

G U R P S[®]

MAGE[™]

THE ASCENSION[™]



BY ROBERT M. SCHROECK
BASED ON THE ORIGINAL GAME BY STEWART WIECK

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

G U R P S

MAGE



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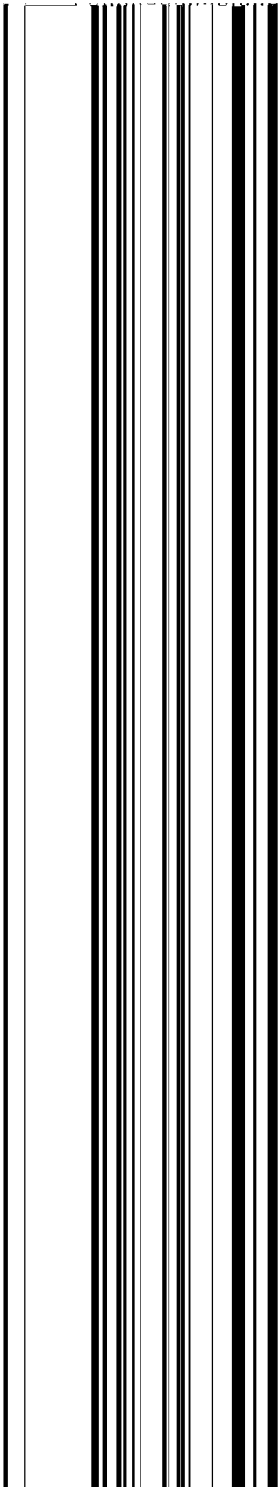
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CONTENTS

PROLOGUE.....	4	3. THE TRADITIONS	54
INTRODUCTION	14	Akashic Brotherhood	56
<i>About GURPS</i>	14	Celestial Chorus.....	58
About the Author	14	Cult of Ecstasy	59
1. ON THE DARK SIDE.....	18	Dreamspeakers	61
Welcome to Your World	19	Euthanatos	63
Gothic-Punk	19	Hollow Ones	64
<i>How to Portray the World</i>	19	Order of Hermes.....	66
The Mages	20	Sons of Ether	67
The Traditions	20	Verbena.....	69
<i>Origins</i>	20	Virtual Adepts.....	70
Mages of Old.....	21	4. MAGICK.....	74
Mages in Today's World.....	21	The Metaphysic of Magic.....	75
<i>Magick</i>	21	“Sleepers”	75
The Search for Ascension	23	<i>The Tapestry</i>	76
<i>Ascension</i>	23	<i>Magic vs. Magick</i>	76
Cabals.....	24	Beliefs and Paradigms	77
<i>Types of Chantries</i>	24	Static Reality	77
Chantries	25	<i>The Structure of Reality</i>	77
<i>Protecting the Chantry</i>	25	Quintessence	78
<i>Sample Chantries</i>	26	Nodes	79
Protocol	27	Tass.....	79
Learning	27	<i>Mind</i>	79
<i>Acolytes</i>	29	Creating Magickal Effects.....	80
Other Powers	29	<i>Quintessence and Mana</i>	80
The Technocracy	30	Static, or “Coincidental,” Magick	81
The Marauders	30	Dynamic, or “Vulgar,” Magick	81
<i>Tribunals</i>	30	Foci	82
<i>The Quiet</i>	31	<i>The Oracles</i>	82
The Nephandi.....	32	<i>Patterns</i>	82
<i>Using Mage in Other Genres</i>	32	The Process of Magick	83
Governments	33	<i>Quintessence and Tass</i>	83
The Inquisition	34	<i>Apprenticeship</i>	84
The Arcanum	35	<i>Conjunctural Magick</i>	85
2. CHARACTERS	38	<i>Key Elements of Coincidental Magick</i>	86
Creating a Mage	39	Counter Magick	87
Starting Points	39	Acting in Concert	88
The “Mage Package”	39	Rotes	88
Essence.....	39	<i>Effect Modifiers</i>	88
Equipping the Mage	40	<i>If at First You Don't Succeed</i>	88
Advantages	41	<i>Determining Effects</i>	89
Disadvantages.....	42	Talismans	90
Skills	43	Using Talismans	90
New Advantages.....	44	<i>Magic in the Spirit World</i>	90
New Disadvantage.....	47	Creating Talismans	91
New Skills	47	<i>Sample Talismans</i>	92
Traditions.....	48	The Burden of Foci.....	92
Spheres	50	Unique Foci.....	93
Quintessence and Paradox	50	Focus List	94
Quintessence	50	The Nine Spheres of Knowledge.....	96
Paradox	50	Beyond Mastery – The Oracles.....	96
Paradox vs. Quintessence.....	50		
Sample Mage: Damien	51		

THE SPHERES97
Correspondence97
 Correspondence Rotes101
Entropy102
 Entropy Rotes.....104
Forces105
 Forces Rotes108
Life109
 Life Rotes111
Matter112
 Matter Rotes114
Mind115

7. THE TECHNOCRACY.....154
Rise of the Technocracy155
The Pogrom155
The Technocratic Agenda156
Grip of the Technocracy157
The Technocracy's Technology157
The Conventions.....158
 Iteration X158
 New World Order159
 The Progenitors159
Autochthonia159
HIT Marks160





July 17, 1994
Dr. Harold Mautzenberg
Dept. of History
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

Dear Harold,

I write to assure you that I am indeed still alive. Indeed, I have never felt so alive before! I have found a haven, and the things that I am learning! But I get ahead of myself...

The last time I wrote, I was about to take my leave of the werewolf pack which had sheltered me for many months. Their theurge in fact urged me to go, telling me I had a destiny beyond the safety of their pack, and gifted me with certain items that he assured me would help ensure my safety should the Kindred rediscover my trail. Reluctantly, I parted ways with them.

Several times during our many discussions, Moonfoot mentioned the Magi — magickally gifted humans, of whom he said some were good, some evil, but all very powerful. One thing I learned during my time with the pack was to trust my instincts. And my instincts told me, this time, that I was to seek out a mage.

Events almost seemed to conspire to aid me in my search. A personal ad in an alternative newspaper, a street person accosting me, an obscure grafitto on a wall in Greenwich Village — all seemed to direct me, almost to funnel me. And when finally we met, I was not sure whether I found him, or he found me. There in the foyer of his home on Bleecker, he greeted me by name and welcomed me. I became his student.

Again, I risk much by writing you, but I must share my excitement with someone other than my mentor, and you have always kept my confidences. Oh, the things I am learning! Harold, you would not believe the truth behind the myths and fairy tales we all learn as children — and the lies behind the truths we have been taught since childhood. The true workings of reality are a wonder and a fright and a glory to comprehend! And wonder of wonders, I am learning how to use these workings. Magick, real magick, is the purest of philosophies, the truest of sciences, the ultimate revelation and power. And what is more amazing, my friend, is that mages are not few and far between — while we are not common, still we are everywhere! Someone you know is probably a mage, unbeknownst to you. Look for us, Harold. Anywhere coincidences are rife, where odd things happen — a mage is probably there.

And now, to my growing wonder and joy, I no longer feel at the mercy of my enemies. I may be the barest of beginners, almost totally untrained, but I find in myself a growing confidence — for the first time in a long time — that I will survive to see a ripe old age, and that I will do so by my own power and not through hiding or by the protection of others who choose to shield me. A resolution is coming for the vampires and me, and I begin to grow sure that I will live through it.

Take care of the following pages, my friend. They document some of my explorations and discoveries in this new life of mine. Who knows, perhaps they will lead you to your own Awakening, and then maybe we will see each other again in some Chantry or meeting.
Until then...

Taylor

12 October 1215

Unto the Magister Magici Petronius of Genoa, of the Order of Hermes, greetings from Adeptus Luis Aragonese! Herewith the written copy of my report to you on the continued progress of our great experiment.

As of the first of this month, Chantry houses have been established in all the Capitols of Europe. Buda-Pesht was the last to be invested, and I proudly officiated at the ceremony. We now have at least one Chantry in every nation, and in some cases — France, Bavaria, Prussia and England, among others — we have more.

I must admit that my initial concerns regarding the limitation of the public Images' powers have been dissolved. Just as you predicted, restricting their abilities by forcing them to use weaker rites exclusively and by controlling their research seems to have provided them with an enviable balance between their power and the fear of the populace. It appears that in perhaps two centuries or less, true mages will be able to operate in the open without fear of either the Paradox that inflicts our greater efforts, or of the Sleepers themselves.

At the current time, the benefits of the public Order are already immediately noticeable. The beliefs and paradigms of the average European Sleeper have already expanded to accommodate "wizards" of our style and magick on the (admittedly limited) scale that has already been displayed by our public brothers. Even better, reports of creatures of magick have doubled in just under fifteen years. Dragons have been sighted in the vicinity of Paris no less than three times in the past 18 months!

I feel a growing confidence that our Order, through the intermediary of our public counterpart, will be making an incalculable impact on the shape of reality in the future. Our paradigms will become pre-eminent, forcing out those of the other Traditions, and we will come into our destined power.

I trust you are pleased with this report.

I remain your obedient servant,

A.O.h.

Luis Aragonese,

Book 3

On Mind, Belief & Magick



There is One Crystall Truth to the practice of the Magickal Arts: The Greatest Force behind Magick is Belief. Those of you reading my Words who were raised in the Holy Church will know that the Lord Jesu Christos said after Withering the Fig Tree, "If ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done."

In this wise did Jesu Christos speak as a Magus, for unto the Magus all things are possible with Belief & Faith. The Foundation of all that the Magus can do is His Belief that it can be Done. And the only limit to what He can do is what he Believes Cannot be Done. Nor only the Magus, but all Men. Observe:

The common, uneducated Man knows little of Magick. To him, it is the twirl of the Conjuror's hand and kerchief, or the Legerdmain of the Trickster who seeks to separate the unwary from their few Pennies. Many know these Tricks for what they are; almost all dismiss Magick as something Impossible.

Sadly, they are right. Because they decide that Magick does not exist, it cannot exist for Them. They cannot find Magick, nor can they use it. Because they have not Awakened unto the Truth, they are called Sleepers.

Those who are Slightly More Enlightened are Content in the Knowledge that they have found to be True. They seek Formulas & Words of Power & beings of the Spirit whom they may Command; they cast Spells & perform Complex Rituals & seek the Power they believe to be Manifest in the World

and Spirit. The Will in shape Slightly from Magick as so Controlled: nor can they is Real, because Importance.

The True only on Form Magick is not stands that N Force. Magic The True Ma Believe that So. The True the Universe

The Key to ty To Believe is not sufficient to Believe, & Knowledge of Fundamental they constitute been Master Master, but s

and Spirit. They know Some of the Truth, professing the Importance of Will in shaping the forces of the World. But they have Wakened only Slightly from their Sleep, for they rely upon Tools & Formulas, and see Magick as something apart from themselves that must be Conquered & Controlled. They may work small Magicks, but they do not Understand it, nor can they do more than Tricks and Summonings. However, their Magick is Real, because they *Know* it is Real. This distincktion is of Great Importance.

The True Magus is not he who can Memorize & Cast Spells, who relies only on Formula and Rote, but he who has Truly Awakened to See that Magick is not Outside himself, but Within himself. The True Magus understands that Magick is not a Force, except that the Indomitable Will is a Force. Magick is the Power of Belief to Change the Nature of the World. The True Magus is he who, when he Wants some thing, sets his Will to Believe that Thing is So, & in Believing, changes the Universe to Make it So. The True Magus needs no Formulas or Spells; he needs only Know that the Universe responds to his Will.

The Key to the Magus' Power, then, is his Strength of Will, and his ability To Believe that which he Must Believe to achieve his Ends. But Will alone is not sufficient. It is Not Enough to believe. The Magus must know What to Believe, & How to Believe. This What and How is contained in a body of Knowledge called a Sphere. There are Nine Spheres, each containing Fundamental Knowledge of one aspect of the Universe. Taken as a Whole, they constitute Complete Power over Reality, but no single Magus has Ever been Master of all Nine. The Wise Magus will choose Two or Three to Master, but should Learn from as Many as he can.

Prologue

login: taylor
Password:
Last login: Wed Apr 20 13:33:23 on tty05
SunOS Release 4.1.1_U1 (LANCER) #3: Thu Apr 21 18:19:46 EST 1993
Welcome to Lancer Access(sm) by Lancer Network Systems, Inc.
New York, NY local access (lancer.com)

!! Free connect time has been increased to 6 hours per day.
!! Additional time is one dollar per hour.
!! See the posting in newsgroup "lancer.general" for details.

o The Lancer Access User's Guide is available online. Type
"help users-guide" to access it.

You have no mail.

lancer% trn
Unread news in lancer.general 3 articles
Unread news in alt.magick.virtual-adepts 38 articles
Unread news in rec.games.frp.misc 34 articles
Unread news in alt.fan.mike-jittlov 2 articles
Unread news in alt.fandom.misc 1 article
etc.

==== 38 unread articles in alt.magick.virtual-adepts -- read now?

[+ynq]

Reading thread file.....

Threading 38 articles...

alt.magick.virtual-adepts 38 articles

a-Old Queens	1	Anyone got any cool rotes?
b-damien@virtunet.	1	>Improving tactile interactivity
d-damien@virtunet.	2	>Non-Technomancer Conspiracies
sj@io.com		
e-phiber optikk	3	>Discordian Magick???
Nitro		
Dr. Faustus		
f+fearless leader	1	Too many Copperfields!
g-The Manipulator	2	>Correspondence and Prime
Sim Sallah Bim		
i-nightfall@tranto	1	>Vote to create alt.technocracy.die.die.die
j-Jolly Roger	2	>Golems and grogs
Phyllis@studio.m		
l+puvs@hogswatch.c	1	Paris/Brussels chantries
o-Rincewind	2	>"Tales of the City"
damien@virtunet.		
r-Leonard	3	>Life magick
nature boy		
Gandalf the Grey		

-- Select threads (date order) -- Top 53% [>Z] --

alt.magick.virtual-adepts 38 articles

a+phiber optikk 1 >Clueless Dweeb Alert!
b+Mr Mistofffolees 1 >Where can I find enlitenment?
d-Raistlin 1 Time Sphere and Vision Problems
e-Brian Cokeley 1 >A little Question
f-M Virgin 1 >HOT NEW CODE! UUDECODE THIS NOW!
g-lash@teleport.co 2 >Check this out, Prime Masters!
WolfDancer
i-lash@teleport.co 1 >_FRACTURE_ playing around the corner
from...Hell Night
j-fearless leader 1 >Flaming - with real flames - not allowed here!
l-Brazen Figure 1 >Number and Pronouns
o-Sysop 3 Val's diatribe on rotes
Philtrus
Phyllis@studio.m
r+Sysop 1 >So, shall we tweak the next World Series?
s-Xenophilus 1 >Need some good coincidences...
t-Tammye Wuhrer 3 >sex magick
seetan@world.std
Morgana
u-Fearless Leader 1 Alt.magick.virtual-adepts FAQ

-- Select threads (date order) -- Bot [>Z] --

Chasing xrefs.....

alt.magick.virtual-adepts #45791 (4 + 0 more) [1]
From: fearless@chantry.omaha.mgk (Fearless Leader)
[1] Too many Copperfields!
Organization: Virtual Adept Chantry Prime
Date: Wed Apr 20 22:40:43 EST 1994
Lines: 9

Okay, folks, this is your Fearless Leader calling. We have a little problem developing. Some of you bozos are getting a little too public with your magick -- especially on the West Coast. Fortunately, the crystal zweeb Sleepers out there don't give a damn about things that don't work the way the Greyfaces say they should, so you're at a lower risk for Paradox, but come on, guys... you should know by now that *especially* in SoCal the Techs are going to try and stomp you. Just for your own protection, tone it down!

End of article 45791 (of 45827) -- what next? [npq]

alt.magick.virtual-adepts #45796 (3 + 0 more)
From: puvs@hogswatch.com (Seeress)
[1] Paris/Brussels chantries
Date: Wed Apr 20 21:59:01 EST 1994
Organization: Hogswatch Industries
Lines: 4
X-Newsreader: TIN [version 1.2 PL2]

[1]

I'm relocating to the France/Belgium area in the next couple months. Can anyone give me a lead on a good pan-Tradition chantry around there that could use a Verbena? I promise to clean up after myself when I'm done :-).

End of article 45796 (of 45827) -- what next? [npq]

alt.magick.virtual-adepts #45806 (2 + 0 more) |-()--(2)
[1] Re: Clueless Dweeb Alert! \-()+-(1)
From: phiber@husc8.harvard.edu (phiber optikk) |-(1)
Date: Wed Apr 20 12:38:48 EST 1994 |-()+--[1]
Organization: Harvard University, Cambridge, | \-(1)
+ Massachusetts \-(1)
X-Newsreader: TIN [version 1.2 PL1]
Lines: 4

Someone who doesn't acknowledge just how much danger he's in from the Technocracy when he's that open and unconcerned is just asking for trouble. How he's avoided MIBs or HITmarks so far is beyond me. I'm not even going to ask about paradox backlash...

End of article 45806 (of 45827) -- what next? [npq]

alt.magick.virtual-adepts #45815 (1 + 0 more) -()--()--[1]
From: blackcat@netcom.com (Mr Mistoffolees)
[1] >Where can I find enlitenment?
Organization: Little or none
Date: Wed Apr 20 18:25:06 EST 1994
Lines: 15

>"BOB" (palmer@greatnorth.tp.com) said:
>>"SeRchEr FoR Tr00th" (d00d@aol.com) said:
>>so where can i can find real enlitenment?
>Try alt.religion.kibology. Or alt.buddha.short.fat.guy.
Nah. Alt.swedish.chef.bork.bork.bork.

>Oh, and "d00d", don't bother with an anon id from penet. We already
>know who you are. And what pirated software you've got. And how
>much your allowance is. As soon as you found us, we knew
>_every-thing_ about you. Don't worry. We have only your best
>interests at heart.

ROTFLMAO! I think you've got him worried! But is that any way to treat a potential apprentice? After all, he *did* find this newsgroup... Besides, that sort of thing belongs more in alt.illuminati than *here*...

--

I have moved! Virtually, that is. My new address is blackcat@netcom.com. My World account (blackcat@world.std.com) will be deactivated on 30 Apr 94.

End of article 45815 (of 45827) -- what next? [npq]

alt.magick.virtual-adepts #45785 (0 + 0 more)

(1)--[1]

[1] RE: So, shall we tweak the next World Series?

From: valeria@prime.base.mgk (Sysop)

Distribution: world

Date: Sat Jan 15 00:47:00 EST 1994

Organization: PrimeBase BBS

Lines: 8

Ballfan (keating@uu.magick.edu) said:

>A little Correspondence, a little Forces, the right bookie, it
>could be done.

>All coincidental, of course. What do people say?

No.

"No good! I'm fighting 17 million years of uncooperative avian evolution!"

== Opus _Bloom County_

End of article 45799 (of 45827) -- what next? [npq]



INTRODUCTION

Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.

— Isaiah 47:12

Humanity has always had a fascination with magic. Who wouldn't like to be able to reshape the world to fit one's whims, to snap one's fingers and get anything one desired? Who, indeed?

