in the library requires either additional time per day or additional days per season. A reader can choose to either use his 10-day distraction time or suffer the effects of Overtime, as if he was using the lab routine of that name. *Reputation -1, Research -1*

• **Faerie Aura (Minor Supernatural Flaw):** The library is located inside a Faerie aura. It has supernatural features which, while seldom outright harmful, are nevertheless inconvenient or distracting. The staff, and some of the books themselves, are probably faeries involved in stories that deal with the acquisition, preservation, or improper seeking of knowledge. *Reputation +1, Research -1*

• **Infamous (Minor Facilities Flaw):** The library has a bad reputation. It may be well known as a shell of its former glory, for its unhelpful or even antagonistic staff, or for a terrible event which happened there. *Reputation -3*

• **Infernal Aura (Major Supernatural Flaw):** The library is located within an Infernal aura, a place which encourages sinful behavior and serves as a refuge for demons. Quaesitores will deter magi from using such facilities and may have non-magical





methods of monitoring those who insist on using them anyway. *Reputation -3*

• **Limited Access (Minor or Major Facilities Virtue):** While readers may be allowed into the library's reading areas, access to the stacks is limited. When a reader desires a book, he asks a staff member to retrieve it for him. This makes theft very difficult, but it also means that staff members occasionally refuse to deliver a requested book. As a Minor Flaw, it is possible for outsiders to gain access to the stacks by gaining permission from one of a few people (usually the head librarian, his assistant, and his superior). Those with access carry or wear a token showing that they are permitted entry, and this token may be magically trackable or monitored. As a Major Flaw, only one person — the head librarian — is allowed into the library stacks. All requests for a book go through that person. *If Minor: -1 Upkeep, -1 Reputation, -1 Research; if Major: -2 Upkeep, -2 Reputation, -2 Research*

• **Lost Books (Minor Collections Flaw):** A sizable number of books have been misplaced, locked away, or are otherwise inaccessible. Select 250 Build Points worth of books and subtract them from the library's Arts and Abilities. Calculate Size based on the remaining books, not the lost ones. If the books can be relocated, this Flaw goes away and the library's scores rise back to their previous level. This Flaw can be taken more than once. *Reputation -1*

• **Plagued by Supernatural Entity (Minor Supernatural Flaw):** The library is home to a ghost, a malicious faerie, a divine spirit which dissuades researchers from books it considers dangerous, or a minor demon. It may be home to a creature with Might, which makes it its lair. *Reputation -2, Research -1*

• **Poorly Organized (Minor Collection Flaw):** The library is organized in an especially inefficient manner, if at all. Often, books are listed in the order in which they were added to the collection, and the only person who knows where these books are is the head librarian. Research in this library takes twice as long. *Research -1, Reputation -1*

• **Scattered (Major Facilities Flaw):** The covenant has no single location, and the books are scattered in several places, including the sanctum of various magi. Research is difficult, and it's not unusual for a student seeking a book to find that the book is inaccessible. *Reputation -1, Research -1*

• **Thin Selection (Minor Collections Flaw):** The library's score in an Art or Ability does not reflect a broad collection of books, but rather a single summa of high level. Only one person can study this specific Art or Ability at once. This Flaw is never applied to an Art of 5 or less or an Ability of 2 or less, which can already only be studied by a single person. To avoid this Flaw, the library must have as many books on an Art as the Art/5, or as many books on an Ability as the Ability/2 (round up in both cases). This Flaw may be taken more than once, each time applied to a different Art of 6+ or Ability of 3+.

• **Unhealthy (Minor Facilities Flaw):** The library is cold, damp, uncomfortable, or plagued with vermin or noxious air. Those studying in the library have a -1 living conditions modifier and a -1 to Advancement Totals. This flaw can be taken up to three times, with the modifier growing to as much as -3. *Upkeep -1, Reputation -1, Research -1*

• **Unusual Language (Minor Collection Flaw):** The library's key texts in a particular subject are in a language other than Latin. This Flaw can be taken multiple times; each time, apply it to a different Art or Ability. Do not apply this Flaw to books on Language, unless they are in neither Latin nor the language which is the book's subject. In the Theban Tribunal, this Flaw applies to books in any language other than Classical Greek. *Reputation +1*

• **Vulnerable (Minor Facilities Flaw):** This library lacks even the most basic security precautions. For example, it is on the ground floor and there is no door. *Upkeep -1, Reputation -1*

• **Warped (Minor Supernatural Flaw):** The library has accumulated significant magical warping; either it is inside a powerful Magic Aura (and should have that Virtue) or else has been the site of powerful magic that

went awry, warping everything within at the same time. The library has two Minor Flaws and one Minor Virtue which represent this warping, and these Virtues and Flaws apply to the building itself, most books, and the oldest staff. (It takes 5 years to acquire the first Flaw, 15 years to acquire the second, and 75 years to acquire the Virtue.)