GURPS Mage: The Ascension is a game about individuals with that power — the ability to mold reality at will. But ultimately, it is about an individual's reactions to that power, and how he handles the responsibility. Some would argue that the very mutability of reality in the World of Darkness makes claims of any kind of absolute responsibility meaningless. Others would argue that it only makes responsibility the more important.

The discovery of power and how to use it is a theme that is found in myth, legend and story the world over. The mages of the World of Darkness are only the latest in a long and distinguished line — the questing heroes who must make their journey through the world, temptation and power. Some never meet the challenge; others fall to the attacks of enemies such as the Technocracy, or to the temptations of demons, Nephandi or the power of magick itself. A very few make it through their trials and reach the fulfillment of their potential.

Between the decadent Vampires and the foredoomed Werewolves, there is little heroic in the World of Darkness. The few mages who complete the Hero's Journey ensure that there is still a chance to redeem the Earth and rescue it from the clutches of the Wyrms. Their power is not only the source of reality, it is also the last best hope for the World of Darkness.

— Robert M. Schroeck



About the Author

Robert M. Schroeck is a computer programmer and hobbyist, a devoted husband, a gamer who has played RPGs for nearly 15 years, a collector of books and music, and the author of hundreds of pages of unpublished fiction. He has written or contributed to more than half a dozen books for Steve Jackson Games, including **GURPS International Super Teams**, **GURPS Werewolf: The Apocalypse**, and (in collaboration with his lovely wife Peggy) **GURPS Camelot** and **GURPS Robin Hood**. He is also very, very tired.

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the **GURPS** system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Pyramid. Our bimonthly magazine includes new rules and articles for **GURPS**, as well as information on our other lines: **Car Wars**, **Toon**, **Ogre Miniatures** and more. It also covers top releases from other companies — **Traveller**, **Call of Cthulhu**, **Shadowrun**, and many more.

New supplements and adventures. We're always working on new material, and we'll be happy to let you know what's available. A current catalog is available for an SASE.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us — but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all **GURPS** releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request.

Q&A. We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

Illuminati Online. For those who have home computers, SJ Games has an online service with discussion areas for many games, including **GURPS**. Here's where we do a lot of our playtesting! It's up 24 hours per day at 512-448-8950, at up to 28.8K baud — or telnet to io.com. Give us a call! We also have conferences on Compuserve, GENie, and America Online.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set**, Third Edition. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the **GURPS Basic Set** — e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the **GURPS Basic Set**, Third Edition.

Page references beginning with VTM refer to **GURPS Vampire: The Masquerade**, a WTA refers to **GURPS Werewolf: The Apocalypse**, and M means **GURPS Magic**, Second Edition.



The city still unnerves me, after all this time. I was born and raised a country boy, and this far from growing things, from the fresh earth, I start getting the jitters. Still, I came to learn, and I stayed to protect.

Around me, the gaping, guttered buildings loom. There's little sun from the overcast sky; the lowering clouds threaten a rainstorm. Just what I need – another bleak, black day.

I pass a junkie, a juvie and a bum. They're not who I'm looking for, none of them. Shoppers whip by me, hunched over against the rising wind, protecting their precious purchases against the elements and the odd mugger. It doesn't take much to make sure that each one will reach home safely. And it doesn't hurt to add a little extra something to each shopping bag to make their lives a little happier, and maybe, just maybe, a little more magical. I smile. We all make our small contributions to the world.

Then, from out of the shadows she walks, like a dream. And the smile drains away from my face as I see the aura that preceds her like the cresting wave at the bow of a ship. I wonder what she was before she was Awakened – a hooker, a model, a lab assistant? I almost shrug, but I stop myself in time. The movement would give me away. It doesn't matter now, anyway. She's one of Them – a Technomancer.

And she's on my turf.

Chapter 1

ON THE DARK SIDE

The world is not governed by facts or logic. It is governed by belief systems.

– Robert Anton Wilson, Cosmic Trigger 2

The world which you are about to enter is very familiar. The geography is the same, as is much of the history. But it different from our world – darker, sadder, dirtier, and much more sinister. Corporations are megalithic powers, wielding influence that makes them all but untouchable. Governments are corrupt. People are more cynical – the world is going to Hell, and everyone knows it and is hanging on for the ride. The environment is collapsing and urban decay is spreading. Vampires haunt the cities, preying upon the humans there. In the few remaining wilderness areas, the last werewolves fight their long battle against the creeping destruction of nature.

And hidden among the mortals are the most powerful ones of all – the ones who have the power to forestall the Vampires' Gehenna and the Werewolves' Apocalypse. They are the ones who can reshape the very fabric of reality at their whim.

The mages.

Welcome to Your World . . .

*In the fields of Hell where the grass grows high
Are the graves of dreams allowed to die.*

– Unknown

The world of *Mage* is not the world we know – not quite. The term is “Gothic-Punk” – darker, more sinister, like a black-bladed knife with a wicked, hidden edge. Oh, the trappings are the same – CDs are in and vinyl is out, the disappearing ozone layer, morning talk radio and afternoon tabloid TV. The monuments are the same. But everything is twisted slightly to the dark side, with an undeniable rot underlying it all, everywhere that you look. The government is corrupt, the culture is bankrupt, and the decadent mortals revel in the flames of the final days. The overall mood is darkness; life is grim but the future is grimmer.

The creators of this world, the mages, have made many mistakes throughout history. Much of the horror of this world stems from their errors and conflicts.

Gothic-Punk

There is wisdom in madness and strong probability of truth in all accusations, for people are complete, and everyone is capable of everything.

– Joseph Heller

The Gothic-Punk milieu is a world of almost cinematic extremes. The filthy rich hit the hottest clubs while the homeless lie in the gutters outside. Government is corrupt and uncaring; crime runs rampant. Life is cheap and death is cheaper. Even the weather seems to contribute to the feel: glowering clouds seem always overhead, and drizzle adds to the dank, fetid air of the dark streets and alleys.

The Gothic in Gothic-Punk describes the bleakness of the world. Nothing is simple or unadorned; buildings and organizations are huge and massive, brooding, looming and ominous. No stainless steel Art Deco artifacts here – look for gargoyles, spires and vaguely disconcerting ornamentation crafted from granite and black marble, or, at the lower end, from crumbling, lichen-infested concrete and sandstone. The sense of corruption and conspiracy surrounds you; disturbing, frightening motion flickers in the dark shadows of both alleyways and statehouses. There is always an ulterior motive, official records are scant, and bribery is rampant. Think of Gotham City from the *Batman* movies, and you’ve got the beginnings of the feel.

Cities in the Gothic-Punk world seem to be untouched by time, filled with medieval fortresses and castles. Bauhaus glass-and-steel towers never caught on here; solid rock is the material of choice for both the tenants in the penthouses above and the gangsters who bury their competition in the foundations below. Private homes often seem to be centuries old, and the abandoned houses only add to the haunted, desolated air of many neighborhoods.

Bureaucracy reigns here, and the agents of any organization, private or public, are faceless and impersonal, black-suited and intimidating. The Church is enormous and ritualistic, with tightly controlled dioceses and power plays between its clergy.

The other half of Gothic-Punk is . . . Punk. Despite everything else, the world is drenched in post-modern angst and fatalism. Cynicism abounds among a people toughened by rampant crime and violence. Among the young, rebellion is common place, an escape from the bleak, oppressive landscape of society and Earth alike. As usual, rebellion is proclaimed in all parts of life,



How To Portray The World

Although the primary flavor of the Gothic-Punk world is of decay, cynicism and impending doom, the presence of mages does something to change it. The world the mages live in may be dark and despairing, but only on the surface; beyond the superficial detail of the mundane lie many things that are simply *other*.

The essence of reality, despite the efforts of the Technocracy, is change and life. There is always something, some mystery, some unknown that can pop up and surprise the players. There will never be a time when reality is so completely charted that there is nothing left to discover. Even if such a time came, reality would no doubt contort itself and reveal a new, unexpected wrinkle.

The universe of the mages is, at its heart, dangerously and thrillingly unpredictable. Great horror and great beauty appear and disappear without notice or cause, even without the machinations of mages. Let the players take nothing for granted; let them always wonder what else is out there to see and be seen by. . . The inhabitants of the Near Umbra and the Deep Umbra are infinite in variety and number, and characters never need see the same type of spirit twice in a lifetime. With the exception of those forces battling over the earth, they need never meet the same type of foe twice in a lifetime, either. . .

Never let them become complacent, except to set them up for some new threat or wonder.

Origins

There are no clear-cut answers why mages exist – or why certain persons become mages. There is only conjecture. Mages may feel the stirrings of their Awakened spirits within, the spirits that both give them great powers and drive them toward Ascension. But no answers are forthcoming.

Most mages believe that before there was anything else, there was Prime. Prime was a universal primordial force, which eventually spawned a race of beings known as the Pure Ones. The Pure Ones ruled over the new-born reality until some unknown force destroyed them, shattering them into uncounted fragments. These shards of the Pure Ones' essences are believed to have become human souls; some retained their power to guide and shape reality, but now that power could be wielded by humans. Thus were the first mages born.

The name the mages give to the soul – to the shard of the Pure Ones in each human – is the *Avatar*. When a human realizes the nature of the Avatar within him, he is said to have been Awakened. He now realizes his ability to shape reality, and his Avatar begins its hunt for Ascension. From that point onward, he can begin to develop his potential for magick.

The Awakening of a mage's Avatar can be a traumatic event that occurs spontaneously; more often, however, it occurs as the mage-to-be learns magickal theory under the tutelage of an experienced mage. Mages believe that all supernatural creatures possess Awakened Avatars.

from music to clothing to vocabulary – to violence. The mazelike alleys and streets of the decaying city downtowns sport gangs and poseurs, underground clubs and all-night bars, and anarchic bands screaming at 100 decibels about revolution. The youth, ignored and disaffected, dance to the entropic chords of oblivion.

Ultimately, the GM will have to decide exactly how dark his Gothic-Punk world has become. He can lighten it, and make it more like the “real” world, or he can make it blacker still. The setting described in this book is merely a template for further development.

The Mages

“Magic” is a ritual performed to produce a specific, desired end result, the exact reason for whose occurrence is unknown. By this definition, most of the civilized world operates by magic.

– Michael R. Singer

Lurking in the cracks of society is one of the true powers of the Gothic-Punk world – a secret cadre of wizards and sorcerers. Possessing power beyond the wildest dreams of man, following Traditions that date back thousands of years, these mages are above such petty concerns as money and status. They seek something more – knowledge. Knowledge that will give them power over reality itself.

While mages are ordinary humans by birth and by nature, they have become Awakened – enlightened to the true nature of the universe and to the magickal gift they possess. They are a bridge between the mundane and the supernatural, and a waypost, some say, for the rest of the human race. In them is found the gift of magick, the gift that gives them absolute control over reality itself and the ability to plumb its farthest depths.

Shared by all mages is a belief in the ultimate unity of man with the universe; the attainment of this glorified state is known as the Ascension. But no single issue has caused greater division among the many factions and Traditions than the Ascension. No one knows what form it will take; all Mages ask, at one time or another in their lives, “What will the Ascension be?”



The Traditions

Of the remaining factions of mages, only one still espouses the ancient vision of an Ascension that blends personal achievement and cultural enlightenment. This faction is less homogeneous than the others; it is made up of nine Traditions that each hail from a different culture and a different part of the world. Although the Traditions all embrace the same basic beliefs as to the nature of the Ascension, they still differ among themselves – frequently to the point of bloodfeuds and internecine warfare. But still, they all agree that the other factions are indisputably wrong in approach and philosophy, and this gives them a common ground on which to unite against the other factions. The Traditions have united against common enemies, and form a significant force in the Ascension War.

Even in concert, however, the Traditions are sorely outmatched by the powerful Technocracy (pp. 30, 154), much less the nightmarish Nephandi (pp. 32, 151) and the incomprehensible Marauders (see pp. 30, 150). Pursued by their enemies, the Tradition mages are forced to live on the outskirts and in the shadows of the world, hiding from the Technocracy's Pogrom and fearing to tread too far into the spirit worlds of the Umbra, which are haunted by the other factions.

Still, while they may be outnumbered by their enemies, the mages of the Traditions are not to be dismissed casually. Their magick is the most versatile of all factions, and individual Tradition mages can hold greater potential for power than any of their opponents because of that versatility.

Mages of Old

From the first shattering of Prime and the Pure Ones which created the myriad souls that today dwell in mortal bodies, the mages have always existed among and alongside humanity – and humanity has known it. The past is not what the history books would have it be, but what the fairy tales say it was. The Mythic Age is what truly happened when history says the Middle Ages took place, when dragons and wizards walked the earth. One Tradition, the Order of Hermes, performed a daring experiment then by placing a society of mages in public to interact with mankind at large. The goal of this public Order was anchor humanity in a world of myth, eventually allowing the true mages of the Traditions to operate openly among mankind.

This grand experiment – and all the designs of Tradition mages – eventually failed after the Technomancers seized control of the hearts and minds of mankind during the chaos following the Black Plague. The Technocracy rewrote history to remove magick from the Mythic Age, and to cast it as fantasy and superstition, long since expunged by the “truth” of science and technology.

Mages in Today's World

In these modern times, the Tradition mage finds himself in the uneasy middle position. Flanked by the Technocracy on one side, the Marauders on another and the Nephandi on the third, target for all three and caught in any crossfire, the Tradition mage has all he can do simply to maintain his own position. But what is worse is that the Traditions are the only hope for humanity to reach a common, glorious Ascension. They must fight, not only for themselves, but for the future of mankind against enemies who have all fallen to extremes of stasis, chaos and corruption.

However, their enemies already have an advantage. The magickal powers of the Traditions have been crippled by the Technocracy and its control over reality. Because of the twin threats of Paradox spirits (p. 22) and the Pogrom (p. 155), Tradition mages must hide, practicing their art in secret. Too much mag-



Magick

Although cloaked and guarded, magick still exists in the modern world. It takes many different forms, from seemingly mundane technology to bizarre “coincidences” to displays of sorcerous might worthy of the wizards of myth and legend. Magick is nothing more or less than the ability to reshape reality to one's will. Mages are humans whose Avatars are Awakened, and who realize their ability to impose their will on reality.

The Nature of Magick

Magick is the alteration of reality by force of will. Those with Awakened Avatars are able to understand the way the mind affects the fabric of reality, and know how to use their minds to mold and shape it as they see fit. There are two forms of magick: static and dynamic. Dynamic magick is the magick of myth – obvious and straightforward, such as hurling lightning bolts or levitating. This sort of magick is commonly called vulgar magick, for it is an obscenity to the laws of reality as they stand now.

Static magick is better known as coincidental magick. While no less powerful than vulgar magick, static magick attempts to insinuate itself into the fabric of reality. Anything done with static magick must be disguised as some event that is not impossible by the laws of reality. It usually manifests as extraordinary coincidences that work in a mage's favor. A mage who performed static magick with the intent of acquiring money might “suddenly” win the lottery (as opposed to the vulgar magick alternative of conjuring showers of gold from the heavens).

Continued on next page . . .

Magick (Continued)

Quintessence

Behind the power of magick is Quintessence – the fundamental building block of reality. Quintessence is an indefinable force which forms patterns and flows that define all that is in the universe. Raw Quintessence can exude into the world from somewhere else; the places where it does so are magically-charged spots called “Nodes.” It is the raw stuff of reality, and can be used to augment magick, allowing the mage to override reality more easily. Quintessence and its effects are explained more fully on p. 78.

Paradox

Every action has an equal and opposite reaction. In the case of magick, that reaction is Paradox. Paradox is a mysterious force that strikes at those who alter reality. Vulgar magick is especially vulnerable to Paradox because it rips apart reality to achieve its goals.

Often, Paradox is caused by witnesses to magick; if the magical feat is seen by other humans, and is impossible according to reality as they understand it, the Sleepers will unconsciously signal the forces of Paradox to appear and remove the disturbing, impossible event. Even if there are no witnesses, vulgar magick may still attract the attention of Paradox. Coincidental magick may be used without fear of Paradox, for this style of magick works within the rules of reality rather than overriding them. However, no use of magick is *completely* free from risk of Paradox.

The forces of Paradox take many forms, depending on how great a disturbance the mage creates; none is particularly pleasant for him. At the very least, the mage will gain a certain level of Paradox energy. This mysterious energy can accumulate in the mage’s Pattern and eventually erode his ability to handle Quintessence. If he gains too much, it may unpredictably alter his Pattern and those of things around him, or even burst out of his Pattern in a deadly explosion.

Particularly powerful works of magick may attract the attention of Paradox spirits – entities whose sole purpose is to remove the problem – the mage – from reality. The worse the transgression against reality, the more powerful the Paradox spirit. While their goal is primarily correction of the disturbance caused by the mage, correction often involves punishing him in some manner. Sometimes Paradox spirits imprison the offending mage in a pocket universe called a Paradox Realm. Other times, they simply slay the mage outright.

ick will summon Paradox spirits to reverse their work – and then punish them. And if any Sleeper were to discover their existence, the Technocracy would loose its baying hounds to enforce their destruction.

Thus, to preserve the secrecy of their magick, the mages of the Traditions have practiced to conceal its true nature, and their own, with obscure habits and difficult mystical disciplines. The most important of these is the cloaking of magick with the appearance of the mundane – coincidental magick (p. 81). Its practice is held in high regard among the Traditions.

Sadly, mages are all too aware of mankind’s tendency to destroy that which is feared or misunderstood. They are also extremely frustrated by the automatic acceptance of anything which is presented within the context of scientific or technological advancement. Both work against the mages, who seek to subvert the petrifying, rules-bound reality imposed by the Technomancers. To reveal the strange and the disturbing ways of magick would do nothing more than bring disaster down upon their heads. So, for the most part, mages live their lives with their magick hidden or disguised, bound by agreements not to perform vulgar magick where normal humans may see it. After a lifetime of practice, these defenses become second nature, performed without thought as a matter of habit.

Still, in the effort to win the Ascension War, to reconstruct Prime from the fragmentary souls and muddled clues that are available, mages will do anything they can to survive and maybe, just maybe, prevail. Despite their power, they are in the unenviable position of being almost beaten already. Their foes are much more numerous and powerful than they are. The goal for which they fight may not even exist. The people for whom they fight are unwitting allies to the very forces arrayed against them. But still, they have hope and a fierce determination. Mages are nothing if not people of great strength of will and confidence in their own abilities. Despite doubts that assail them in the dark night, despite worries and inter-Tradition rivalries, and despite the overwhelming odds facing them, the Tradition Mages still pursue their great mission.

The Spontaneous Gift

In the last decades of this waning millennium, something new has arisen to challenge the mages of the Gothic-Punk world. Sleepers have been born with their gift to work magick already Awakened. Because their magick requires no mentor to nurse it into being, these “spontaneous mages” are called Orphans by the Traditions. Opinions on the meaning of this phenomenon varies widely – some see the Orphans as the harbingers of some new crisis, while others view them as proof of the imminence of Ascension. The reasons behind their spontaneous Awakening are also vigorously debated, but many believe that their Avatars are not spirits recycled from the Pure Ones, but perhaps from somewhere else. There is evidence for this – some Orphans seem to have Avatars that have never incarnated before.

As they discover their magical abilities outside of the formal training of the Traditions, Orphans do not feel any need to abide by any of their rules or restrictions. Also, they seem to operate without the need of the carefully-constructed Spheres of knowledge that mages of the Traditions depend on – instead, they work magick by intuition and inspiration alone. The majority of Orphans have weak Avatars, compared to Tradition mages, but there are always exceptions; some Orphans are stupendously powerful.

Initially, the Traditions displayed a great deal of hostility toward the Orphans, considering them “freaks.” Eventually they were brought into the fellowship of the Traditions, but for many years there was a broad social and political chasm between the Orphans and those who thought of themselves as “true” mages. In time this has faded, but even today the Orphans can still find



themselves to be second-class citizens among the Traditions, despite the valuable contributions many of their number have made in the Ascension War.

Even within the Orphans, there are distinctions and subgroups. The most predominant of these is a group which draws from the Punk subculture for its attitude, style and methods. This group is not yet recognized as a full Tradition, but its members are still as recognizable as those of any other. Members of this proto-Tradition are called *Hollow Ones*.

The Search for Ascension

"Sometimes you wake up. Sometimes the fall kills you. And sometimes, when you fall, you fly."

– Neil Gaiman

The search for Ascension underlies almost everything in a mage's life. However, the vastly differing views and opinion on the true nature of Ascension has often – and still does – bring mages into conflict. Most mages will agree that fundamental to Ascension is the striking of a balance between the forces of stasis and change (referred to by some as the static and dynamic elements of reality). However, the Technomancers support and encourage the predominance of stasis in the balance, while the Marauders have embraced unrelenting change and chaos. And on the third side, the Nephandi seek to balance both through utter destruction.

The mages of the Traditions hold the unenviable middle ground between the other factions. They view Ascension as a goal for all humanity, realized through individual achievement and growth. All mankind must be enlightened, or reality will not be fulfilled in Ascension. Both mankind and his world must be perfected, in the view of the Traditions. Each Tradition has a different dogma regarding how this is to be achieved and what it will look like when it is accomplished, but as a whole, they all agree that the unchecked expansion of the Technocracy threatens reality and Ascension both.

Thus, while mages often discuss Ascension, the time for mere debate has passed. The Traditions realize that Ascension has gone from being a lofty ideal to being a very real goal for which they must fight. They are rising to the challenge.

Humanity's Role

Unlike the other factions, the mages of the Traditions believe that normal humanity – the so-called Sleepers – has an integral role in Ascension. Even

Ascension

Mages pursue the ideal of Ascension. Though spoken of often, it is rarely analyzed or explained, as it frequently has different meanings for different mages. The philosophical differences on the nature of Ascension have caused the greatest rifts and conflicts between mages throughout all of history, so there is good reason for such reticence! In general, Ascension is viewed as the goal of perfecting not only one's own soul, but all reality. Mages view Ascension as the achievement of ultimate enlightenment.

Many mages believe Ascension to be all-or-nothing, that the whole of humanity must be perfected before reality as a whole is able to Ascend. Others think it can be attained in bits and pieces, by individuals one at a time. A few mages think that Ascension requires only an important subset of humanity, others feel that it is a state reserved for mages alone. Yet others think that it does not exist at all.

Even the Technomancers and the Marauders have their own views of the Ascension. Of all mages, perhaps only the Nephandi do not, for they taunt those who pursue Ascension for wasting their time.

The Ascension War

For millennia, mages have been fighting a long and arduous war; each faction has sought to advance its view of Ascension and thereby claim the soul of reality. It is called the Ascension War, and its violence is hidden from the world of the Sleepers, concealed in coincidence and cloaked, at times, by the protective forces of Paradox. It is a battle between the mythic and the monolithic, between order and entropy, society and individuality. In the past there has been limited cooperation between factions, but today the war is fought with no quarter asked and none given. Each faction – Traditions, Technocracy, Marauders and Nephandi alike – strives to enforce its own version of Ascension and tries to convert or destroy all that stand in its way.

Types of Chantries

Chantries are organizations specific to the Traditions, although the other factions of mages may have analogous institutions. There are almost as many kinds of Chantries as there are cabals! Below are a few of the types of Chantries that exist in the World of Darkness.

Ancestral Chantries: Every Tradition has at least one Chantry that is “home” – specific to that Tradition, and housing pockets of the homogeneous culture that defines the Tradition. These Ancestral Chantries have functioned as political and social centers for their Traditions for centuries. Most are aging and stagnant but incredibly powerful. Ancestral Chantries tend to be located in the most remote and desirable mystical landscapes of the world, from the Tibetan Plateau to the heart of Rome.

College Chantries: Most Chantries are places where Tradition mages can go to improve their magickal knowledge. Those that specialize in teaching are known as Colleges.

Squatter Chantries: Chantries usually require a Node, but some beginning cabals, unwilling to abide by the rules of an established Chantry, may settle on any location that suits their needs and found a Chantry there, whether it has a Node or not. Those that do not have a Node are known by this unpleasant nickname.

The Net: The Net is a recent phenomenon, and few mages even know of its existence. It is unique in that it is not a completely physical place. It is not unlike an Ancestral Chantry, in that it is run by one Tradition, the Virtual Adepts. However, the Net is hardly a traditional Chantry by any measure. Its Horizon Realm is said to be a computerized virtual reality that can be entered directly from the Net without the use of a Node Portal – if one has the proper access rights and codes.

Technomancer Chantries: The Technocracy has its own institutions that correspond to Chantries. Mostly, these are little more than fortified laboratories, but some do connect to their own Horizon Realms. For example, Iteration X's Chantries often connect to the Convention's machine Realm of Autochthonia. (See p. 154 for more about the Technocracy.)

those mages who believe that only the Awakened will achieve Ascension grudgingly acknowledge that they cannot reach that goal without using humans. Mages stand on the shoulders of ordinary humanity, and could not reach for the stars without the added height the Sleepers give them. However, Earth's reality seems to be the hub around which the Tellurian rotates, and human souls are quite possibly its centerpieces.

The Traditions, then, are in an unenviable position. Their vision of Ascension requires them to protect and nurture a humanity that is completely under the sway of the Technocracy and its propaganda. They must somehow rescue mankind from the oppressive plans of the Technocracy while at the same time guard them from the Marauders and the Nephandi. Of all mage factions, it seems that the Traditions are the only ones who possess true compassion for their un-Awakened brethren.

Cabals

The basic unit of mage organization is a small group known as a *cabal*. These compact groups are social at their roots, but often will develop a specific character and purpose; some may evolve into chantries or colleges. When they start, though, their resources will usually be limited; for lack of a permanent headquarters of some sort, young cabals may meet in bookstores or nightclubs, abandoned warehouses, utilities tunnels or the like. For less-experienced mages, belonging to a cabal could be dangerous, a potential target for the Pogrom; secret contacts and coded information on the time and place for meetings are often used.

In earlier times, cabals were usually formed by a number of mages all from the same Tradition. Today, however, mages from many different Traditions may band together, forming versatile cabals with a wide range of magickal ability, talents and skills. While these mixed groups are still small and low in resources, they have, by virtue of their versatility, become the vanguard of the Traditions' resistance to the Technocracy.



Some mixed cabals do not become exemplars of the Traditions, but instead become magnets for the disaffected and dissatisfied. Such groups scorn the teachings of the Traditions and strike out on their own. They become mercenaries in the Ascension War, selling their services to the highest bidder, even the Nephandi. They are frequently masters of magickal guerrilla warfare and espionage. Mages of the Traditions refer to them as Rogues.

Channies

The next level up in mage organizations is the Chantry. Successful cabals that evade the Pogrom long enough to gather resources often establish a Chantry or join an existing one. A Chantry serves as a permanent headquarters for the cabal; it can be anything from a simple shack in the woods to a network of sites tied into a Horizon Realm (p. 146).

Any building or location can serve as a Chantry, but few cabals will go to the effort of establishing one unless it is on the grounds of a Node (p. 79). A Node provides the cabal and the Chantry with a mystic power supply with which they can fortify and defend themselves, and, eventually, create a Horizon Realm in Gaia's Near Umbra (p. 145). While not a requirement for a Chantry, a Horizon Realm will give a cabal a haven from both the Technocracy and Earth's reality. In their Horizon Realm, the mages can practice magick without fear of Paradox or (usually) Technomancer attack. When a Realm is created, a permanent portal provides access to it from the Node. Old, established, and powerful Channies may have huge Horizon Realms that connect with several Node sites on Earth. Such a Chantry might control Nodes in Paris, Moscow, Los Angeles, and a cave in Tunisia.

The catch is that Node sites are rare and difficult to find. Locating one requires an extensive search in the Near Umbra for the magickal lines of power (known as *ley lines*) that intersect to create a Node. Because of their rarity, many young cabals are forced to join the ranks of an established Chantry in order to share in its resources. Powerful Channies may have as many as a dozen different cabals as members.

Naturally, membership has its price. Each Chantry is governed by a list of laws known as Covenants. These Covenants are created by the cabal that founded the Chantry, and therefore the rules generally favor the senior members. New cabals frequently must "prove themselves" for a long time before being allowed to tap any of the Chantry's resources; this sometimes involves all manner of menial or courier duties, but most frequently is Sentinel (see below) duty. As a result, most Chantry Covenants create a system of social distinctions among its various members.

Chantry Society

Most Tradition Channies recognize certain titles among their members.

Pedagogue: This is the common term used to describe a teacher of magick who has become widely known throughout mage society for his skill and success. Based in a Chantry college (see p. 28), these tutors are so instrumental to the Chantry's success that they inevitably become its rulers either through influence or direct control. All too often, these Pedagogues abuse their power, ruling the Chantry with an iron hand and discrediting all who dare to disagree with them.

Deacon: Deacons are usually the very same mages who founded the Chantry, and are thus its leaders. The Covenants of their Chantry usually give Deacons a great deal of power. They generally possess the authority to distribute the Chantry's supply of Quintessence. If the Chantry is also a college, the Deacons often have the final say in curriculum and student admission.



Protecting the Chantry

Once, a Chantry was a refuge from the Pogrom, but that is no longer the case. The Ascension War has caught the Channies and their Realms in its lines. In particular, the Technocracy hunts down Channies with great enthusiasm. They rarely enter the Umbra, so the only way they have to locate Nodes is to locate a Chantry (or a Garou caern) and take it over with a swarm of HITMarks or Men In Black. As a result, Channies are no longer peaceful havens, but strategic sites that must be guarded carefully against Technomancer attack.

A Chantry's Horizon Realm is just as vulnerable. Poised on the Horizon, it is a perfect target for raiders from both the Near Umbra and the Deep Umbra. Since they must be continuously fed Quintessence from Nodes on Earth, Realms are tempting treats for the Nephandi and Marauders, who find it difficult to break into Earth's physical reality to steal Quintessence directly. Worse yet, the Portals that feed the Realm power make it not only a source of Quintessence, but an easy route to Earth. This is another reason why the Technocracy desires to control all of the Nodes on Earth.

Sample Chantries

Here are two especially active Chantries among the dozens which exist in the Umbra. These Chantries are at the center of the War and are constantly engaged in recruiting new apprentices and hunting sources of Quintessence. These Chantries are particularly open to newcomers, and are very willing to serve as "patrons" to young cabals.

Doissetep

A truly ancient Chantry, Doissetep has existed since prehistoric times. Originally founded in southeast Asia by a Thai sorcerer-king, the Chantry has moved many times in its long history. During the Mythic Age, the Order of Hermes moved Doissetep to Earth in order to use it in their experiments with their weaker, public counterpart organization (see p. 66).

Now Doissetep is once again in the Umbra, in the Shade Realm of Forces. From the outside, it appears to be a huge mountain that resembles Mount Celidar in the Pyrenées, where the Chantry appeared in the physical world. Atop this is a sprawling castle. Its architecture is irregular and apparently reflects nothing of its original design; the exterior and many inner areas were changed to resemble Middle Ages styles of building. The interior is dark and the libraries, though extensive and among the best of the Traditions', are dusty and filled of huge, folio-sized, hand-written volumes.

Beneath the fortress is a maze of catacombs and labyrinths. These tunnels lead (for those who know the way) to a great chamber known as Gateway. This nexus contains portals centered on Doissetep from many locations. These include some 40 to Earth, perhaps a half-dozen to other Shade Realms, and a few to other Chantries. The mages of Doissetep journey to the Umbra through these portals.

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Fellow: Members of a Chantry who are not Deacons are known as Fellows. Fellowship grants the mages use of the Chantry's facilities, access to its Horizon Realm, and a (lesser) share of its Quintessence.

Sentinel: Chantries must protect their Nodes and the portals leading to the Chantry's Horizon Realm; the mages who take this guardian duty are known as Sentinels. It is also the duty of the Sentinels to maintain the secrecy of the Chantry's Node sites, lest the Technomancers discover the Chantry's existence. Sentinels are organized in cabals associated with the Chantry, but are not usually themselves members. Sentinel duty is the usual task given to a cabal that seeks to join an existing chantry. Sentinels don't just perform guard duty; Chantries usually send Sentinels to perform a variety of earthly missions. Such missions include the collection of overdue "tuition" to a college Chantry, envoys to other Chantries, and even out-and-out war parties.

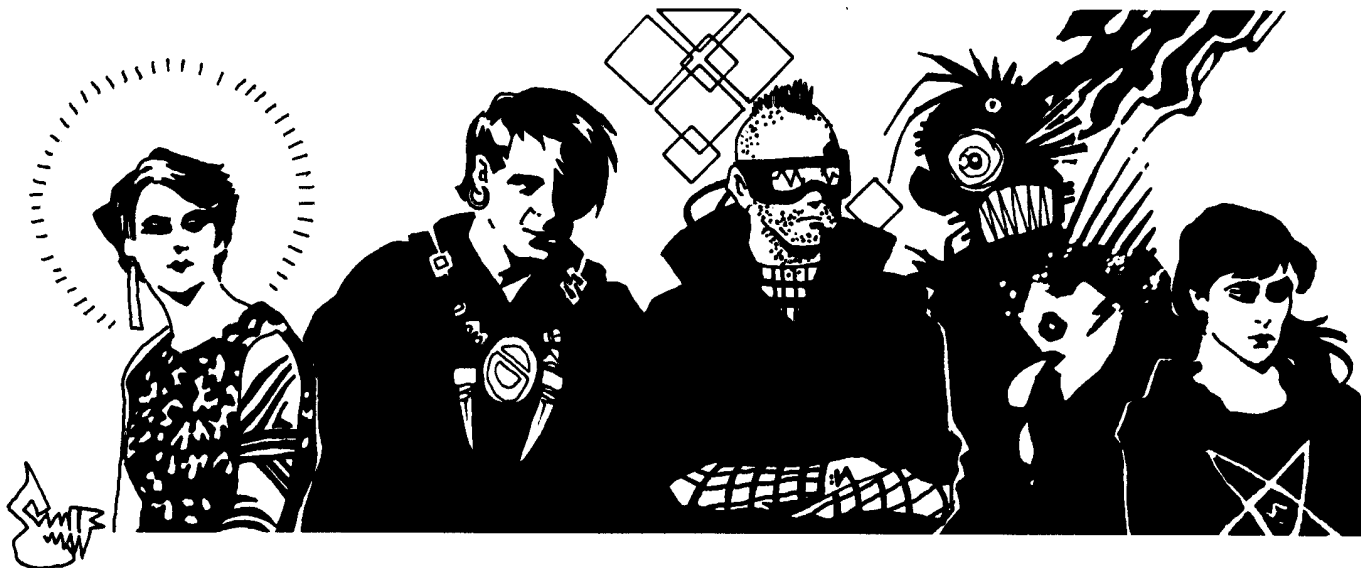
Errants: Errants are mages whose Chantries were destroyed or taken over, or whose cabals were eliminated, by the Technocracy's Pogrom. Having lost everything they ever worked for or held dear, these mages have sworn vengeance against their enemies, and will use anyone or do anything to accomplish their goal. Errants are known as harbingers of sorrow, for wherever they go they bring their enemies with them. Few Chantries or cabals dare to harbor them, so Errants wander alone on their quest for revenge.

Rogues: Rogue cabals have been described on p. 25. Mage society scorns and reviles them as violent, honorless and greedy. They have been known to serve anyone who pays them, even the Technocracy and the Nephandi. They are proficient with the magick of war and espionage, and generally operate alone or in tightly knit cabals tied to no Chantry or Node.

Apprenticeship

While each Tradition uses its own title to describe a human who has had his Avatar Awakened, the process of such apprenticeship is shared by all Traditions. Mages who take on apprentices are called Mentors. They gain great respect among mages if they successfully Awaken a Sleeper, especially if the apprentice goes on to become a mage of note.

Each Tradition has its own way of selecting apprentices, and its own preferred cultural group. Once selected, an apprentice works with one or more Mentors who provide him with the fundamentals of magick. This stage only ends when the apprentice is deemed ready. The duration varies from individual to individual; some may be ready in a year, others not for a decade or more.





When deemed ready, the apprentice is taken through his Tradition's initiation, which Awakens his Avatar. From that point forward, he is a Sleeper no longer; he is a mage.

The Protocols

The society of the Traditions is far from structured or hierarchical, but even so, there are certain rules and customs that all mages are expected to follow. These ancient social taboos and expectations are known as the Protocols. They are simple rules of behavior taught to all apprentices. Each Tradition interprets the Protocols slightly differently, but most of the maxims hold true for all.

Generally the Protocols encourage honorable behavior. Some of the most common and well-known Protocols are described below:

Respect those of greater knowledge.

A debt to a tutor must be repaid.

A mage's word is his honor; never break a sworn vow.

The will of an Oracle must always be obeyed.

Do not betray your cabal or Chantry.

Do not conspire with the Technocracy or other enemies of Ascension.

Protect the Sleepers; they are ignorant of what they do.

A mage who breaks a Protocol is rebuked and instructed as to how to deport himself. If he continues to violate the Protocol, a number of things can happen depending on the mood, power and status of those offended. Most commonly, he may be shunned. Word of the mage's violation will be spread, and other mages will refuse to teach the offender. Whole Chantries may refuse to associate with mages guilty of breaking the Protocols.

This informal system of justice is generally effective. Occasionally, more drastic measures must be taken against serious offenders and habitual miscreants. In this case, a mage's own Tradition will call a Tribunal (see p. 30) against him.

Learning

Mage society revolves around a respect for education and a profound love of knowledge. Pursuing the Mastery of the Spheres stems from a desire for complete knowledge about part of reality. And at its heart, the quest for Ascension is nothing more than a search for the ultimate truth. Even the Ascension War is waged over nothing more than a difference in philosophies. This love of lore emerges from the very source of mages' being.

Sample Chantries (Continued)

Doissetep's mages live in small, spartan cubicles, and until recently this kind of regimentation and monasticism was reflected in their organization. Older mages from all Traditions at the Chantry (primarily the Order of Hermes, Akashic Brotherhood and Verbena) went into a long period of somnolence after the return from Earth. Only during the last decade, after successfully repelling a number of attacks from Iteration X Chantries, did Doissetep's mages find new vigor, becoming actively involved in the Horizon Wars. Now younger mages (nearly second-class citizens before) have a voice, and the Chantry is recruiting new blood and associate memberships. Today Doissetep is the political center for those who oppose the rule of the Technocracy.