*Reputation* -1

## Sample Libraries

### Semita Errebunda

In 1220, the new covenant of Semita Errebunda has only a score of books, about enough to fill a single shelf, supplemented by 40 laboratory texts. It is a humble collection with many gaps, but buttressed by the Roots and several summa of sound quality.

**Size** 0

**Upkeep** -1

**Reputation** "Good, Considering" 2 (5)

**Research** +1

**Arts** Cr 6, In 6, Mu 0, Pe 16, Re 4; An 0, Aq 0, Au 6, Co 16, He 6, Ig 6, Im 16, Me 4, Te 3 (3), Vi 6

**Abilities** Code of Hermes 6, Latin 5, Magic Theory 6, Order of Hermes Lore 4 (1), Parma Magica 4, Penetration 4

**Virtues** (+13) Magic Aura, Hermetic, Magic Item: Library Lamp (-1 Upkeep, +1 Research), Regio x3, Roots of the Arts, Sound Summa x6 (Pe; Co, Im; Code of Hermes, Latin, Magic Theory)

**Flaws** (-15) Thin Selection x15 (Cr, In, Pe; Au, Co, He, Ig, Im, Vi; Code of Hermes, Latin, Magic Theory, Order of Hermes Lore, Parma Magica, Penetration)

### The Northern Seas

This unusual Spring covenant sails in a small fleet of ships. It has no single library; instead, its 29 books on Abilities and the Arts and 24 casting tablets and lab texts are scattered amongst the various sanctum of the magi or in Boulogne, where a companion of the covenant keeps his home and office.

**Size** 0

**Upkeep** 0

**Reputation** "What Library?" 1

**Research** -1

**Arts** Cr 9, In 1 (5), Pe 10, Re 11; An 11, Aq 1 (6), Au 0, Co 12, He 0, Ig 1 (6), Im 0, Me 0, Te 1 (6), Vi 8

**Abilities** Area Lore: Northern Seas 1 (7), Artes Liberales 1 (2), Code of Hermes 1 (7), Dominion Lore 1 (3), Faerie Lore 1 (3), Finesse 1 (9), Infernal Lore 1 (3), Magic Lore 1 (3), Magic Theory 2 (6), Parma Magica 1 (6), Penetration 1 (3), Philosophiae 1 (2), Profession: Sea Captain 2, Spell Mastery: *Clouds of Thunderous Might* 1 (4) and *Pilum of Fire* 1 (4)

**Virtues** (+1) Hermetic

**Flaws** (-9) Scattered, Thin Selection x6 (Cr, Pe, Re; An, Co, Vi)

### Jardin

This Summer covenant in Provençal maintains a beautiful dedicated library overseen by Bohella, a full-time librarian who keeps a close eye on the collection. This includes 40 books on Arts and Abilities and 90 lab texts. Among the collection is Janus of Bonisagus's *Further Notes on Magical Notation*, a work of famous complexity, and *The Golden Flowers of Toulouse*, a remarkable book on the Occitan language by Raimond Saissac. The summa and tractatus are not shelved in the Hermetic fashion, but are instead chained to tables where they can be read. The building is large enough to include small alcoves where it's easy to hide, or even nap.

**Size** +4

**Upkeep** +7

**Reputation** "A Beautiful Place to Work" 3

**Research** +1 (Occitan or Magic Theory)

**Arts** Cr 1 (3), In 7, Mu 18, Re 12, Pe 11; An 8 (2), Aq 13, Au 4, Co 10, He 20, Ig 3 (2), Im 13, Me 13, Te 3, Vi 13

**Abilities** Area Lore: Provençal 4, Artes Liberales 3, Charm 4, Code of Hermes 2,





Etiquette 4, House Bjornaer Lore 4, Latin 2, Magic Theory 7, Occitan 5, Parma Magica 1 (3), Penetration 1 (1), Profession: Viticulturist 1 (3), Teaching 1 (3), Theology: Cathar 1 (1)



**Virtues** (+18) Authority: Magic Theory & Occitan, Dedicated Building, Living Quarters, Secure (Minor), Sound Summa x9 (Mu; An, Aq, He, Im, Me, Vi; Charm, Etiquette)



**Flaws** (-18) Faerie Aura, Thin Selection x16 (In, Mu, Re, Pe; Aq, Co, Im, Me, Vi; Area Lore: Provençal, Artes Liberales, Charm, Etiquette, House Bjornaer Lore, Magic Theory, Occitan), Unusual Language: Gothic (House Bjornaer Lore)



### The Oracles of Didyma



This Autumn covenant in the Theban Tribunal is 230 years old. The core of the library is a collection of 76 books especially strong in Intellego, Corpus, and Creo; this is supplemented by a collection of 53 lab texts and many thousands of prophecies made since ancient times. A magus of the council, currently Alexander of Ex Miscellanea, is librarian and is responsible for a small group of young scribes. The library is housed in an enormous temple to Apollo; most of the temple is open to the sky, but the library is enclosed, between two laboratories.