This Chantry has no definite leader, but one mage, Caeron, who first proposed the new policies, now wields considerable influence.

The Chantry also possesses a huge numbers of servants. Most were born here and come from long lineages of Acolytes.

Null-B

This is the Technomancer Chantry most dedicated to the imposition of industrialization and reason – the Technomancer view of reality – upon the Earth. Null-B is also the headquarters of most Technomancer campaigns in the Horizon Wars. The Chantry is the result of efforts to create a place for research in the Umbra.

Null-B looks like a gigantic Victorian factory, floating on a slab of gray rock. The architecture is Early Industrial, and the building is littered with courtyards, smokestacks, leaded glass and bustling workers. From the outside, the Chantry seems quite archaic, but it is actually very high-tech. The mages there have access to the newest developments of the Machine World of Autochthonia.

Null-B is the primary source of the Technomancers' study in the use of technology and magick in the Umbra. The mages of Null-B develop hybrid Talismans for war in the Deep Umbra, and the Traditions have lost several battles due to such innovations.

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Sample Chantries (Continued)

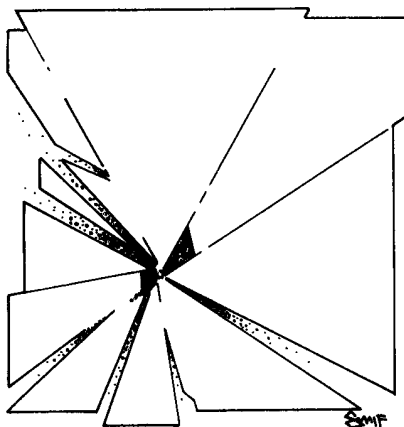
Of late, Null-B has perfected the design of a Techno-spirit called the web-spider. These creatures travel through the Umbra, seeking out nodes and reporting whatever they find. Vendiz, the leader of Null-B, uses the spiders to spy on Chantries. Webspiders are self-replicating and extremely hard to detect. They seek out any mechanical or technological device and build nests inside it to maintain and even increase their efficiency. On Earth they operate as spirits, but in the Umbra they take on physical form. No more than an inch in length, they look like tiny robotic spiders. Woe to the mage who forgets to leave his watch or Walkman behind on a trip to his Chantry, for a tag-along webspider may become an unwanted passenger.

Null-B is connected through portals to five different military-industrial complexes in North America and England. It also has one carefully guarded gate to the Machine World. The Chantry is extremely wealthy in Quintessence due to these rich contacts.

For other travel through the Umbra – particularly of a military nature – Null-B maintains and equips a fleet of PT boats, converted for use in the Umbra and manned with a standing army of ‘marines.’ The infamous Umbra jet-skis are used as scouts for the main force of PT boats. Engagements with other Chantries persist on a virtually constant basis.

Once the marines take a Chantry, a trap is laid at all portals and entrances. During the next month, anyone passing through is captured and put on trial. After that, portals are closed, the Chantry structure is utterly destroyed, and a garrison is left to ensure that it is never again used. In this way, seven Tradition Chantries have been destroyed by Null-B.

The only thing that keeps Null-B from the complete destruction of all Tradition Chantries is constant attack by a group of mysterious Marauders.



Teaching

Teaching is the closest thing to a sacred institution that mages possess. The relationship between student and teacher is the basis of many old legends and stories. Teachers can be both benevolent and manipulative, however, and some misuse their authority and position. Many conflicts among mages are begun by respected tutors who teach the ways of war.

The currency of status for tutors is respect, as measured by the number and quality of students that the tutor attracts. Truly talented students are a precious commodity, and the competition for them is fierce and sometimes cutthroat, because the achievements of the student reflect favorably upon the teacher. In addition, the young and talented are often innovative and willing to try what older mages would call impossible or unprofitable; their discoveries teach the tutor as much as they may learn from him. However, since most tutors cannot possibly teach all who would learn from them, they must pick and choose; a student must convince the teacher that he is among the best and brightest, if he has any hope of being accepted.

Some tutors will require that their students be of a specific Tradition, or have specific values or morals. Such tutors often perform exhaustive background searches on potential students in order to determine their “fitness” for the knowledge the tutor has to impart.

Colleges

When a particular tutor inspires enough like-minded mages, they may form a college. Colleges support, defend and propagate the particular tutor’s philosophy in the course of teaching its students. Many are little more than clubs of enthusiasts with a common interest; others are large Chantries pushing a specific dogma and conducting classes with the control and discipline of a military school.

One example of a college is the Order of the Burning Light, which is affiliated with the Celestial Chorus and the Order of Hermes (one of the few lasting areas of cooperation between these two Traditions). Led by an ancient tutor named Abelard, the Order is dedicated to integrating the Spheres of Prime and Forces. The Order holds secretive meetings in Paris on a regular basis. These meetings are excellent sources of information about potential tutors, particularly those in the Chorus or the Order.

Mentors

The course of a mage's life can be profoundly influenced by his Mentor. A good Mentor can produce a mage of exceptional ability, while a bad Mentor can warp and retard the mage; sometimes a mage taught by a poor Mentor will have to unlearn part of a Sphere before he can learn it properly. A mage is always in debt to his Mentor, because the Mentor is Awakened him, and only the most perverse and cruel Mentors are not accorded respect for this.

It is not unusual for a mage to remain close to their Mentors, and to support them and their own goals. Mages frequently become involved in the social and political affairs of their Mentors, and may be asked for assistance from time to time. In exchange, Mentors continue to provide support and advice for their former students, and may occasionally serve as tutors. Often a Mentor will aid a former apprentice when help is available from no one else.

Tuition

Education is never free. But in mage society, money is all but worthless. Instead, a tutor will require the student, as their payment, to perform various tasks, tasks that range from the menial to the impossible.

However, the chance to learn from a tutor, especially a noted pedagogue, will force a student to do whatever is asked of him. This can lead to embarrassing, dangerous and terrifying situations. Missions to deliver messages or recover lost tomes are typical. However, in the best tradition of the cloistered academic, tutors – especially those tutors who spend all their time at a Chantry – frequently lose a sense of perspective when it comes to the feasibility of their tasks. A student may be required to pay with an unhatched dragon's egg, or a crate of authentic Venetian glass or a Rolls Royce Silver Cloud.

Other Powers

Our cruel and unrelenting enemy leaves us only the choice of brave resistance, or the most abject submission. We have, therefore, to resolve to conquer or die.

– George Washington

Acolytes

Mages cannot do everything alone; they must have their Acolytes. Acolytes are mundane humans who serve a mage or group of mages; they rarely understand the true nature of those they follow, but they experience enough to know that they are beyond the edge of the normal. Acolytes serve as guards, assistants and advisors to the mages who need them. Some of the greatest achievements in the history of the Traditions could not have occurred without these faithful servants. Apprentices are often recruited from the pool of Acolytes.

Acolytes can be any type of people. They are bums, stockbrokers, policemen, hookers, secretaries, shop owners, and ordinary people who have a sliver of something pure inside them. Although Acolytes are Sleepers whose Avatars have not yet Awakened, their inner magick often manifests itself in one way or another.

Acolytes often serve as a mage's connection to the real world. Mages are usually wrapped up in the business of magick or politics within the Traditions, and are thus often ignorant of the machinations of the Technocracy. Acolytes can act as newsmongers or even as spies, gathering intelligence unnoticed in the halls of the Technomancers. Acolytes can be a mage's street contacts, provide a source of influence over society, and even provide resources for equipment and supplies.

A character's Acolytes can be represented by many different advantages. A generic band of servitors may be an Ally Group, while especially useful individuals could be Allies or Contacts.



Tribunals

A Tribunal is a formal gathering where mages meet to discuss issues of importance, determine policies, and enact justice. Usually they are specific to a single Tradition, but in recent times, multi-Tradition Tribunals have been convened. A Tribunal can be called only by a mage who is a Master (Status 2) or greater; while technically they can be convened at any time, Tribunals usually meet only at times of turmoil, or after a great offense against mage society has been committed.

Tradition Tribunals are held in one of the Tradition's Ancestral Chantries. Inter-Tradition Tribunals are held in mutually accessible locations. The mage who calls the Tribunal brings it to order, but other Masters actually conduct the Tribunal.

Trials are commonly conducted at Tribunals, with formal punishments are meted out to the guilty. While the defendant in such a trial is usually a mage who has broken a Protocol, trials may also be called to judge spirits, mages defecting from other factions or even Acolytes. Punishments can range from the simple and polite to the unforgiving and harsh:

Censure

A formal rebuke, after which the censured mage is on an indefinite probation. During this time, the mage must follow a strict set of rules and instructions, or suffer further punishment. These orders vary from case to case, but usually include travel and social restrictions, as well as "community service" clauses.

Ostracism

The mage is outcast from mage society. All members of all the Traditions are forbidden to associate with him in any way. Those who dare to associate with the outcast risk censure or worse. The duration of the mage's expulsion varies according to the offense, and can last as short as a month to as long as the mage lives.

Branding

For particularly severe offenses against a Protocol, Masters of the Sphere of Spirit can place a permanent "sigil" upon the Avatar of a mage, forever marking him as an offender against that Protocol.

Death

Death is the punishment for those who consistently violate the precepts and the rules of mage society. Mages who hinder Ascension are slain so that their Avatars can be incarnated into new, unborn children.

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Mages face threats from many fronts. Besides the Werewolves and the Vampires (see pp. 173-175), they have enemies from within their own ranks.

The Technocracy

The greatest threat known to the Traditions is the Technocracy. This body of mages controls Earth's reality through the clever use of their particular style of magick – science and technology. Since the end of the Black Death, but most successfully since the Renaissance, the Technomancers have supplanted the dynamic, mythic reality of the Traditions with the static scientific reality that is the modern world. The key to the Technomancers' success is a massive propaganda campaign they have orchestrated, designed to promote science as the only truth.

The Technomancers cloak their magick as "scientific advances," and use them as a front for forcing their cold, bleak worldview on Sleeper society. They believe that the only avenue to Ascension lies through regimentation and control of all aspects of life. Anything that doesn't fit into this worldview is destroyed or banished, like dragons and other mythical beasts, whom they forced into the Umbra. Their policies have been so successful that reality now rejects the efforts of Tradition mages to use vulgar magick, punishing them with Paradox.

The Tradition mages themselves are the Technocracy's greatest enemies. They seek a reality where dynamic forces prevent the universal calcification the Technomancers believe is necessary for Ascension; their pursuit of Ascension in a form other than that proscribed by the Technocracy is heresy, and punishable by death. Sometimes a Tradition mage can be converted to the cause of the Technocracy, but those that cannot are killed.

The Technomancers have ultra-tech machines and weapons at their disposal. They directly control the media and many of the world's corporations and governments. They are indeed a fearsome enemy. A complete discussion of the Technocracy and its structure can be found in Chapter 7.

The Marauders

Where the Technomancers demand absolute rigidity, the mages known as the Marauders have delved so deeply into the alluring seas of dynamism and chaos that they have lost the desire ever to return to a more stable reality. They are a funhouse mirror reflection of the Technomancers, embracing change, disorder and individuality to the point of utter lunacy. They are darkly humorous madmen whose sporadic visits to Earth rip normal reality apart. They normally dwell within the Near Umbra; some live within their own wild, chaotic realms.

For the Marauders, Ascension is an intensely personal achievement, whose requisites are set by that person. Whatever furthers the individual's goals is what is necessary for his Ascension, and to hell with anyone who gets in the way. In the pursuit of their vision of Ascension, the Marauders will stop at nothing to gain more personal power and knowledge. The Marauders toy with the very fabric of reality to find better ways of manipulating it without suffering the consequences of Paradox and have, to some extent, succeeded.

While these mages have managed to unite with their Avatars as no others have, they have done so at the expense of their sanity, and their ability to understand and be understood by humanity. As a result, the Marauders are feared; they are insanity incarnate. Their escapades are so frightening that they almost justify some of the rigidity of the Technomancers. Even the worst enemies of the Technocracy know that its stable foundation prevents the greatest Marauder atrocities. It is whispered that Marauders are manipulated by other factions in the Tellurian, but no one has yet figured out who controls them, or why.

Fortunately for most, the Technomancers have managed bar the Marauders from Earth – most of the time. When the Marauders do manage to break through, the Technocracy attacks them mercilessly. But while the Technomancers may drive the Marauders back into the Umbra, the toll taken on both their forces and reality is great, and any Sleeper caught in the carnage stands no chance of survival. The impact of the Marauders on reality can be so damaging that both Tradition mages and Technomancers alike find themselves compelled to stop or at least contain the Marauders' activities.

Unfortunately, the Traditions' own actions occasionally allow Marauders to enter Earth's reality. Whenever a mage opens a Portal or in any way pierces the Gauntlet, there is a chance that a Marauder may also use the Portal, slipping past the Tradition mage to disappear somewhere down the streets of physical reality. This is one of the main reasons the Technocracy hunts Tradition mages.

It is believed that one of the Marauders' goals (if such madmen have coherent goals) is to bring back the Mythic Age – with a vengeance. Their behavior suggests that they want all of reality to return to the chaotic wonderland of myth, where humans mix with unicorns and dragons. One of their common tactics is to reintroduce creatures of legend to Earth, laughing as they watch a dragon fly down a city street igniting gas mains with its fiery breath. So far, the few incidents that have occurred have been wiped from existence by Paradox spirits, but it is only a matter of time until something gets through, and newspapers carry the front-page story of monsters among us.

The Nephandi

Of the Traditions' many foes, the most evil and mysterious are the Nephandi. They are immensely powerful mages who have sold their souls to the darkest forces of the universe in a bid for supreme mastery of reality. No one understands their true motives or the extent of their power. All that is known is that their allies are fearsome, grotesque and come from beyond the Horizon and the Deep Umbra.

Tribunals (Continued)

Gilgul

The only punishment worse than death is *Gilgul*, the deliberate destruction of an Avatar. It is reserved for those mages whose very Avatars are known or believed to have become warped or polluted. An Oracle must perform the punishment, which is beyond even the Adepts. The guilty mage's Avatar is torn from him and utterly destroyed. The mage is left physically unharmed, but without his soul, the body is little more than a vegetable, mindless and unable to work magick ever again.



The Quiet

Besides the forces of Paradox, there are other costs a mage may pay for his manipulations of reality. A mage who has worked too much magick may slip into a hallucination-filled state known as the *Quiet*. In this state he must deal with embodiments of the forces of his own subconscious mind, and vanquish them or risk their permanent manifestation as *real* objects that will dog him for the rest of his life. The Quiet and its effects are detailed on p. 136.

Using Mage in Other Genres

The rules and ideas in this book need not remain restricted to the Gothic-Punk world. Many other **GURPS** worldbooks are suited for mages as characters. Here are just a few examples.

GURPS Fantasy

The mage has been a staple of the Fantasy campaign since the beginning of roleplaying. If the GM wishes to use magick as described in this worldbook instead of the magic found in the **GURPS Basic Set** and **GURPS Magic**, he is welcome to. However, he should realize that mages built on this system are drastically more powerful than the "standard" **GURPS** mage and may no longer be suitable for player characters except in the most high-powered of campaigns. If magic use is not secret and hidden in the world, he must be prepared for mages to be the true movers and shakers of his world, on top of most social and political ladders – unless he also imports a foe or foes that will take much of their time and energies to combat.

A good possible setting for a classic fantasy campaign using the **Mage** magick rules would be the Mythic Age of Earth, either in Europe or elsewhere in the world. Most fantasy-oriented **GURPS** supplements would support this setting with ease.

Another possibility is to use **Mage** magick, at lower levels of power, for non-human magic. Elven warriors and wizards could use the Spheres of Life and Mind, while Dwarves could have secret rites in the Sphere of Matter to forge their legendary blades and artifacts. Alternatively, standard **GURPS** magic and **Mage** magick could coexist side-by-side, as lesser and greater magicks, distinguished by the efforts and philosophies of their practitioners. The creator of a mage character would have to consider carefully the choice of magic, of whether to take the more immediate gratification but ultimate limitation of lesser magic, or the more subtle and vastly more powerful path of the greater magick.

GURPS Space

The Void Engineers are already there, and the Sons of Ether have traversed it in the past – outer space is no barrier to magick. If a source of Quintessence other than the Earth itself is located, mages may be found throughout the solar system. GMs will have to decide just how much of reality as described by science is "unreal" – perhaps the stars *aren't* distant suns – but if the entire known universe is left open for exploration, distant worlds may have their own Quintessence and magick; perhaps interstellar wars won't be fought with phasers and photon torpedos, but with Forces magick and talismans. . .

Continued on p. 34 . . .



These allies are the Demon Hordes, expelled from the Earth centuries ago by the Technomancers. Exiled beyond the barrier of the Horizon, they now desperately want back in. They desire the Quintessence produced by Earth, which they can feed upon and grow in power. Over the centuries since their banishment, the Demon Hordes have sustained themselves by devouring the souls of human beings, but as the nutritional content of human souls diminishes (a side effect of the Technomancers' work), they can no longer wait Outside – they must break through the barriers.

To further this end, the Demons tempt and pervert mages to their side with promises of great power and even godhood, in return for his soul. Those who agree to the bargain become the Nephandi, the generals of the legions of darkness. Mages from Technocracy, Marauders and Traditions alike have all fallen victim to the temptations of the Demons, and have traded their souls for the power to command the minions of the Wyrms.

Unlike other factions of mages, the Nephandi rarely speak of Ascension, except to taunt other mages. "Far better to accept promises of power, true enlightenment and comfort among the forces of the Nephandi. Do not live in fear of evil; embrace it and it will forever protect you." Such promises lure mages into alliances with the bizarre and horrific minions of the Wyrms.

Among the Nephandi's servants are the cunning and deceitful Demons of the Inferno, and the corrupt Banes of the Umbra. Beyond this, little is known of them and the forces they command. Tales are whispered of Nephandi who ruthlessly rule their own Realms; others speak of fallen Dreamspeakers who have joined Nephandi ranks to marshal the forces of the Wyrms, the legendary dragon of corruption and destruction.

The Nephandi also use human (or once-human) agents. These are called the fomori (p. 172). Though they gain supernatural powers from their evil masters, the fomori are marked by physical and mental deformities. Those marked least

hide within society, furthering the Nephandi's influence by seducing other mortals. The heavily deformed ones hide in the shadowy places of the world, waiting for a chance to open a pathway to the Umbra, where their masters wait patiently to invade Earth.

Governments

How much do the world governments suspect? How much do they know? How firmly are they under the control of mages or other supernatural entities? It's hard to say. Certainly some governments – or parts of them – are influenced by the Technocracy. Many, though, have agencies devoted to paranormal investigation; many of these, especially on the military end, seem to be devoted to extrasensory phenomena such as ESP, clairvoyance and telekinesis. Rumors circulate about a United States government research facility, designated "Project PSI," that has achieved a measure of success. Could the government have managed to Awaken test subjects?

The FBI might contain several individuals who suspect the truth. There is even a special department devoted to the investigation of the paranormal. Originally formed to neutralize the impact of suspected "Communist Thought Control" research, this department, known generally as Special Affairs (though its members rarely identify themselves as such) has shifted its focus to more paranormal events. Special Affairs may even have uncovered some mage-related information during the '50s and '60s. Despite this, the department has dwindled significantly over the years. They must provide indisputable proof of suspected activities before the FBI will take action, and proof is what has thus far eluded the department. Circumstantial evidence of magickal activity no doubt abounds, but that last, necessary piece of tangible evidence has escaped Special Affairs – so far.

The NSA is said to keep an active file on supernatural events, especially significant paradoxes, but treats it, oddly, as a subclassification of terrorism. The agency has not yet made the connections that would reveal the whole picture. The NSA is a giant fact-sifting agency concerned with national security from an internal perspective. The NSA flags police and news reports that contain interesting or anomalous (read: paradoxical) facts. Investigation only occurs after the computer, or





Using Mage in Other Genres (Continued)

GURPS Horror

There's not much conversion necessary for a modern-day **Horror** campaign. The Gothic-Punk world is a horrific place in and of itself. The creatures of the Deep Umbra already count among their number Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, and if the GM wishes to add to the wide variety of evil creatures from Earth and beyond, he can certainly include dark creatures from beneath the sea, other forms of undead besides vampires (zombies, ghosts), and anything else his twisted imagination desires!

GURPS Illuminati

The World of Darkness is already a web of conspiracies; the Technocracy vs. the Mages being only the most dramatic of them. However, they think themselves above the "petty" conspiracies of Sleeper society; they may be wrong. . . Imagine bringing them into conflict with all the strange and mysterious power blocs of the Illuminated world. Finding out who is on whose side, and what kind of reality each bloc supports, would make the lives of Tradition mages much more complicated. And if different Illuminati side with different Traditions, it gets even worse. . .

Continued on next page . . .

a reviewer, notices possible connections between stories. Should the NSA actually deduce the existence of mages and magick, the resources that could be brought to bear are truly frightening.

In the United Kingdom there is government body devoted to the investigation of the paranormal, but it is very difficult to trace. Some suspect that it is actually of a quasi-mystical nature, possibly with ties to mystery orders and secret societies dating back centuries. (In any event, British mages report that Scotland Yard has investigated mage-related incidents with unnerving accuracy.) Some say that a vampire actually controls this group and uses it to combat her enemies.

The Inquisition

The Celestial Chorus and the Order of Hermes have a long, interwoven history. Together, they developed the great Mythic experiment of the Middle Ages, but certain members from both groups may have had treachery at heart. In 1229, a movement called the Inquisition was formed, and the zealots of this Church order ultimately contributed to the destruction of the Mythic Age. Most mages feel that others of their kind were behind the the Inquisition, but they don't know who to blame – the Chorus or the Order for trying to ensure its part of the experiment succeeded, or the Technocracy, or may some other group entirely.

The Inquisition's main goal was the active suppression of heresies, real or imagined. Inquisitors were also given leave to persecute all things supernatural. In particular, vampires and werewolves both suffered greatly at the hands of the Inquisition.

Whoever was responsible, and whatever their motives, the ultimate result was the withering of magic in the world. In the chaos that followed the dissolution of the Mythic Age, the mortal Inquisitors broke loose from the mages who ostensibly controlled them; although they remained nominally part of the Church, they became independent. Indeed, the Inquisition continues to this day, albeit in a different form.

Today the Inquisition is an organization known as "The Society of Leopold." It is a loose confederation of scholars and high-ranking priests who research the occult, and who keep in touch mainly through letters and rare conferences. They are a body of scholars and researchers of the occult. Though the Inquisition is no longer an official body of the Catholic Church, most of its members are Catholics. Despite its purported new name and purpose, the Inquisition's members remain preeminent among hunters of vampires, Garou, and even mages! Some rumors even suggest that the Inquisition is a cover for strike teams from the Celestial Chorus, sent out to disrupt the plans of other Traditions. The Vatican Chantry hotly denies this.

The Arcanum

The formation of the Arcanum can be traced to the mystical "War of the Roses" (not related to the English Baronial Wars) that centered around Paris in the late 1800s. A war of words (and, rumor has it, mystic forces) arose between two orders of Rosicrucians. The fighting became such a public scandal that many of both groups' best practitioners and scholars abandoned their respective orders to create a new one. After drafting a great Charter, the dissidents established the Arcanum, an order which survives to this day.

Though the Arcanum itself has formally existed for less than 100 years, it has a longer history. The elite of the Arcanum consists of a group that calls itself the "White Monks." It is believed that these so-called White Monks were somehow involved in the Inquisition, and learned of mages there. However, they are not currently connected with the Inquisition, nor do they ever actually engage in witch hunts. The Arcanum studies. It does not destroy.

There are three known Arcanum headquarters buildings, known as Foundation houses, in Boston, Paris, and Vienna. Its members are intellectuals, more concerned with the theory of magick and the history of the supernatural than with actual practice; their focus is primarily on the past rather than the present, and many of their number believe such creatures as werewolves and vampires are long extinct, and that mages and magick are long gone, if they ever existed outside of folklore and myth. The Arcanum seems more interested in paranormal phenomena such as hauntings and miracles than in magick and the truth of the Mythic Age.

However, their information-gathering abilities, when it comes to occult subjects, are formidable, and are a matter of great concern among mages. A single mistake on the part of the Traditions could lead the Arcanum directly to their doors, and right behind them, the Technocracy.



Using Mage in Other Genres (Continued)

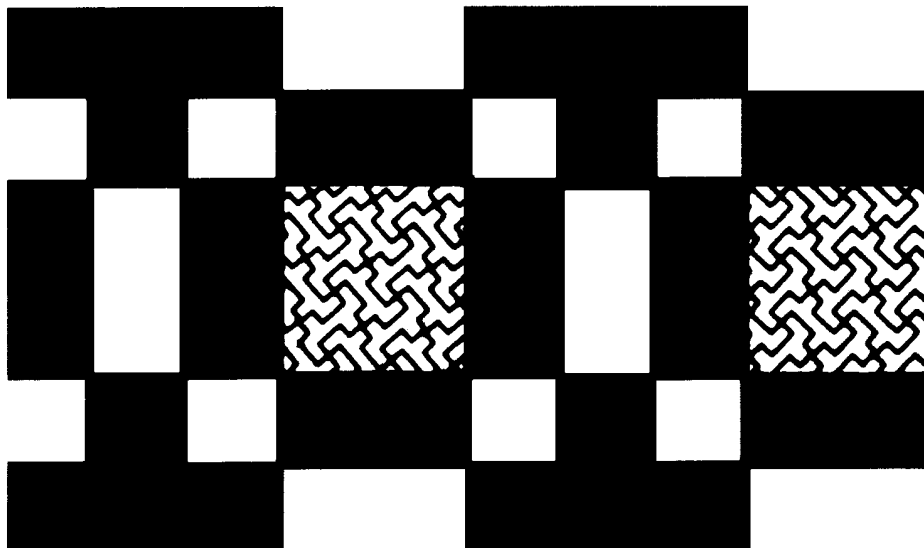
GURPS Supers

The I.S.T. background presented in *GURPS Supers* and *GURPS International Super Teams* pretty much mirrors our own, except that superheroes exist and work for the government. The wielders of magick would certainly be on an even footing with supers, and may be trying to repeat the Order of Hermes' grand Mythic experiment once again, even in the very face of the Technomancers. Or what if all supers are really mages or mage-created creatures of magick? Paradox may very well be weaker in a world where strange powers and creatures are on the news every night, giving mages even more power and latitude.

GURPS Time Travel

Perhaps the world described in this book is merely an Alternate Earth, as detailed in the Infinity Unlimited background in *GURPS Time Travel*. If this is true, mage PCs may have to deal with the distraction – or threat – of meddling dimension-hoppers who want to study the reality-warping mutants of an alternate Earth.

Or the PCs could be Time Agents from Timepiece, sent back to the late 20th century. When they discover that their history stems from aiding the Ascension – or worse, preventing it completely – what will they do? What if one of them is a Marauder or Technomancer in secret? Or a fomor?





O'Malley looked down at him. "You mean, that's it? That's all?"

The small mage grinned and nodded. "You came for enlightenment. I have given it to you."

"But this is worse than a zen koan. At least koans have a point! Well buried and obscure, to be sure, but a point none the less." O'Malley was seething. Ten years' search, another year's study, and this was all he got? A pointless children's riddle?

"So?" The so-called Master grinned again, and O'Malley could swear he saw the little man's back teeth. "What do you want me to do? Hit you with a stick and shout 'mu!'?"

"I was expecting something more profound than 'How many apprentices does it take to screw in a light bulb!'" O'Malley roared in frustration.

"Ah," said the master quietly, "but enlightenment is not in the question, but the answer."

"And what, pray tell," O'Malley hissed between gritted teeth, "is the answer?"

"The answer is, 'Only one, if he Awakens.'" Without warning, the little man suddenly struck O'Malley with a rod of dark wood, and he found himself . . . elsewhere.

Chapter 2

CHARACTERS

*Those who refuse to serve the Powers,
Become the tools of the Powers.
Those who agree to serve the Powers,
Themselves **become** the Powers.
Beware the Choice! Beware refusing it!*

*– Book of Night with Moon, Tetrastych xiv:
“Fire over Heaven” (Diane Duane, in **High Wizardry**)*

Mages are as varied as the Sleepers from whose numbers they spring. Although the different Traditions each have their own “uniform”, the person behind the robe – or the drum, or the goggles – is an individual to the utmost degree, made even more so by his unique avatar – his share of the primal spirit of the Universe. But however different, all mages ultimately share the same goal: the search for Ascension.

Creating a Mage

Starting Points

Mages are powerful beings, who often have a wide range of abilities – or a great deal of power in one or two specialized fields. Beginning mage characters are presumed to be Disciples in at least their chosen Tradition's specialty Sphere, and should be built on 400 points, with 100 points of disadvantages and 5 quirks.

The "Mage Package"

Although mages are not a separate race from humanity, *per se*, they all share certain common characteristics that are not found in the bulk of mankind. These characteristics make up a basic "package" that defines the minimum necessary to make a mage character.

A mage must have the advantages Arete-1 (15 points) and Immune to the Delirium (25 points). (For campaigns in which Werewolves will never appear, the GM may wish to omit the latter advantage.) He will also have the disadvantage Secret: Non-Technocracy Mage (Possible Death; -30 points), which does not count against his disadvantage limit. If revealed, this Secret becomes Enemy (The Technocracy) on 12 or less.

The basic cost to be a mage is 10 points. In addition, a mage character will normally have at least 1 level in a Sphere of magick, but the cost of that (and other) levels will vary depending on his background.

Essence

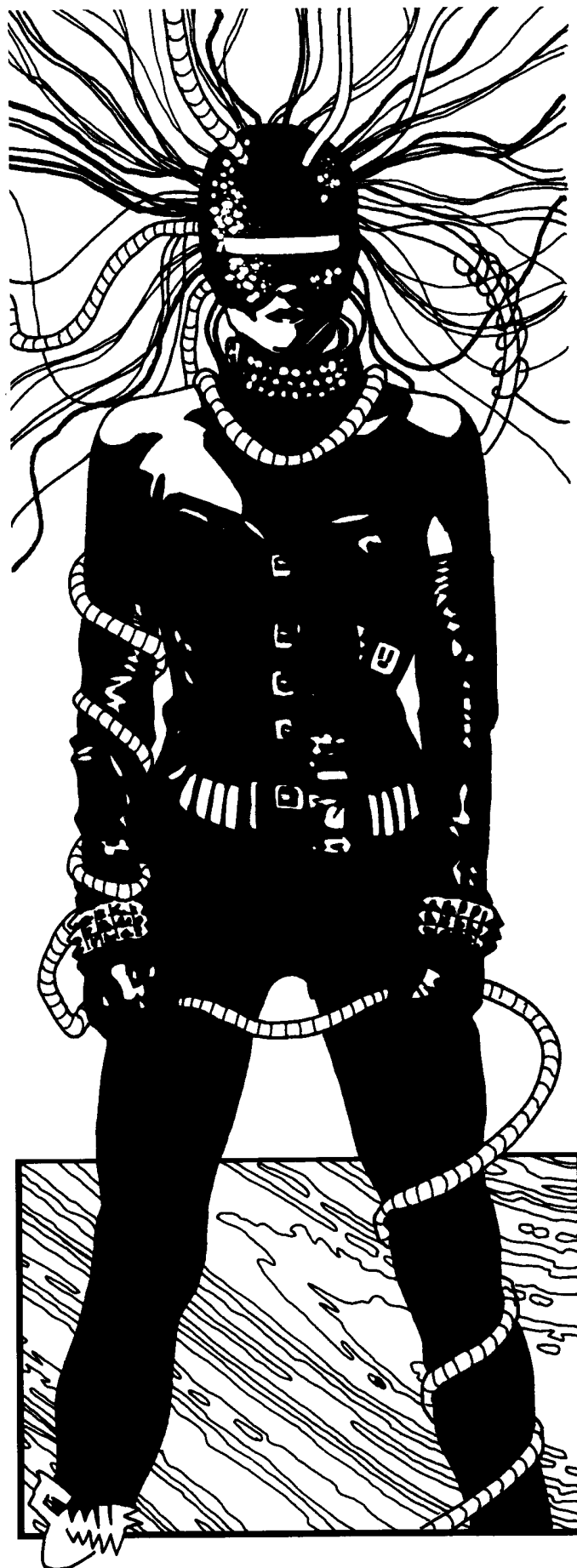
Every mage character must have an *Essence*. A mage's Essence describes the Avatar of the mage. It also describes the manner in which he is fundamentally connected to the quintessential core of reality. A mage's actions are most likely to succeed when they reflect this fundamental connection. It has no direct "game mechanic" effect, but the choice of Essence will usually have some influence on the selection of a character's advantages, disadvantages and quirks. It also will act as a role-playing guide, both for the player (as Essence plays a large part in the quest for Ascension) and for the GM (for when a character's Avatar manifests itself as a separate being – see p. 132). Each player should choose the Essence that the concept for his mage most embodies.

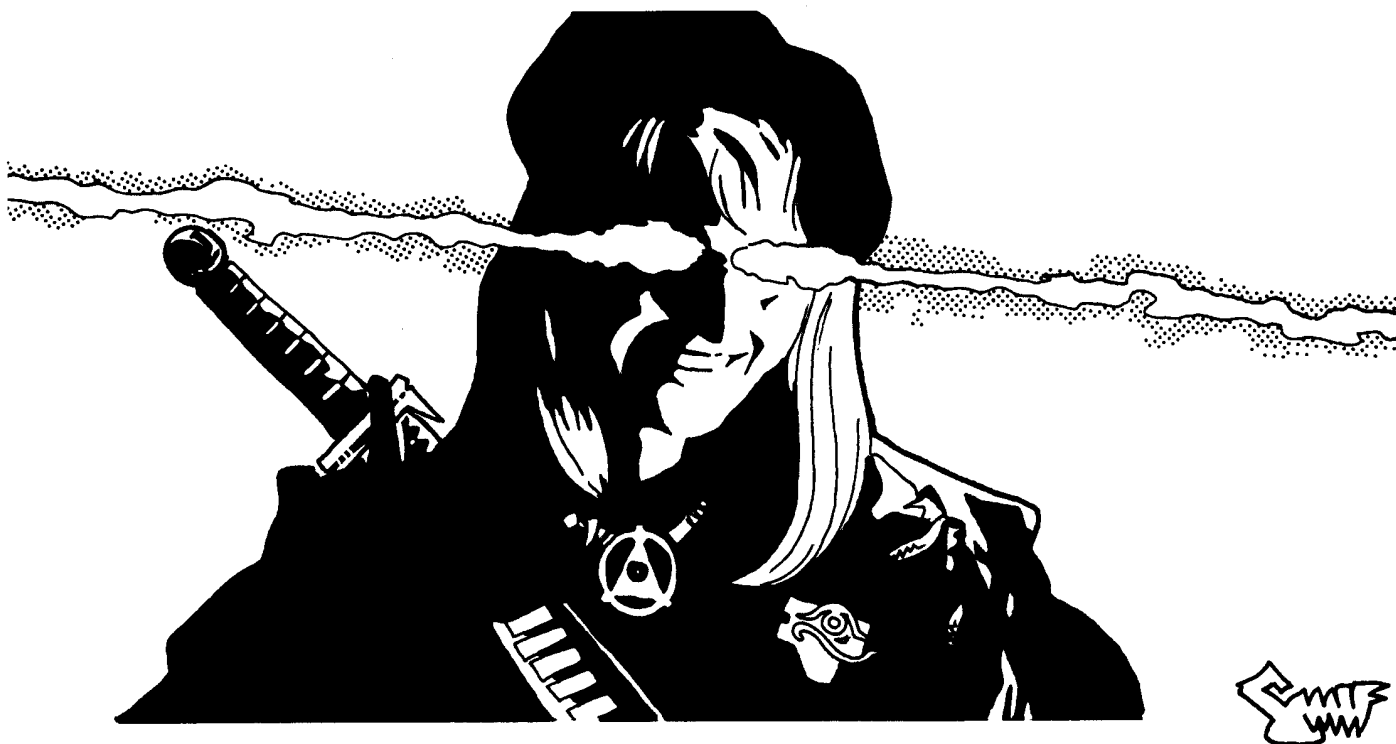
There are five Essences: Dynamic, Infinite, Pattern, Primordial and Questing. Of these, only four are even remotely understood by most mages. The Infinite Essence has never been known to manifest in mages. In fact, its existence is conjecture, much like the quark in quantum mechanics. Just as modern physics is inconceivable without the existence of quarks, so too does the metaphysics of magick fundamentally rely upon the Essence of Infinite. The other four Essences are vaguely understood by most mages and have manifested themselves throughout history.

The four other Essences are described below.

Dynamic

This is by far the most common Essence. Dynamic is the very incarnation of the forces of change. All mages are ultimately part of the dynamic force that drives reality, but mages of this Essence are consumed by it. That is, they are driven by a love of and desire for constant change. They will probably never achieve, and may never know, their ultimate destination. Mages of this Essence are often considered pioneers, for they embody the very heart of what it is to be a mage.





The Avatars of those of with Dynamic Essences tend to be energetic spirits of great cunning and curiosity. They are able to assume many different forms, but tend to appear as shadows or nebulous beings out of childhood dreams. Fickle and capricious, they are impossible to please.

Pattern

Relatively few mages outside of the Technocracy embody this Essence, but they are vital in the overall schema of mage society. Pattern Essence mages usually work toward an end. They are innately dynamic, of course, like all mages, but they aren't as concerned with finding new ways to weave the advancements of mages into reality. Without Pattern mages' support, most Dynamic mages would be incapable of pursuing the truths of reality as far as they do.

The Avatars of this Essence are the most stable and constant of all Avatars, and tend to have but one form. Such an Avatar usually appears as an authority figure from the character's past, and are demanding and unforgiving. Their rules must be followed in everything.

Primordial

Primordial is perhaps the rarest of mage Essences. Many of the earliest mages embodied this Essence, but as time has passed fewer and fewer have manifested it. Today, very few Primordial Avatars exist among the ranks of mages. Many believe this is because the Essence has become obsolete. When reality was forming it was central, but now reality is so defined there is little room for it. Primordial Avatars concern themselves with the base elements of reality, the underlying structures and natures of things.