**Size** +4



**Upkeep** +4



**Reputation** Prophecy Collection 3



**Research** -1



**Arts** Cr 15, In 14 (divination), Mu 13, Pe 14, Re 13; An 7 (3), Aq 1 (3), Au 5 (2), Co 18, He 5 (3), Ig 6, Im 12, Me 10, Te 8, Vi 19



**Abilities** Area Lore: Miletos 1 (6), Artes Liberales 4, Civil & Canon Law 5, Classical Greek 1 (6), Code of Hermes 3, Magic Lore 3, Magic Theory 5, Medicine 4, Organization Lore: Didyma 2 (2), Organization Lore: Merenita 3, Order of Hermes Lore 1 (4), Parma Magica 2 (5), Penetration 3, Philosophiae 2 (9), Theology: Pagan 9, Verditius Cult Lore 1 (3)



**Virtues** (+5) Hermetic, Scriptorium (Minor), Special Collection: Prophecies

**Flaws** (-11) Faerie Aura, Thin Selection (Au; Civil & Canon Law, Code of Hermes, Magic Lore, Medicine, Organization Lore: Merenita, Theology: Pagan), Unusual Language (Latin: Auram & Parma Magica, Arabic: Medicine)

### Longmist

The library of Longmist is made up of two levels of a great tower, connected by a spiral staircase. About 100 volumes are housed there, but working in the library is a challenging task, as many of the books are heavy, old, and in bad repair. They often refer to other books, forcing a student to return again and again to the library to pour over the shelves alone. Among the collection are a few rare books on the art of Sihr, native to the Ex Miscellanea spirit tradition of the Corrguineach. The tower lies within a regio accessed by a single door, and so is well protected from outsiders; nevertheless, many books have been lost to damage or theft over the years.

**Size** 0

**Upkeep** -1

**Reputation** "Repository of Ancient Lore" 2

**Research** 0

**Arts** Cr 14, In 12, Mu 13, Pe 14, Re 12; An 11, Aq 14, Au 14, Co 11, He 14, Ig 14, Im 12, Me 14, Te 12, Vi 12

**Abilities** Area Lore: Hibernia 2 (2) (History), Artes Liberales 1 (3), Code of Hermes 1 (8), Dominion Lore 2, Faerie Lore 2 (2), Faerie Magic 1 (8), Finesse 2, Infernal Lore 5, Magic Lore 2 (1), Magic Theory 2 (10), Order of Hermes Lore 1 (9), Parma Magica 2 (1), Penetration 2, Sihr 2 (11), Philosophiae 1 (3), Spell Mastery: *The Crystal Dart* 1 (3), *Demon's Eternal Oblivion* 1 (3), *The Wound that Weeps* 1 (3)

**Virtues** (+6) Diverse, Hermetic, Magical Aura, Regio, Specialization, Sound Summa (In)

**Flaws** (-21) Distracting, Thin Selection x16 (All Arts; Infernal Lore), Unusual Language: Gaelic x4 (Area Lore: Hibernia, Faerie Lore, Magic Lore, Sihr)

## Collem Leonis

A covenant almost four centuries old should have a legendary library. But at the covenant of Collem Leonis, only 63 books remain; the rest have been stolen or lost. Among those missing is a large cache of introductory summa which would grant the Roots of the Arts Virtue if found (in addition to raising most Arts scores and adding Magic Theory 4). Several Sound Summa, along with a collection of excellent tractatus on Arcane Abilities, were stolen by the last autocrat, who was corrupted by a demon; among these books, which are all buried in a cave, are summa on the Goetic Arts of Summoning and Binding.

**Size** -1

**Upkeep** -2

**Reputation** "There's Nothing Left!" 1 (5)

**Research** 0

**Arts** Cr 4, In 3 (3), Mu 3 (3), Pe 3 (3), Re 6 (1); An 3 (3), Aq 3 (3), Au 3 (3), Co 5 (1), He 5 (3), Ig 5 (3), Im 6 (3), Me 5 (5), Te 6 (3), Vi 4 (1)

**Abilities** Area Lore: Collem Leonis 8, Area Lore: Dortmund 2, Area Lore: Sauerland 2, Collem Leonis Lore 1 (7), Order of Hermes Lore 3, Profession: Autocrat 4

**Virtues** (+3) Hermetic, Magic Aura, Sound Summa (Area Lore: Collem Leonis)

**Flaws** (-3) Lost Books x3





## Athanasius of Kos

by Jim Seals



"You must consider that the librarian (if not overworked or neurotic) is happy when he can demonstrate two things: the quality of his memory and erudition and the richness of his library, especially if it is small. The more isolated and disregarded the library, the more the librarian is consumed with sorrow for its underestimation. A person who asks for help makes the librarian happy." — Umberto Eco, *How to Write a Thesis*

*Peripheral Code's* regular NPC column spotlights covenfolk, grogs, rivals, allies, and antagonists. Submissions should be at least 1,000 words and include complete game statistics, character background, roleplaying advice, and story seeds that help the storyguide integrate the NPC in ways that facilitate engaging play.

Athanasius was born in 482 AD to a long line of merchant princes on the Greek isle of Kos. Thanks to the privileged station of his parents, his childhood was one of private instruction and tutelage; the finest instructors from all corners of Greece traveled to their island. Even when very young, Athanasius possessed a strong love of reading. At 8, he was sent from his family estate and fostered at the local, provincial library.

The Kos library was constructed at the end of the 1st century as part of the ground floor of the Asklepon, a healing temple dedicated to the god Asclepius. It had been endowed by Gaiou Stertinou Xenofontos, a native of Kos who had become personal physician to the Emperors Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero. Kos's location in the Aegean Sea made it a crossroads for Mediterranean trade and commerce in the ancient world and this, combined with the library's collection of authors like Hippocrates, Apelles, Philitas and Theocritus, made Kos a center of learning during the Ptolemaic dynasty.

It was here in the library of Kos, amongst the stacks of countless tomes, that Athanasius met his mentor, Petros Alkiviadis Floros, and discovered his true calling as a librarian. Floros treated Athanasius in a manner not unlike that of a master toward an apprentice;

he was quick to encourage his pupil's interest in academia, and even quicker to discourage behaviors that were, as he saw it, beneath the child.

After learning all that his mentor could teach him, Athanasius wanted to continue his education, specifically in the Art of Memory, but he had to travel elsewhere to do so. Leaving behind the island of Kos, he journeyed through the various cities of the Byzantine Empire, beginning in nearby Rhodes and ending in distant Constantinople. There, in Constantinople, came word from home: Petros Floros had died. Beneath a dark cloud of mortality, Athanasius returned to Kos and assumed his mentor's role. At the age of 32, he became the island's youngest master librarian. It was a role Athanasius would continue to serve in through the library's apparent destruction in 554 AD ... and well beyond.

That is when the earthquake came. Dating back to 469 AD and continuing throughout Athanasius' lifetime, the island of Kos had been wracked with a series of annual tremors, the origins of which were far more sinister than simple plate tectonics. Living among the unsuspecting populace was a cult which saw the gods of Olympus as base villains; the cult sought to undo their evil works one deed at a time, beginning with the release of the Titan Atlas from his bondage upholding the heavens. Gathering annually within the shadow of the Asklepon, the cult performed their rituals in secret. With each ritual came another tremor; with each tremor another link in Atlas's chains was broken. Unfortunately, a botched ritual saw the Asklepon itself

unmoored from all Mythic Europe and swallowed by the Magic Realm in a devastating earthquake that also claimed the lives of the cultists themselves.

Athanasius was 72 years old at the time of this last earthquake, and age had been a cruel mistress; a severe aging crisis during his mid-thirties had left the master librarian with an acute case of agoraphobia. The same man who had boldly traveled to the furthest reaches of the Byzantine Empire in his youth now could not take more than a handful of steps outside the library without suffering a panic attack. The attacks were all-consuming and left him virtually useless to the outside world. Thus, as his colleagues all fled the Asklepion in mortal terror, Athanasius remained at his post, dying as he had lived, amidst his precious books.

When he awoke again inside the library, he was not quite human anymore; he was now a Magic Human. What's more, as he would slowly come to realize in the intervening centuries, his immediate surroundings were not the actual, physical Library of Kos, but were instead his own Memory Palace made manifest. The new Library of Kos is a near-identical replication of the original, save for the ground floor. The pristine white marble of Florence has been replaced with a chiseled black granodiorite floor magically inscribed with every language ever written. Athanasius's connection to the library (a physical representation of his own memory palace) and the enchantment of the stone floor made him capable of reading books in any language, even those which he had never been able to read when alive.