The Primordial Avatars tend to take the form of animals, spirits or gods of legend. They tend to be very coarse and direct in manner and speech, caring little for the trappings and expectations of society.

Questing

For many millennia mages did not view this Essence as separate from Dynamic. However, mages of Dynamic

Essence do not have the focus or motivation of Questing mages. Even if Questing mages do not achieve any stable end, they at least pursue something tangible and therefore forge a path in that direction for others to follow. Dynamic mages lack this focus. They jump from fancy to fancy without regard for an end or even concern over the fact that they are doing little to affect reality in a fundamental way. Many mages tend to overlook the forest for the trees, but those of Questing Essence always seek the big picture. Questing mages tie disparate ideas together and make forgotten thoughts seem fresh again.

Questing Avatars are pushy and demanding, and are never satisfied with what has been achieved. They always want more and better. When they reveal themselves they always want to set out on some mission and are rarely patient enough to wait for long.

Equipping the Mage

Depending on the character's Wealth and Status in Sleeper society, he may have much or almost nothing in the way of possessions. However, all characters have the option of acquiring talismans – magic items. The sidebar on pp. 92-93 gives a list of sample talismans which can be purchased with starting cash *at the time of character creation only*. (Any talismans acquired after creation must be made, received as gifts or stolen/scrounged by the character – they cannot normally be bought. See the sidebar.)

A mage may also count among his possessions a library. The contents of the mage's library will never be exclusively grimoires of power, but it will normally include a wide assortment of texts from which he may study the Spheres.

Finally, most, mages will have among their possessions physical foci – items that let them wield the power of Magick with greater ease. The exact choice of foci will vary from Tradition to Tradition, and with the Spheres learned by the mage. Characters do *not* have to buy foci with money from their Wealth; they automatically possess all their necessary foci. See p. 92 for more about foci.

Advantages

Ally Group

see p. B232

Mages often belong to groups that can be considered Ally Groups – gangs and cabals are a few examples.

Contacts

see p. B234

A good selection of informants and street rats is essential to the survival of any city-dwelling mage. Mages from outside the city might have their own cadre of Contacts.

Magical Aptitude

see p. B21

Mages in the World of Darkness do *not* require Magery for their magickal ability. This advantage is used by Tremere Vampires and practitioners of Mortal Thaumaturgy, who power their spells with the environmental energy known as mana (see sidebar, p. 80, for more details). The prerequisite for Mage ability is *Arete* (p. 44).

Magical Resistance

see p. B21

Magical Resistance has no effect against Magick, but does provide its normal effect against Thaumaturgy of both Mortal and Kindred varieties.

Patron

see p. B24

Nearly all apprentices are Awakened and taught by a mage known as the Mentor. This individual is not only a teacher, but an advisor and spiritual guide. The relationship between apprentice and Mentor can be very close and often continues well after the apprentice becomes a full mage, in which case the Mentor is considered a Patron. Not all Mentors are the first teachers of a mage; any elder mage who befriends a younger mage can be called a Mentor.

Socially speaking, a Mentor is an invaluable advisor. A mage who is guided through wizard society by a Mentor will more easily find teachers, avoid dangerous rivalries, hide from the Technomancers, and understand the power structure.

Mentors can teach Spheres and Abilities to mages, but this will be done only rarely; they are primarily information brokers. Mentors may also protect a mage from danger and inform him of opportunities he might otherwise miss. However, a Mentor may expect some favors in exchange for the information and assistance he provides. This could be as simple as keeping his books in order, or as dangerous as retrieving strange artifacts from the Deep Umbra.

Reputation

see p. B17

Mage society is entirely separate from Sleeper society, and reputations reflect this. "All Mages" counts as "Everybody;" a Tradition is considered a large group, and a Chantry is a small group.

Mages may also have Reputations among the Sleepers. These are calculated separately, without counting the society of mages.

Status

See p. B18

Mages have their own measure of Status, which is separate from "normal" human society. Mages have surprisingly little social stratification; they place much more importance on the Destiny (p. 45) a mage may have. What Status differences there are in mage society are based mostly on intellectual achievement – on the highest level a mage has achieved among the spheres that he has studied. A mage who is learning the earlier

stages of a Sphere is termed a Disciple of that Sphere; one with a large base of knowledge is an Adept, and one who has become proficient with all a Sphere's common properties is a Master of that Sphere.

The various ranks among the Traditions are based purely on knowledge and wisdom, or lack of it. The highest status is reserved for the Oracles (p. 82), who epitomize the quest for Ascension.

Mage Status is *mandatory* – as soon as a character achieves sufficient levels in a Sphere, he *must* purchase the equivalent level of Status. Only the highest level possessed among a character's Spheres – not the number of Spheres – matters; for instance, if a character has reached Level 4 in Forces and has bought Status 1, he need not purchase more Status upon reaching Level 4 in Matter.

The status levels are:

Level	Title
-1	Apprentice
0..	
1	Adept
2	Master
3	Oracle



Apprentice: Mages who are still in training and have not been initiated are known as apprentices. They can remain such for as long as a decade, though this is rare. Apprentices normally have no levels in any Spheres.

Disciple: A mage who has been accepted into a Tradition. A Disciple need not have any levels in any Spheres, but will normally have at least one.

Adept: A mage who has attained Level 4 in a Sphere – any Sphere – is known as an Adept and is accorded honor among his peers.

Master: A mage who has attained the fifth Level of a Sphere attains the exalted status of Master.

Oracle: The most senior and respected of the mages, these great tutors have mastered the highest strata of the Spheres.

There is no true mage Status level beyond 3; however, any levels of Destiny (see p. 45) possessed by the mage are added to his Status for an effective level that can reach up to 8.

Mages may also possess Status in Sleeper society; this is counted and purchased separately from your status among other mages.

Unusual Background *see p. B27*

Two Unusual Backgrounds are available to mages in the World of Darkness.

Garou Kinfolk. You are a blood relation to a Werewolf, without being one yourself. This background allows you to take a possible Patron in a single Garou, a pack or even a whole tribe! You may also learn the Garou language. *10 points.*

Marauder. You are a Marauder, a mage who has given himself over entirely to chaos. You are automatically Awakened and must have at least one level of Arete, and you are also able to purchase the Immunity to Paradox and Immunity to Delirium advantages. *20 points.*

Wealth *see p. B16*

Wealth, in the long run, is a meaningless concept for a mage. After a certain level of mastery has been achieved in various Spheres, a mage need never have to purchase food or goods ever again. Poverty among mages is virtually unknown, as it is easy enough for a mage to create or summon any physical need – including cold cash – at will. However, the Wealth advantage is a good measure of a mage's connection to the Sleepers' world, in that it can help define who he was before he was Awakened. It can also indicate the amount of influence and power he has among the Sleepers, should he choose to retain a "cover identity" in normal human society.

One other point to remember is that Wealth is useful in equipping beginning characters. Libraries, talismans (these *only* at the time of character creation) and other possessions must be acquired, and Wealth can go a long way here, especially since it is difficult (if not impossible) to create or summon these goods.

Since a mage can acquire money so easily, all levels of Wealth cost 5 points less than the standard prices delineated in the *GURPS Basic Set*. If you need some equipment, but not enough to justify a high level of Wealth, you may wish to consider the "little extra money" option found in the sidebar on p. B16.

Disadvantages

Mental disadvantages are of unusual importance to mages. Mages seek *Ascension* (see p. 132), but are only able to achieve this ultimate state if they overcome their inherent flaws. While it is possible to create a mage character who, devoid of disadvantages, is ready for Ascension from the start, the mage who transcends many flaws – or one great one – is far more dramatically satisfying for both player and GM. Additionally, the need to buy off his disadvantages will slow the inevitable growth of a mage's power, for those GMs concerned about the magical escalation of a campaign.

Paradox Flaws

Mages who perform too much magick, particularly Vulgar Magick, are subject to Paradox; to "burn off" the Paradox he has accumulated, a mage may take Paradox Flaws (see p. 133). Sometimes these can cause permanent alteration to the character and can be counted as disadvantages; see the section on Paradox Flaws for more details.

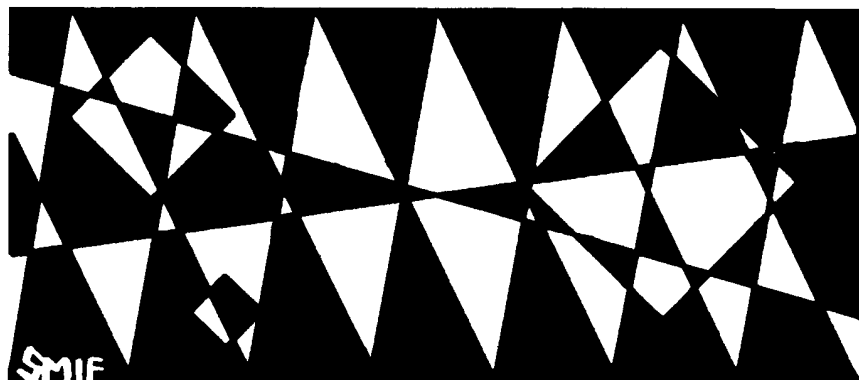
Code of Honor *see p. B31*

The Protocols (-5, -10, -15 points). The basic rules of mage society are known as the *Protocols*. While all mages are expected to obey them, the actual degree of compliance varies from individual to individual. Exact interpretation differs from Tradition to Tradition as well. Thus, the exact cost may vary depending upon how closely the character adheres to them. There are many elements to the Protocols, but among the most important are these: Respect those of greater knowledge. A debt to a tutor must be repaid. A mage's word is his honor; never break a sworn vow. The will of an Oracle must always be obeyed. Do not betray your cabal or Chantry. Do not conspire with the Technocracy or other enemies of Ascension. Protect the Sleepers; they are ignorant of what they do.

Enemies *see p. B39*

The Technocracy. The Technocracy (Chapter 7) is the organization of mages who currently control the nature of reality through their manipulation of the beliefs of the Sleepers. They enforce their power and position vigorously and with extreme prejudice, and have maintained a pogrom against Tradition mages for centuries. The Technocracy is an utterly formidable group; if a mage's Secret is revealed, this disadvantage, with an appearance frequency of 12 or less, will take its place.

Paradox Spirits. While for the most part, the appearance of Paradox Spirits (see p.135) will be one-time affairs, some mages may be able to hold them off through various means. In





such cases, the spirits become Enemies. The power and frequency of appearance of such spirits will vary depending upon the circumstances. If the GM allows, an Enemy Paradox Spirit may be used as a Paradox Flaw (see p. 133).

Phobias

see p. B35

Paraphobia: When the "facts" of reality are violated by magick, reality itself retaliates to set things right. The agents of this response are known as Paradox spirits. These inscrutable, ferocious forces of reality punish those who transgress reality's laws. Many mages are completely crippled by a pathological fear of these spirits; in others it may manifest as an unwillingness to perform vulgar magick (see p. 81) or magicks above a certain level of power. -10/-20 points.

Poverty

See *Wealth*, above.

see p. B16

Reputation

see p. B17

A mage may have a Bad Reputation as a violator of the Protocols. This usually is in the range of -1 to -3; if it ever reaches -4, the mage is probably a candidate for *Branding* (see the *Branded Social Stigma* below, and the sidebar on p. 30).

Secret

see p. B238

All Tradition mages have the Secret that they are non-Technocracy mages. This secret is worth -30 points since they would be hunted down and killed were the secret revealed.

If a character's secret is revealed during play, the GM should replace this disadvantage with Enemy: Technocracy (12 or less).

Social Stigma

see p. B27

Branded (-20 points). A mage who has violated one of the Protocols (see p. 30) may be *branded* if his violation is severe enough. A sigil is placed upon the mage's Avatar to indicate the Protocol he broke; this sigil is immediately detectable by all other mages who encounter the character, who react to him at -4. A particularly offensive mage may have more than one Brand, but brands beyond the first do not provide further disadvantage points or reaction penalties.

Orphan (-10 points). Mages of no Tradition, who had no Mentor and taught themselves the mysteries, are known as Orphans. Orphans are held in disdain (-2 Reaction) by those of the Traditions and are considered to possess no honor.

Skills

With several very important exceptions, the Gothic-Punk world is a late TL7 society. Only skills appropriate to that tech level may be taken unless the character is a member of a Tradition or Convention that uses ultra-tech. In general, these skills will operate at TL9 (or better), except for computer skills, which reflect the higher TL10 of mage computing.

Brawling, Karate and Judo

Members of the Tradition known as the Akashic Brotherhood are frequently martial artists of no small skill, and may sometimes combine Magickal techniques with their unarmed combat skills. In particular, attacks that are combined with advanced Correspondence abilities (such as the *Kick of the Four Winds*) may produce multiple blows from a single strike. See p. 43 for more information on handling such cases.

If the GM owns a copy of *GURPS Martial Arts*, he may wish to design a martial arts style for the Akashic Brotherhood. A suggested style breakdown is found on pp. 138.

Languages

Garou Language: The werewolves have a native tongue that uses sounds native to both wolf and human larynxes, and can be spoken and understood by all Garou irregardless of form. It is actually a stylized communication, midway between a ritual and a linguistic phenomenon. It uses body language, whines and growls to communicate concepts and emotions. It is a Mental/Average skill; the GM may wish to require an Unusual Background (such as *Garou Kinfolk*) to explain how the character came to know this language.

Hermean: The Order of Hermes teaches its apprentices a mystic tongue that only they know. This language can be used for crude communication between members (at -4 to skill), but its main use is to evoke different magickal effects. Hermean is a Mental/Hard language.

Area Knowledge

see p. B62

The *Umbra* (see Chapter 6) may be taken as an area for this skill. This will allow the character to recognize those major features of the *Umbra* that are relatively stable, as well as recognize common phenomena of the spirit world.

Survival

see p. B57

Umbra: This skill gives you the skill to survive extended visits in the *Umbra*, avoiding hazards and finding sustenance. It includes knowledge of the more common forces and dangers of the spirit world, as well as how to circumvent or avoid them.

Urban: This skill covers the *physical* part of staying alive in a city environment, whether it's overpopulated or empty. The *social* problems of city survival are covered by the *Streetwise* skill. A specialist in urban survival could (for instance) find clean rainwater; locate manholes from above or below; quickly locate building entrances, exits, stairwells, and so on; recognize and avoid physically dangerous areas, like crumbling buildings; make and read city maps, and find his way out of strange city areas; find a warm place to sleep outside in cold weather; and locate common types of buildings or businesses without asking anyone, just by his "feel" for the way cities are laid out.

New Advantages

Arcane

10 points/level

Mages are inherently mysterious people, rarely noticed for what they are. This is in large part because of their reticence and solitary nature, but mages sometimes also possess a mystic ability to avoid the limelight. This ability is called Arcane.

Characters with high levels of Arcane tend, for example, not to show up on television. They are not invisible to the lens, but the camera never seems to focus on them. These mages leave little to no paper trail, so they may not be on computer files even if they were born after the advent of Social Security numbers in the USA. Each level of Arcane renders it more difficult for your enemies to make sure they are talking about the same person. Assassination attempts meant for you may be misdirected toward the wrong person, sometimes to the chagrin of your companions.

Arcane functions automatically, without regard to distance or even your awareness of its action or targets. Whenever another being attempts to locate you or information about you, or tries to discuss, describe or recognize you, they must subtract twice your level in Arcane from the skill they are using. Each character involved in this effort must make this roll. If no skill is normally required – for instance, in a simple conversation about you – a Will roll at the same penalty must be made; failure indicates that sufficient confusion to blur your identity has occurred. A critical failure on this roll leaves the character completely misinformed about you.

Whenever someone has an opportunity to look directly at you, or point a recording device at you, he must first make a Will roll at a penalty equal to your level in Arcane. If the roll fails, you will not be seen or recorded.

Your level in Arcane is also a bonus to your Stealth skill.

Note that this advantage is not synonymous with invisibility; it is more akin to “clouding minds” and does not, for example, protect the mage in combat; and if a recording device is pointed at a mage, he will be recorded.

Arcane is normally “always on,” but a Will Roll allows you to dampen it, so people can find you more easily.

Arete

Variable

The Arete advantage is probably the most important of all a mage’s advantages. It embodies what mages are all about – understanding the truth of reality. Varying levels of enlightenment among mages, and disputes about what is right for mankind, have pitted mage against mage in recent times, but Arete is still the main pursuit of workers of magick. You may have no more than 10 levels of Arete.

Arete has many practical effects on mage characters in the game, and these are outlined below.

Buying Arete forces you to buy the *Immunity to the Delirium* advantage. By understanding the true workings of Reality, you have been freed from the terrifying ancestral memory that afflicts Sleepers who witness the Garou in action.

Your levels in your Spheres are limited by Arete – general enlightenment must be gained before specific wisdom may be applied. Thus, you may never have a level in a Sphere greater than your level in Arete, which means no mage with an Arete of less than 6 is considered for membership among the Oracles.

Your level in Arete also indicates the maximum skill you may have in any of your Sphere skills; if you don’t understand reality very well, you simply aren’t able to circumvent it as well.

Finally, each level of Arete indicates that you no longer need to rely on certain foci to use magick. Beginning at level 2, you may ignore the requirement of a focus for one Sphere (chosen by you). At level 3, two Spheres may be used without a focus, and so on. See *Foci* (p. 92) for more information.

Arete	Maximum Skill	Cost
1	11	15 points
2	12	30 points
3	13	45 points
4	14	65 points
5	15	85 points
6	16	110 points
7	17	135 points
8	18	170 points
9	19	200 points
10	No limit	250 points

Avatar

15 points/level

The soul is what differentiates humans from animals. It allows people to interact with the world and not merely react. Mages possess more powerful souls, which are called Avatars. Avatars are purer fragments of the original Prime (from which all souls descended) than are the souls of most Sleepers. The sheer potency of your Avatar is determined by this advantage. Lack of this advantage simply means your Avatar is not exceptionally potent, though it is still far more powerful than that of most Sleepers.

The primary benefit of this advantage is very simple. It represents the size of the base pool of Quintessence you possess. In other words, at the start of play you automatically have as many points of Quintessence as you have levels of Avatar. Plus, whenever your Quintessence rating dips below your Avatar level, you automatically reabsorb Quintessence after successfully meditating in a Node for at least an hour (see the Meditation skill, p. 47). You regain 1 point of Quintessence for every 2 points by which you make your Meditation roll (minimum 1 point), though the amount regained in this manner cannot be greater than your Avatar level or the rating of the Node.

Quintessence that you gain from your Avatar may not be stored or channeled to another mage. It is innate to you and may only be used by you. In essence, it is part of your Pattern and therefore untouchable.

Your level in this advantage is also the limit on the number of Quintessence points that may be spent in a single turn in order to raise your effective skill for a magickal effect roll.

Some mages claim that there are distinct lineages of Avatars, which they call Families. What these connections might mean if they existed is unknown to all save possibly the Oracles.

An Avatar is described by the Essence (p. 39) that it embodies.

Awareness

15/35 points

This advantage allows you to detect things that are not of the physical world, like the presence of magick. However, the range for such detection is still limited by real-world parameters. You cannot sense magick cast on the other side of town (unless the magick was very potent and very successful), though you might be able to sense it through a wall. (Apply the long-range magic modifiers found in the sidebar on p. B151 to any attempt to use this advantage at a significant distance, unless you are also using Correspondence magick to remotely sense a specific site.)