It was here, within his Memory Palace, adrift in the Magic Realm, that Athanasius remained — all alone, in complete silence for centuries, organizing and reorganizing his collections in peace. Until one day a bell tolled.

The visitor ringing the bell was a Verditius maga, and she came to check out a book.

Athanasius was stricken mute, for try as he might, he could not recall the last time he had lent out a text — let alone to one so ravishing.

To him, she seemed his complete opposite in appearance; whereas he was a lump of unworked stone, she was a statue sculpted by one of the masters of Athens. Tall and slender she was, with a coy smile and an easy, childlike laugh that never failed to delight. Yet it was the love of books that would prove to be their common ground.

Once he overcame his initial awkwardness, Athanasius hastily checked out the book in question and she departed. Much to his chagrin, the master librarian was so flustered that he forgot to catch her name. A season passed, then another, and another. Athanasius resigned himself to having been had. Until one day she returned, book in hand, seeking another. Upon this second visit, Athanasius made a point to write down her name and update his records accordingly. He also learned that this Verditius maga was an expert in the art of illuminating manuscripts and the crafting of books; he was smitten instantly and the two formed an instant rapport.

She left and came back, left and came back, each time returning the last book she had checked out. He helped her rummage the stacks — though he may be accused of dithering on more than one occasion — until they had discovered the book she was looking for; then she would leave once again, promising to come back as soon as she could.

Like her, seasons came and went, and the maga did age, albeit slowly and far more gracefully than he had. He bestowed upon her the only gift he had: the meticulous attention to detail and keen love of learning that had made him such an apt student under Petros Floros. And so it was that a maga of the Order, one who happened upon the Lost Library of Kos in her wanderings, began as Athanasius's student, became his true love, and eventually came to reside in the library with him. As she eventually told him, the two of them had long since outlived their usefulness in the waking world, and she was content with his company.

But even Hermetic wizards are not immortal. Eventually she did die, leaving Athanasius alone once more. Now, he wanders the



deserted halls of his Memory Palace, awaiting another patron to come along and check out a book.

## Athanasius of Kos

**Magic Might:** 14 (Mentem)

**Characteristics:** Intelligence +6, Perception +2, Presence +2, Communication +2, Strength -1, Stamina -2, Dexterity -1, Quickness -2

**Size:** -1

**Season:** Winter

**Age:** 72

**Confidence Score:** 1 (3)

**Virtues & Flaws:** Magic Human; Academic Concentration: Grammar (see A&A p12), Good Teacher, Great Intelligence x2, Piercing Gaze, Transformed Man; Agoraphobia (libraries), Fickle Nature: Acerbic/Kind (see A&A p134), Obese, Proud, Small Frame, Stuck in His Ways

**Magical Qualities & Inferiorities:** Gift of Tongues, Improved Intelligence, Minor Virtues x4 (Affinity with Art of Memory, Affinity with Profession: Librarian, Puissant Art of Memory, Puissant Profession: Librarian), Natural Appearance, Personal Power, Ritual Power, Unaffected by the Gift; Minor Flaw (Lost Love), Necessary Magic Aura for Art of Memory (-1)

**Personality Traits:** Acerbic +4, Kind +4, Librarian +3 (Essential Trait)

### Combat:

*Dodge:* Initiative -2, Attack N/A, Defense -2, Damage N/A

*Fist:* Initiative -2, Attack -1, Defense -2, Damage -1

*Illuminated Manuscript:* Initiative -2, Attack +1, Defense -2, Damage +1  
Soak: -1

**Fatigue Levels:** OK, 0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious

**Wound Penalties:** -1 (1-4), -3 (5-8), -5 (9-12), Incapacitated (13-16), Dead (17+)

**Abilities:** Area Lore: Kos 3 (Asklepion), Art of Memory 9+2 (Loaned Books), Artes Liberales 5 (Grammar), Charm 1 (Patrons), Civil & Canon Law 2 (Maritime), Concentration 4 (Reading), Etiquette 2 (Patrons), Folk Ken 4 (Overdue Books), Greek 5 (Homeric Epics), Latin 6 (Collected Works of Aristotle), Leadership 3 (Underlings), Organization Lore: Byzantine Empire 3 (Libraries), Organization Lore: Library of Kos 5 (Stacks), Organization Lore: Order of Hermes 2 (Verditius),

Philosophiae 5 (Moral Philosophy), Profession: Bookbinding 4 (Repairs), Profession: Illuminator 4 (Copying), Profession: Librarian 9+2 (Cataloging), Profession: Scribe 5 (Copying), Swim 1 (treading water), Teacher 5 (Apt Student)

### Powers:

*Grant Apt Student*, 5 points, Initiative -12, Vim

R: Touch, D: Mom, T: Ind, Ritual

Athanasius loathes having his time wasted; therefore, if he is moved to teach, he does so only to those upon whom he has bestowed the Apt Student Minor Virtue. Athanasius can decide to bestow the Virtue permanently or temporarily. If permanent, the power is a ritual-like power and costs from his Might score as well as Might pool. If temporary, the Might points spent on this power are only recovered when the effects are withdrawn. Until now, Athanasius has only ever used this power on his Lost Love, at first temporarily but eventually permanently. No Hermetic equivalent.

*Rosetta Stone of the Mind*, 0 points, Constant

R: Pers, D: Special, T: Ind

There is no language barrier in the Magic Realm, which communicates with all regardless of their Native Language. Nowhere is this more evident than in Athanasius' Memory Palace. Endowed upon him by the Magic Realm itself, this power is manifested in the black stone floor of the Lost Library, which magically replicates whatever phrase Athanasius last read into every language ever written. The stone floor expands as new languages are devised by Man. By virtue of this power, Athanasius can read any language, provided he spends a few days studying the text beforehand within the confines of the Lost Library. No Hermetic equivalent.

**Equipment:** Athanasius has everything a librarian would want inside the Lost Library, including the tools of a scribe, bookbinder, and Illuminator.

**Vis:** 3 Mentem inside his skull

**Appearance:** Despite his diminutive stature, Athanasius is nevertheless an imposing man within the circles of academia, with a barrel chest, receding hairline, aquiline nose and august mustache. However, his most striking



attribute is his intellectual stare. He considers himself the smartest man in the room (and he's never been wrong on that score). Yet, there is an unmistakable sadness to him, one that asserts itself when he believes no one is looking.

### Athanasius in Play

Athanasius is a Magic Human designed to serve as a covenant librarian. He can also serve as a teacher, should the player characters be able to convince him they are worthy of his precious time.

He is temperamental, however, and won't bend over backwards to give player characters the same deference they may have come to expect from their custos. His grasp of Hermetic pomp-and-circumstance is limited, and that's how he likes it. As a real stickler for due dates, Athanasius is not above employing his Piercing Gaze to ensure all materials are returned promptly. (Although, he does hold a special weakness in his heart for Verditius maga and might make an exception or two in these cases.)

Thanks to his Agoraphobia Flaw, he is of little use outside of libraries, magical constructs or otherwise, and his Art of Memory is so tied to the Magic Realm that he must be in a Magic Aura to fully access its benefits, including, though not limited to, his unique ability to read any language.

### Reaching the Lost Library of Kos

Athanasius begins play trapped in the Magic Realm, in the Lost Library, which is a reproduction of the original library made from Athanasius's memory palace. It's mostly exact, down to every book or scroll on the shelves, with the addition of the Rosetta Stone of Athanasius's mind, which covers the ground floor. Depending on which story seed you're using, your players may have to go to Athanasius in order to discover him.

There are many ways this might happen, though all are unusual. The most conventional method would be through some sort of access

### New Flaw: Agoraphobia

Major, General

You suffer from an acute case of agoraphobia, the fear of leaving a safe place. Whether that safe place is a lord's tower or a Hermetic sanctum, being removed from your safe place causes you to experience crippling panic attacks; you suffer a -3 penalty on all simple die rolls and a -6 penalty on all stress die rolls made while outside of your safe place. This safe place must be chosen when this Flaw is taken and agreed upon by the storyguide and the rest of the troupe.

to the Magic Realm; if your covenant already knows where such a place is, they have probably been using it and exploring the Magic Realm for some time already. The Lost Library is just another interesting stop.

Characters with Art of Memory and a memory palace of their own might find, in their palace, a doorway unknown to them. Mentally traveling through this doorway leads to the Lost Library, even as the character's physical body remains in the mundane world. If you don't have anyone with Art of Memory in your game, the same effect may be achieved by something as simple as a vivid dream. There are even spells which enhance a memory palace; if you want to make the players work for Athanasius, it might be possible to make a mental equivalent of a Hermes Portal, connecting one memory palace to another. (Probably a Rego Mentem effect, possibly with a Vim requisite to reach the Magic Realm.)

Characters may seek out or stumble across the mundane ruins of the library itself. By the thirteenth century, little of the Asklepion, including the library, remains. All remnants are gone save for the odd shrine and a singular plaque; upon this plaque is an inscription listing the names of the patrons who contributed to the Asklepion's construction. But the work of the Titan-worshipping cult may have left a Magic aura here, perhaps even one high enough to reach into the Magic Realm.





Kos's history of Titan-worshipping cults sounds suspiciously similar to the origin myths of House Tytalus; Tytalus magi might be seeking out the remnants of the cult and manuscripts left in the library. House Tytalus may already know of Athanasius. They may have even brought him back already, and are exploiting his powers and lore in a secret library somewhere!