A successful IQ roll allows you to ascertain the location and approximate power of a nearby Talisman, a being's Karmic balance, mental state and more. The 35-point level of Awareness also gives you the ability to detect the auras that surround objects and people, much as though you were using the *Aura* spell (p. B162). This allows you to analyze the general disposition of a person, or to glean other information, such as whether the "person" is in fact a vampire or werewolf. An IQ roll is required for each separate aura reading performed, but unlike the *Aura* spell, "secret" magickal traits are detected on any success, not just critical successes.

Alertness (but no other Sense advantages) adds its bonus to all Awareness IQ rolls.

Destiny

5 points/level

This advantage is a variation of the Destiny advantage that appears in the *Basic Set, Third Edition, Revised*, p. 235. Although mage society has a certain system of status based on magickal achievement, it is this advantage that truly garners respect from other mages. Destiny is your ultimate potential to alter reality. Your level in Destiny is immediately detectable by other mages, who will then (generally) accord you respect commensurate with your Destiny. When dealing with other mages, add your Destiny to your Status to determine your *effective* Status. Thus, an Adept (Status 1) with a Destiny of 4 (effective Status 5) will be given much more reverence and honor than a Master with no Destiny whatsoever (Status 2).

In addition, a mage with a high Destiny is obviously fated for great things. Though even the Oracles have been wrong on occasion, mages of Destiny rarely die early, ignominious deaths. Destiny has been known to lead a mage through trials and tribulations to his ultimate fate. Once per hour of play, you (or the GM) may apply your level of Destiny as a modifier (either positive or negative, as needed) to a die roll that directly affects your survival.

Remember, though, that the Destiny advantage means just that – you are destined to accomplish some great feat, or save countless souls, or die facing overwhelming odds in valiant battle, or even turn to the forces of evil. One day, the GM will call the Destiny due. . .

Exactly *what* your Destiny will be is all but impossible to determine until it happens, even something so simple as whether it is good or bad. (At the GM's option, an Oracle of an appropriate Sphere may be able to determine *something* about a character's Destiny, but even then, the details should be sketchy.) The precise details of the Destiny (and how it dovetails into the campaign) are up to the GM and the flow of the campaign. It requires considerable ingenuity on the part of the GM; before the GM decides on a Destiny, be sure that it won't drag the campaign off the rails.

If you fulfill your Destiny and still live, it is over, and has no further effect on your life – although its repercussions might haunt you for years to come. A character who has fulfilled his Destiny still retains his Status bonus, but loses the ability to use his Destiny as a die roll modifier.

You may have no more than 5 levels of Destiny.

Dream

3 points/level

You must have at least 1 level of Arete in order to buy this advantage.

Even mages do not know all the secrets of the universe. However, mages may access many of these secrets, provided they can tap into the correct repositories of knowledge. The Dream advantage indicates the depth to which a mage can delve into the universal unconscious. In game play this means that a



character may be able to access information or gain answers he cannot possibly know.

Once per day, you may use Dream to gain a temporary proficiency in any one Mental skill, or to improve an existing one. Count your levels of Dream as character points applied to the skill in order to determine your new level. Any points which exceed the cost of one level but do not reach the next have no effect, but are counted as "used." You may *not* split your levels in Dream to use them for more than one skill.

Examples: Medge the Mage has an IQ of 14 and Dream 8. He needs to use First Aid to help an injured companion, but has no points invested in it. He decides to use Dream to draw the necessary knowledge from Prime. Eight levels of Dream become 8 points in the First Aid skill, for a level of IQ+4, or 18. Medge saves his companion's life. The next day, he needs to look for an obscure fact in a large library. He already has Research-14 (IQ for 4 points), but wants to improve his chances of finding the information he wants; he uses his 8 Dream levels to raise his Research skill to 19 (IQ+5 for 4 + 8, or 12, points).

Delving into Prime requires 5 seconds' concentration and a successful IQ roll. Skills gained in this manner last until midnight, and may be used any number of times until then. Dream may substitute for only one skill per day.

Dream cannot be used to improve or gain Rotes, spells from Mortal Thaumaturgy, or Sphere skills. It cannot be used to gain psi or mental super skills that you do not possess, but you *can* improve those such skills you already have.

Dream may allow the use of skills in completely alien situations where no other skill would be useful, such as gaining a new language in order to understand the speech of a creature from another Realm.

Enhanced Time Sense **45 points**

This advantage is an advanced form of the Combat Reflexes advantage, and includes all the benefits normally associated with that advantage. There is no reason for any character to ever take both Enhanced Time Sense and Combat Reflexes – the advantages are *not* cumulative. Unlike Combat Reflexes, Enhanced Time Sense cannot be purchased after character creation.

Someone with Enhanced Time Sense can receive and process information at a rate dramatically faster than most humans. Your physical speed is unaffected, but your mental speed is prodigious.

In addition to the effects of Combat Reflexes, this gives you several other game benefits. First, you automatically have initiative in any combat situation (if there's more than one character with Enhanced Time Sense in the combat, initiative falls to the one with the highest Basic Speed). At the GM's discretion, you can perceive things that happen too fast for normal humans to discern. For example, you will never be fooled by a projected image, because you'll be able to see the individual frames of the film or tape change. If secret information is being sent at super-high-speed, as a "blip" over the air or wire, you'll be able to hear it, if you're monitoring the transmission. (You probably won't be able to decipher it, but you'll be able to tell it's there, and you'll know it's not just random static). If you glimpse a blurred object in flight out of the corner of your eye, you'll be able to tell if it's a bird, a baseball, a fairy or a very small UFO.

Finally, if you have Enhanced Time Sense, the GM can *never* tell you to make a decision *right now*. Your rapid thought processes will always give you the opportunity to think a problem full thoroughly and respond in the manner you think best. (This advantage will not, however, protect you from the slings and arrows of impatient fellow gamers, if you're taking a half-hour to decide what to do in each second of a given combat.) The only exception to the above might be something that's coming up so fast that the other players can't perceive it at all – then the GM would be justified in asking you for an immediate response.

This advantage does not "slow down" the world from your viewpoint. You can still enjoy a movie by simply ignoring the frames, in much the same way that a literate person can choose whether or not to consciously notice the individual letters in the words he's reading. A normal conversation will not seem to last decades.

This advantage should not be available to normal human PCs without the GM's permission and a significant Unusual Background. It can be used as a super-power or racial advantage.

Immunity to the Delirium **25 points**

You are unaffected by the Delirium, and can think and act rationally in the presence of a Garou in Crinos or Hispo form. You will not forget or rationalize the encounter after it ends.

Normally, the Unusual Background *Garou Kinfolk*, or a least one level of Arete, is a prerequisite for this advantage, but it is possible that some exceptional human specimens (supers or the like) may be naturally immune to the Delirium. Some American Indians are immune, as the Garou's ill-fated Impergium was only mildly enforced in North America. In addition, some fomori (p. 172) have this advantage.

Immunity to Paradox **50 points**

You must have the Unusual Background: Marauder advantage before you can buy this advantage. Certain Technomancers may also be qualified to possess it, as well.

You are immune to the effects of Paradox; you do not accumulate Paradox, nor will Paradox spirits attack you, no matter how much Vulgar Magick you perform.

Node **10 points/Quintessence**

This advantage determines how much Quintessence is available to the cabal each month from their own private Node. Nodes are extremely valuable, and are magnificent advantages for new mages. They are the backbone of a cabal, and the genesis of a future Chantry. Nodes can be located nearly anywhere – in church cellars, in the backs of bookstores, or in graveyards.

This advantage does not apply directly to the character, but rather to the entire cabal. The total amount of Quintessence purchased with this advantage by all the characters in the cabal is amount of Quintessence produced by the Node's in one month. This monthly output which determines the level of power for the Node. An individual character can not purchase more than 5 levels in this advantage.

The Node's Quintessence appears in the form of Tass, which makes it easily transportable, though easily stolen. The characters should decide what physical form the Tass from their Node takes. This free Quintessence produced by the Node is in addition to any Quintessence gained by the recharging of an Avatar (see the Avatar advantage on p. 44).

The following table outlines the relationship between the total Quintessence produced by the Node and its various attributes. Mana level is a measure of "Gaia mana" (see *GURPS Werewolf the Apocalypse*, p. 159), and is provided here as a reference for both Garou and practitioners of Mortal Thaumaturgy. The "Gauntlet" is the measure of how easy it is to reach the spirit world, and is explained more fully on p. 146.

Monthly Quintessence	Node Level	Mana Level	Gauntlet
1 to 5	1	Normal	8
6 to 10	2	Normal	7
11 to 20	3	High	6
21 to 40	4	High	5
41+	5	Very High	4

The Node created through the purchase of this advantage is the sole province of the contributing characters' cabal, unless they choose to share it with another group of mages. However, if knowledge of the Node's existence spreads beyond the cabal, they may find themselves fending off Garou, Technomancers and any number of other beings who seek to exploit it.

Quintessence **2 points/point**

In order to purchase this advantage, you must have at least one level in the Sphere of Prime.

This advantage gives you extra Quintessence for you to use, in addition to any provided by your Avatar (p. 44). This is *not* a permanent advantage; rather, it is handled similarly to

purchasing additional starting cash with character points – it is gone once you “spend” it. Neither does it count for purposes of regaining Quintessence later; it simply allows you to start the game with a stockpile of power above and beyond any inherent to your character.

The Quintessence provided by this advantage comes as *Tass* (see p. 79); you should decide what form the *Tass* takes.

You may not have more than 20 total points of Quintessence at any time.

Spirit Empathy

10 points

Similar in function to Animal Empathy (p. B19), Spirit Empathy gives you a +3 reaction from any spirits you may encounter. In addition, you receive a +2 to your Spirit Sphere skill (your skill *may* exceed the ceiling imposed by your Arete level with this bonus). However, you are loathe to harm or enslave spirits without a very good reason, and you should try to prevent others from doing so.

Technomancer

40 points

You are a mage of the Technocracy. (This is an alternate “mage package.”) While you learn magick in the same manner as the mages of the Tradition, you are constrained by Technocracy policy to using only Rotes (see p. 88) and are unpracticed using the more improvisational methods of the Traditions. You receive a -3 penalty to all magickal effect rolls other than Rotes. You must still purchase sufficient Arete and Sphere levels to achieve the effects of your known Rotes. The cost above includes 1 level of Arete and Immunity to the Delirium. In addition, you also have a number of enemies of not inconsiderable power (Tradition mages, Nephandi, Marauders) who appear on a 6 or less. However, you have a Patron in the Technocracy, which can provide invaluable aid and resources if needed (available on 9 or less).

New Disadvantage

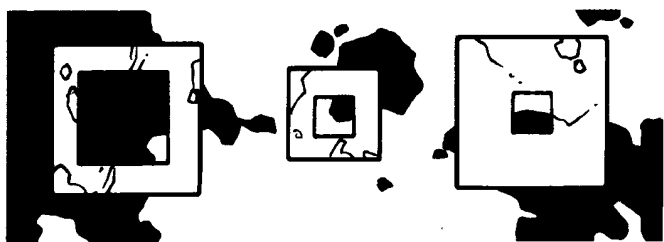
Hobgoblin

Special

A mage who fails to disperse an illusionary element of his Quiet may return to normality with that element made manifest and real. Such illusions-made-real are called *hobgoblins*. (See p. 136 for more information on Quiet and hobgoblins.)

Despite its name, a hobgoblin need not be malicious – simply persistent. Treat a hobgoblin as either a Dependent or an Enemy based on the hobgoblin’s attitudes and behaviors (if any); the frequency of appearance for a hobgoblin will usually be “quite often” or “all the time.”

A hobgoblin may also take the form of a mindless, otherwise normal inanimate object that dogs the mage; such a hobgoblin is a -1 quirk. A character who gains such a hobgoblin in play can add it as a new quirk, even if that takes him over the usual maximum of 5.



New Skills

Abacus (Mental/Average)

No default

This skill allows you to use an abacus to perform calculations. Simple problems can be solved in 1 second and difficult ones in 2 seconds; complex problems will take at least 5 seconds, and often more. A failure with this skill produces an obvious wrong answer. A critical success with this skill will halve the computation time for all but simple problems; a critical failure will cause a subtle error that looks like a right answer.

Bardic Lore (Mental/Hard)

Defaults to IQ-6

A true bard will know many songs and poems, long and short, memorized word for word. On a successful roll, he can perform one accurately; a failed roll means he forgot or garbled something. A separate roll, on Bard skill, is necessary to make the performance *exciting*!

A bard does not necessarily have skill in composing new poems and song (although the best do); those abilities are covered by the Poetry and Musical Instrument skills, respectively.

Enigmas (Mental/Hard)

Defaults to IQ-6

Often taken as a hobby skill, Enigmas is the study and knowledge of riddles and puzzles of all sorts, from the Riddle of the Sphinx to crossword puzzles, from Zen koans to questions in formal logic to mystery novels. A character with this skill does not just solve tricky puzzles well – he is able to integrate information and, by applying various strategies, come up with potential solutions to problems.

This skill can also be used on a *challenge* basis in a contest of wits, such as in a riddle contest like the one between Bilbo and Gollum in *The Hobbit*.

The player should roleplay his pursuit of any given enigma before rolling (and the GM may wish to give a bonus – or penalty! – to the Enigmas roll based on the roleplaying).

In some ways this skill is very like the Intuition advantage (p. B20); when there are multiple possible solutions to an enigma, the GM may want to use the procedure outlined in the entry for that advantage, substituting Enigmas skill for IQ. However, the GM should follow the same general warning applied to Intuition – don’t let it be used to short-circuit adventures. But while only one individual enigma can be solved at a time with this skill, the solutions to several earlier enigmas should be clues necessary to solving any greater, overarching mystery in an adventure.

Erotic Art (Physical/Hard)

Defaults to Acrobatics-5

Prerequisite: Sex Appeal-13

This represents a general knowledge of advanced sexual technique. The exact game effects are left to the GM’s discretion.

Currently this skill is only known in certain Eastern cultures, most notably followers of Tantric Hinduism, and among members of the Cult of Ecstasy and the Verbena.

Meditation (Mental/Very Hard)

No default

Meditation is the skill of calming the emotions, controlling the mind, and relaxing the physical body. The attention of the mind is focused on a singular object or phrase so that a character’s entire being can also focus on matters of importance and screen out distracting thoughts. Meditation is usually performed while seated in a special position, like the lotus position, but

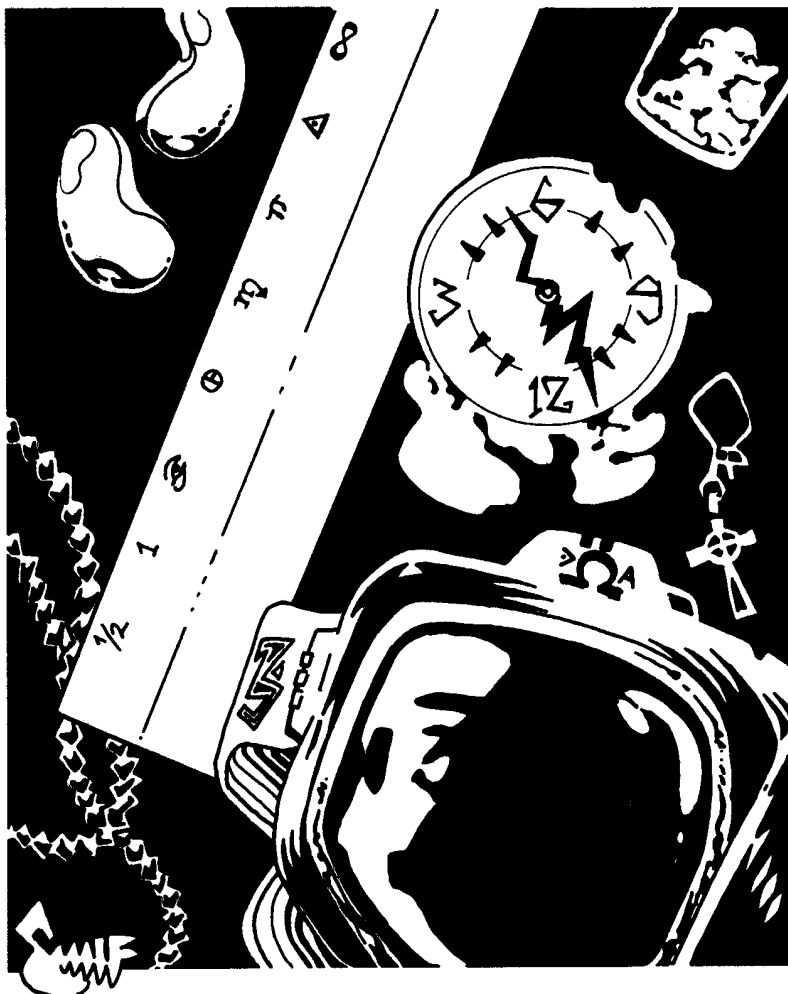
with practice it can be performed in a variety of situations or positions.

Meditation can be used to isolate the mind from distractions, allowing a character to focus on matters of importance. Meditation can also be used to: catch up on lost sleep (the number of points by which your skill roll is made determines how many effective hours of sleep are gained per hour of meditation, minimum 1); survive inclement weather by effectively hibernating (the points of success on a Meditation-2 roll determines how many days the character can last before the effects of starvation, etc., set in); or figure out particularly complicated puzzles (a successful roll grants +1 to Enigmas skill for each 2 full points by which the roll is made).

**Talisman Creation (Mental/Very Hard) Defaults to Prime Sphere skill-3,
Prerequisite: Prime Level 3**

This magickal design skill is necessary for the manufacture of Talismans. Full details on its use are found in the section on creating Talismans, p. 90. This skill is *not* limited by the ceiling imposed by Arete.

Talisman Creation is the Tradition equivalent of the various Engineer skills which are used to design and create Technomancer Talismans (that is, any technological device); the GM may wish to allow optional specialization (p. B59) to reflect this. In particular, the Talisman Creation specialty practiced by the Sons of Ether has as close a relationship to the Engineer specializations as to those practiced by the other Traditions.



Traditions

A Tradition is the way in which a mage externally manifests his working of magick – from the dolls and feathers of voodoo to the meditation and disciplines of Oriental philosophers. The Tradition's procedures and tools are required for each magickal effect the mage wills into reality.

Over the years, most Traditions have achieved identities of their own, outside the cultures from whence they arose. The Traditions are the primary social units of mages. Each Tradition determines the customs to which its members adhere and recruits new initiates into its body.

Each character must choose a Tradition. Each Tradition has a combination of advantages, disadvantages and/or skills which may be taken by characters in that Tradition. Note that most of these are *not* mandatory – simply common among many or most members of the Tradition. An exception to this are skills used as or with foci (see p. 82); if the character has proficiency in Sphere(s) which require the focus, the appropriate skill *must* be taken. These and other mandatory character elements will be marked with an asterisk. See the full Tradition descriptions in Chapter 3 for listings of foci and Spheres.

Each Tradition also has a Sphere of magick (see below) in which it specializes, and in which the character must possess a minimum of 1 level.