## STORY SEEDS

### Wanted — One Lost Book, Keepsake

Without warning, a book from the 6th century suddenly appears on a shelf within the sanctum of a PC. While investigating the book, the player characters learn of the Lost Library of Kos, as well as its fate within the Magic Realm.

For his part, Athanasius is not unaware of the situation. While reorganizing his shelves for the umpteenth time, the master librarian notices the book has gone missing. What's more, the book in question was the last one his Lost Love had checked out; this alone has him incensed enough to brave his own agoraphobia and try to hunt down the culprit.

### Botched: An Unexpected Arrival

Despite his protestations to the contrary, the irascible Athanasius longs for human contact once more. After all, what is the point of a collection of books if there's no one around to read them?

If a player character has an episode of Twilight, courtesy of a botch, have them appear within the Lost Library of Kos, and encounter Athanasius. Play the librarian up as being put off by this sudden arrival — even though secretly he's glad to have some company for a change! (Roll Folk Ken.)

Should the two characters strike up a rapport, it should take little convincing on the player's part for Athanasius to leave the Magic Realm and return to Mythic Europe, provided he can serve as the covenant's master librarian.

### "You Crashed Your Library into my Covenant!" "No, You Crashed Your Covenant into my Library!"

The Magic Realm is a strange place prone to strange happenings.

The magic aura around the covenant begins to go through extreme fluctuations, rising and falling. Eventually it rises high enough for the topmost level to reach the Magic Realm... Right where the Lost Library already is. When the magi solve the problem, the aura recedes but takes Athanasius and the Library down with it. In the end, the library has somehow grafted itself on to the covenant structure, probably in the most inconvenient spot imaginable.

Now, the player characters have to either figure out how to return the library to the Magic Realm or learn to live with this unexpected add-on.

### Maga's Opus

While reorganizing the east wing of the library, the master librarian of Kos comes across scattered pages. These pages are hastily written in Latin and he recognizes the handwriting as that of his lost love.

A quick search in the immediate area reveals a trail of pages leading through the library's halls, prompting Athanasius to turn his library upside down to collect his love's unfinished masterpiece: A treatise on the limits of Hermetic Theory to interpret the meaning of the written word. (Such a breakthrough would depend on how much you are willing to transform Mythic Europe; it might be as simple as a new Hermetic Virtue that allows a magus to read any text set before him, or as complicated as a new Form covering Knowledge.)

Undaunted by his own fears, Athanasius continues along the trail and ends up at the troupe's own library. Now, the master librarian must enlist the magi' to assemble the Maga's Opus.

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Join the Team

# Submission Guidelines



*Peripheral Code* cannot survive without your help. In particular, we seek submissions which go beyond the canonical *Ars Magica* setting, game rules, or traditional storylines, but manuscripts on any topic of interest to *Ars Magica* fans are welcome, both feature articles and submissions to our regular columns.

## Feature Articles

Feature articles are 2,000-5,000 words.

- **Adventures:** While every covenant is different and stories will usually be custom-written, there is a long history of adventures written for *Ars Magica*. *Thrice-Told Tales*, *Tales of Mythic Europe*, *Tales of Power*, *Hooks*, and *Mythic Locations* are all good resources. In particular, the distinct single-session episodes of *Thrice-Told Tales* make excellent models for writers. Adventures win the gold medal of submissions; there is no single category more needed, and no category so seldom filled.
- **Alternate Settings:** We eagerly look for articles on alternate historical periods, wholly original worlds, or even *Ars Magica* set in recognized settings from films, fiction, and other games. This includes new Houses and alternate takes on the Founders, an always-popular topic for conversation amongst *Ars* fans.
- **Alternate Systems:** We would like to see articles adapting *Mythic Europe* and/or Hermetic magic to other game systems.
- **Margins of the Order:** With the official *Ars Magica* 5th Edition line having come to a close, everything those books have not covered is now fair game for us. All those blank spaces are now the margins, and we would like you to help us write in them. Example manuscripts include a rival covenant, a potential covenant site, a mythic location, new Hermetic Societies, *Verditius* confraternities, *Bjornaer* septs, mystery cults, lineages, hedge magic traditions, and so on.
- **Fiction:** *Ars Magica* fiction for *Peripheral Code* should be stand-alone short stories. Alternate settings and historical periods are welcome. This is an excellent place to test out

ideas, characters, and settings which you might develop further once they prove successful in *Peripheral Code*. Many established authors use anthologies and magazines to draft stories they later develop into novels. Let us do that for you.

## Columns

Regular columns are a good choice for authors submitting for the first time or who do not have the time to write long feature articles. Some columns are designed to help GMs with the work of game preparation, while others are of more general interest to all *Ars Magica* players. A full column might be 1,000-2,000 words, but for columns made up of small elements (*Illuminations*, *Goblin Market*, *Reviews*, *House Rules*) an individual book, spell, or review might be as few as 250 words.

- **Magi of the Order:** This regular column presents a single Hermetic magus at a single point in his life with full game stats and spell list, talisman and familiar if appropriate, and any original spells and enchanted items. The character needs to have Story Seeds that make him useful to the GM; traditionally he either has something the players need, needs something the players have, or has goals which will conflict with the players. We discourage you from submitting your own PC; your character is never as interesting to everyone else as they are to you.
- **Goblin Market:** This column spotlights enchanted items and Magical Things. Avoid items which simply duplicate spells which are already in the game. Submissions should include complete game statistics for the item, using the format found in other *Ars Magica* books. Give the item a history and suggest how it might create or be used in stories.
- **Illuminations:** Our library column details books and spells for a covenant library. While the book needs game mechanics, it is also important that the book be interesting. Its author, history, physical details, current location, and game mechanics can all contribute. Design notes are useful when introducing new spells; explain how the

spell conforms to guidelines, and address any game balance concerns. Give the spell some context: who invented it, how is it used, and how can a PC get ahold of it.

- **House Rules:** Ars Magica is often house ruled, and if you have some of those rules which have worked especially well for you and your table, tell us about them. House rules should be tested before you send them to us, and you must include examples in your submission illustrating how the rule works. Remember that readers will probably not be able to ask you questions later. You might include discussion about why and how you developed this house rule, and how it changed through play test. Short submissions (less than 1,000 words) are fine, but we will keep them until we can gather them together into a single column of at least 1,000 words. Larger submissions can be published alone.

- **Reviews:** We are looking for book, film, game, and other product reviews which would be of interest to Ars fans. With few official Ars products on the horizon, this is a time for players of the game to look elsewhere for game aids and inspiration. Perhaps you have already reviewed a fantasy RPG, novel, or film on Amazon or your blog. We'd like to consider it for publication in *Peripheral Code*.

- **NPCs:** Not all NPCs need character sheets, but the ones that do are covenfolk, grogs, or other characters with whom the PCs interact regularly. Strong NPC submissions include story seeds, roleplaying advice, complete game stats, and a complete background for the character.

- **Antagonists:** Ars Magica has a uniquely labor-intensive process of NPC and monster creation. Authors who do this work for Storyguides around the world win the silver medal for submissions. Stat blocks and spell lists for allies (who the SG can improvise) and PCs (which players prefer to make for themselves) are less useful, but every Storyguide needs antagonists, preferably with story seeds and clear goals in opposition to the players.

- **Other Columns** (for example, on the Realms of the Divine, Infernal, and Faerie) are possible, if we receive regular

submissions which merit their creation.

**Format:** Manuscripts should be Word documents. Do not bother to format your manuscript with bold, italics, bullet points, or other formatting, as this will all be stripped out immediately anyway. Send manuscripts to [jason.tondro@gmail.com](mailto:jason.tondro@gmail.com)

## Art Submissions

*Peripheral Code* believes artists should be paid what the artist believes the work is worth. *Peripheral Code* also has no significant art budget. But we are especially interested in two things:

- **Cover Art:** Cover art needs to be magical in theme, but is not otherwise bound by the Ars Magica canon or setting. This is a particularly good place for us to feature art you have already created, and which you might sell in other form (as, for example, prints). If we can work with you on something like this, please reach out to us with samples of your work and your financial requirements.

- **Interior Artists:** Art for columns and feature articles should be created specific to each article. Artists working in this capacity need to be fast and modestly priced. If you are interested in contributing to *Peripheral Code* in this capacity, reach out to us with samples of your work and your financial requirements.

**Rewards:** Writers who contribute to *Peripheral Code* receive an electronic copy of the issue in which their work appears and 4 XP in Craft: Writing.

More seriously, writing for Ars Magica has been described as more of a meta-game than a business proposition. Authors in *Peripheral Code* participate in the game of making the game, and they play this game for fun. If writing for *Peripheral Code* is not fun, we certainly understand your desire to take your writing time elsewhere. The magazine does not make a profit; income from issue sales incompletely defers the cost of cover and interior art. Costs in excess of sales are borne by the editor.

Send us your work. We want to read it.





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# SUB ROSA

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The magic and mystery of Atlas-Games' Ars Magica comes to life in the pages of Sub Rosa Magazine, with articles by fans of the game as well as some of the most popular Ars Magica authors.

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