Nine Traditions of mages currently operate in the world. These are:

Akashic Brotherhood

These monastic martial artists treat magick as a product of their internal light. They explore the Sphere of Mind to divine why the body and soul can never be united. Though somewhat detached from mortal affairs, these ascetics are becoming ever more involved in the Ascension War as they see the Technocracy destroying humanity's chances for true enlightenment.

Sphere: Mind.

Advantages: Clerical Investment, Combat Reflexes. If the GM owns *GURPS Martial Arts*, *Trained by a Master* is also available.

Skills: Do: Karate or Judo*, Meditation*, Philosophy: Zen, Theology: Buddhism or the like, any weapon skill. For GMs who own *GURPS Martial Arts*, the Brotherhood's *Do* is fully described as a style on p. 138.

Celestial Chorus

Though it has lost considerable influence in recent years, the Chorus still holds to its basic tenet – that the Great One is the true source and the true destination of Ascension. Its members live within the labyrinths of ancient cathedrals, seeking to understand the Sphere of Prime, the source of creation.

Sphere: Prime.

Advantages: Clerical Investment. Some members are active fighters of "evil" and may have combat-related advantages.

Disadvantages: Fanaticism.

Skills: Occultism, Theology*. "Fighters of Evil" will have appropriate combat skills.



Cult of Ecstasy

Lovers of music, dance and art, these mages practice magick as a way of life. Rock music was their creation and is still their passion. In their quest they have mastered the Sphere of Time, the better to allow them to escape the physical world.

Sphere: Time.

Advantages: Musical Ability, Voice.

Disadvantages: Addictions, Alcoholism, Compulsive Carousing, Gluttony, Lecherousness. (None of these is mandatory, in and of itself, but at least one must be chosen if the character has a vice as a focus.)

Skills: Bard, Erotic Art, Musical Instrument*, Singing.

Dreamspeakers

Continuing the most ancient tradition of magick on earth, the Dreamspeakers are shamans of considerable mystery and potency. They are masters of the Sphere of Spirit, and use their powers to converse with the great spirits and thereby divine the secrets of reality.

Sphere: Spirit.

Advantages: Dream, Spirit Empathy.

Disadvantages: Any "insanity" disadvantage, Primitive.

Skills: Musical Instrument (Drum)*.

Euthanatos

Misunderstood and distrusted by the other Traditions, the Euthanatos is thought of as little more than a death cult. Its members use their mastery of the Sphere of Entropy to kill and destabilize.

Sphere: Entropy.

Disadvantages: Fanaticism: Duty to the "Good Death," Odious Personal Habit: Fatalism.

Skills: Dancing*, weapon skills*.

Order of Hermes

Once the proud masters of reality, the members of the Order of Hermes have fallen far since the Middle Ages. Practicing the magick of ritual and calculation, they rigorously pursue ultimate power. Toward this end they have mastered the Sphere of Forces, which grants them power over the essence of the universe.

Sphere: Forces.

Advantages: Language Talent, Mathematical Ability.

Disadvantages: Compulsive Behavior: Secrecy, Vow: Keep Tradition knowledge secret.

Skills: Astronomy/Astrology, Hermeneutics*, Linguistics, languages, Mathematics, Occultism*.

Sons of Ether

Many believe the bizarre Sons of Ether to be offshoots of the dreaded Technomancers. Parasites who feed upon the ideas the Technomancers discard, these mad scientists seek to create a science that adapts to the will of humanity instead of oppressing it. They are masters of the Sphere of Matter, giving them great control over physical reality.

Sphere: Matter.

Advantages: Lightning Calculator, Mathematical Ability, Strong Will.

Disadvantages: Absent-minded, Fanatic, Megalomania, other insanities.

Skills: Abacus*, any Engineering or Scientific skills, Occultism, outdated or discredited sciences and theories (Orgone, Lysenkoism or the like).

Verbena

This ancient Tradition is concerned mainly with the substance and power of life, and is fascinated with life's primary constituents, such as blood and the other bodily fluids. Its members specialize in the Sphere of Life, as they study how mortal life grows from a lifeless world.

Sphere: Life.

Disadvantage: Reputation -2 among other mages*.

Skills: Erotic Art, Knife*, Physician/TL4 (Herbalist), Survival (any wilderness).

Virtual Adepts

Though partial members of the Technocracy, the Adepts are accepted by the other Traditions. They are the masters of the Sphere of Correspondence, personified by their cyber-reality computer net. Working through that growing net, they view technology as the means to break the boundaries of reality.

Sphere: Correspondence.

Skills: Computer Operations*, Computer Hacking*, Computer Programming*, Electronics Operation, Electronics. All computer skills are at TL10; skills for other TLs may be purchased as well.

The Hollow Ones

In recent decades, a new phenomenon has arisen. Sleepers have been born with the gift to work magick already Awakened. These "spontaneous mages" are called "Orphans" by Tradition mages, but they call themselves "Hollow Ones." Orphans do not adhere to any of the Traditions, nor do they feel the pull of ancestral spirits within them – they work magick by intuition and inspiration alone.

Sphere: None.

Disadvantages: Social Stigma: Orphan*.

Skills: Survival (Urban).

Spheres

While an Awakened Avatar gives a mage the potential to shape reality, magickal knowledge shows him how to do it. Mages divide their knowledge of magick into nine Spheres: Correspondence, Entropy, Forces, Life, Matter, Mind, Prime, Spirit and Time. Each Sphere represents a facet of existence, and understanding a Sphere gives the mage power to control that aspect of reality. For example, mages who pursue the Sphere of Time gain mastery over chronological aspects of reality.

Often, a mage must possess knowledge in several different Spheres to manipulate reality as he desires. A magickal feat that requires knowledge of more than one Sphere is called conjunctive magick. Conjunctive magick gives a mage much more diverse control over reality. Still, mages find it nearly impossible to master all nine Spheres, so they inevitably specialize in one or two areas of knowledge.

Spheres are similar to psionic powers (pp. B165-176) in that they have levels of power and a skill that controls the use of the Sphere. Level costs are outlined below; Sphere skills are Mental/Very Hard, with no default. Full descriptions of the nine Spheres can be found on pp. 96-127.

The prerequisite for all Spheres is *Arete* (p. 44). You cannot have more levels in a Sphere than you have levels of *Arete*. Your *Arete* level also imposes a ceiling on your Sphere skills (see p. 44). However, no matter how low the ceiling on your skill is, you still must spend at least 1 point on each Sphere skill, even if this puts you below the level you would get for ½ point; as you gain *Arete*, your Sphere skill(s) will rise with the ceiling until you reach the actual skill level you purchased, after which you must again spend points to improve.

Each Tradition has a Sphere in which it “specializes.” Members of a Tradition must purchase at least one level in its “specialty Sphere.” Orphan mages (or “Hollow Ones”) are not considered members of a Tradition, and are not subject to this requirement. However, because they do not require foci (see p. 82) in order to perform magick, Hollow Ones pay a higher cost for their Spheres. The point cost in parentheses is the cost for Hollow Ones.

Level	Cost
1	15 (20)
2	30 (35)
3	45 (50)
4	65 (70)
5	90 (95)

Mages gain Status by mastering the Spheres. This Status must be purchased separately. See *Status*, p. 00.

Note that some Spheres, particularly Mind and Time, require the mage to purchase certain advantages. These are not so much prerequisites as side effects of the Sphere knowledge.

It is recommended that starting characters not be allowed to purchase more than 3 levels in any one Sphere. There are levels of knowledge beyond the fifth, but they are the domains of the Oracles and are not available to player characters.

Rotes

Rotes are pre-defined magickal effects somewhat akin to spells. Normally they are used as teaching tools, but a character may, if he desires, retain one or more rotes as part of his magickal repertoire. Full information on rotes is found on pp. 88-89.

Rotes are purchased as *maneuvers* that default to a Sphere skill. See *Learning Rotes*, p. 88, for the point costs. Sample rotes are provided in the full descriptions of each Sphere on pp. 96-127, but virtually any magickal affect may be taken as a rote.

Quintessence and Paradox

Quintessence

Quintessence rates how much “energy” of the Prime a mage has within him. A mage can literally become a battery, storing a portion of the ambient energy that creates and guides reality. This energy may then be used by the mage to shape reality.

Quintessence is gained by virtue of possessing a strong Avatar (see p. 44) or by absorbing it from some another source, like a Talisman, a node, or the reservoir at the mage’s Chantry. A character can have no more than 20 points of Quintessence at one time.

Paradox

Paradox rates something almost, but not quite, the opposite of Quintessence. This trait reflects how much of an aberration to reality the mage has become. Instead of unifying with reality, as a mage essentially does when he stores Quintessence energy, a mage becomes a blight upon reality as his Paradox level increases.

As his Paradox level goes up, the mage must take Paradox Flaws or risk going into Quiet (see p. 136).

Starting characters will never have any accumulated Paradox.

Quintessence

Paradox

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Paradox vs. Quintessence

Quintessence and Paradox work together in a unique manner. Although they can be noted on your character sheet numerically, it is easier to understand their relationship if you note them graphically.

Create a line of 20 boxes or other figures which you can mark with a check or “x”. This is the continuum of Quintessence and Paradox. Mark your Quintessence by checking off boxes starting from the left and going right; mark your Paradox by checking off boxes starting from the right and going left. (You may wish to use a different notation for each just to make things clearer.)

No special considerations are necessary until the marks from one threaten to overlap the other. When they do so, Paradox always takes precedence, so Paradox always eliminates points of Quintessence in order to make room for itself. For example, if a mage with Quintessence 14 and Paradox 5 suddenly gains 3 points of Paradox, the first Paradox point fills the remaining empty space, but the latter two erase 2 points of Quintessence and replace them with 2 points of Paradox. On the other hand, if the mage has 10 Quintessence and 8 Paradox, and gains 3 points of Quintessence, he can only hold two of them in the 11th and 12th positions, as the next space already marks Paradox.

Sample Mage: Damien

Disciple of the Virtual Adepts

Essence: Dynamic

ST 10 (0 points) **IQ** 16 (80 points) **Speed:** 6.50
DX 15 (60 points) **HT** 11 (10 points) **Move:** 6
Dodge 6 **Parry** 7
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d
Quintessence ••----- **Paradox**

Point Total: 400 points

Advantages

Arete 4 (65 points)
Avatar 2 (30 points)
Destiny 5 (25 points)
Immunity to the Delirium (25 points)
Reputation +4 from Virtual Adepts as an innovator and as the author of the best adult software on the Net (10 points)
Status 1, Sleepers (free from Wealth)
Wealth: Wealthy (15 points)

Disadvantages

Code of Honor: Protocols (-15 points)
Combat Paralysis (-15 points)
Compulsive Behavior: Network Access (-10 points)
Lecherousness (-15 points)
No Sense of Humor (-10 points)
Overconfidence (-10 points)
Overweight (-5 points)
Paraphobia, Mild (-10 points)
Secret: Non-Technocracy Mage (-30 points)

Skills

Bard-15 (1 point); Body Sense-14 (2 points); Brawling-15 (1 point); Broadsword-15 (2 points); Area Knowledge (Network)-18 (4 points); Computer Hacking/TL7-16 (8 points); Computer Hacking/TL10-16 (8 points); Computer Operations/TL7-18 (4 points); Computer Programming/TL7-15 (2 points); Computer Programming/TL10-17 (6 points); Electronics/TL10-16 (4 points); Electronics Operation/TL7-16 (2 points); Electronics Operation/TL10-16 (2 points); Enigmas-16 (4 points); Erotic Art-14 (2 points); Intimidation-16 (2 points); Knife-16 (2 points); Meditation-15 (4 points); Occultism-16 (2 points); Research-16 (2 points); Savoir-Faire-19 (2 points).

Spheres

Correspondence-13 (3) (46 points)
Entropy-13 (2) (31 points)
Forces-13 (3) (46 points)
Prime-13 (1) (16 points)

Quirks

Ruled by expedience, not sentiment.
Prefers virtual reality to true reality.
Not averse to frying an occasional annoying Sleeper.
Proud of being the number-one programmer of TL10 adult software.
Info-junkie.

Possessions

TL10 Personal Computer, Complexity 5, 2 lbs.

Story

Damien was a teenage rogue cracker who discovered the Virtual Adepts when he managed to break through their security and enter their virtual Chantry realm through the network connections of Omaha, Nebraska. Impressed by his ability and inventiveness – and by the Destiny they sensed in him – one of their number took it upon himself to teach and Awaken the boy.

Over the ensuing years, Damien proved to be a capable and voracious student, and quickly rose to the level of Disciple in the Virtual Adepts. His programming skills and magickal abilities combined in a remarkably productive synergy, and he soon became one of the most innovative of the Adepts. Many recent advances made by the Adepts are directly attributable to his creations and insights. However, most of the time, he spends his time pursuing and perfecting his greatest personal interest: interactive adult software. He has gained no small renown among the other Virtual Adepts both from this pursuit and from his ability as a mage.

Although primarily a programmer, Damien dabbles in computer design and construction, and has created several experimental systems that show promise as the basis for the next major revolution in computing power for the Adepts.





WITC
WVC

I hadn't seen a meeting like this in, oh, more years than I'd like to admit. This Horizon Realm was carefully chosen to be neutral ground, for even with all our common enemies and common heritages, there is still much conflict between the Traditions, especially where the newer ones are concerned.

As I took my seat, I looked around the table at their faces, a Master from each Tradition: Ke Chan of the Akashic Brotherhood, Reverend Hargus of the Celestial Chorus and Jimi H. of the Cult of Ecstasy sat to my left. Directly across from me were Dr. Alicia Muldair-Phipps of the Dreamspeakers, the Eulbanatos Master known only as "Darker", and Magister Apollonius of the Order of Hermes. And to my right were Fraulein Doktor Margrethe Heidel of the Sons of Ether, Sunhawk of the Verbena, and Phaze Zycle of the Virtual Adepts.

(I'll admit my surprise that Zycle was here in person, not, as was his wont, via some kind of Correspondence projection. But then, the crisis had struck the Virtual Adepts first and hardest.)

There was a tenth seat, unused and untouched. Its occupant, dressed in her usual black, stood slouched against the wall, the candlelight gleaming off her bangles and the many rings piercing her young body. From the poisonous glances given her by the others, I could see why she did not sit, but she posed herself with an air of insouciant superiority, and did not deign to answer those looks. I got my own share of dark glances, I'll tell you, simply for inviting her, but I was very glad that the Hollow Ones had sent a representative.

Once more I glanced around the table. I was impressed; I was sure that someone would have stayed home, out of some fit of pique or imagined slight, but they all came. All the more testimony to the magnitude of the crisis. I cleared my throat.

"Now that we are all here," I said, when the susurrus of conversation subsided, "I call this meeting to order."

Chapter 3

THE TRADITIONS

I had always believed that the world involved magic; now I thought that perhaps it involved a magician.

— G.K. Chesterton

Most mages of the World of Darkness have organized into groups collectively called “Traditions.” Nine of these Traditions are described here, though there are a few other, smaller groups. One group of mages called the Hollow Ones (not a true Tradition) is presented as well.

Traditions are one of the greatest inventions of mages. These groups allow mages of like mind and like aspirations to gather and cooperate. Without Traditions, it would take many times as long to initiate and teach potential mages. Many innovations of mages are tied to the Traditions and would be unable to operate without the Tradition structure. Foci are good examples of such innovations.

Each Tradition is described in the same format. The format, and a description of the information contained with each item, is as follows:

Introduction: A general description of the Tradition and its history begins each section.

Philosophy: This is a statement of how members of the Tradition view magick, or how they feel magick, mages and Sleepers interrelate. It is the best description of the "personality" of the Tradition, though the philosophy presented is taken from the mouth of a perhaps overly stereotypical member of the Tradition.

Organization: This describes the way the mages of the Tradition have organized their ranks. Some Traditions are very iconoclastic while others have rigid and established ways.

Meetings: Most Traditions have regular meetings for all those who can attend. Attendance is sometimes mandatory.

Initiation: In order to become an official member of the Tradition, a candidate must go through an initiation. Potential candidates for membership and some details of the initiation itself are presented in this section.

Chantry: Members of all the Traditions are spread throughout reality, but each Tradition has one central Chantry made entirely of members of the Tradition. This section gives a little information about that Chantry.

Acolytes: Each Tradition's Acolytes typically represent specific segments of humanity. Some ideas for the Acolytes of each Tradition are listed here.

Sphere: While any mage may use any Sphere of magick, each Sphere is typically associated with the Tradition that has utilized it best and with the greatest variety. That Sphere is listed here, and all mages of that Tradition purchase its first level at a discount (see p. 50).

Foci: Each Tradition relies on certain items or practices in order for the magick used by its members to be effective. For example, a Dreamspeaker must have a feather handy in order to use magick related to the Spirit Sphere.

Concept: This section lists examples of typical persons who might join a certain Tradition. For example, an alchemist is a concept for one type of mage of the Order of Hermes.

Quote: This is simply something you might hear a stereotypical member of the Tradition say.

Stereotypes: Most Traditions feel that their ways are best. Here is presented each Tradition's view of the others.



Akashic Brotherhood

*The movement of the Tao consists in Returning.
The use of the Tao consists in softness.
All things under heaven are born of the corporeal;
The corporeal is born of the Incorporeal.*

— Zen



While the Akashic Brotherhood has remained essentially unchanged for many centuries, its philosophies have had a tremendous impact on the human race. Zen, and all of its mystical cousins, were founded by the Akashic Brotherhood. The recent spread of the philosophies of the Akashic Brotherhood to the West has caused much concern on the part of the Technomancers. They see the peaceful, contemplative lifestyle the Brotherhood proposes as a threat to the mechanistic lifestyle they seek to instill among the world's populace.

For over 2,000 years, the Akashic Brotherhood has held the same course. The aims of the Brotherhood often seem anti-intellectual. This makes it hard for many people of the modern world to accept the Brotherhood's answers. Still, none who encounter the Grand Masters of the Brotherhood can deny the serenity and self-acceptance they find.

The way of the Brotherhood is more than philosophy; it is experience. The Brotherhood believes that only through experiencing one's innermost self can one become enlightened and gain a sense of one's Essence. To gain enlightenment, members of the Tradition practice an art known as Do ("The Way," pronounced "doe"). Do is an amalgamation of martial arts and meditation. The Brotherhood's members believe its continued practice helps a person achieve enlightenment.

Members of the Akashic Brotherhood strive toward the enlightenment of Do as part of an unhurried way of life. While intent on achieving a desired end, they do so with an equal mixture of humor and sobriety. They seek to understand themselves and offer the path of Do to all people, but life can still be joyful. In recent times, though, the martial abilities of Do have been of necessity used offensively.

Because of the very meditative attitude Brothers have toward magick, they tend to slip into Quiet more often than other mages. The hobgoblins they bring back are often very devious and malicious. A mage may unknowingly leave trouble behind in an area he thought he had just relieved of a burden.

Philosophy

Be, do not do. Breathe in. Breathe out. Notice your breath, how it is in you, how it flows. Feel the life force that is in you; feel how it changes as you breathe. That is the Do, the way. It is not a thing to be learned. It is a thing to be lived. What is magick but an extension of our breath? Magick is just as unseen, and just as necessary to us all. It doesn't matter if you were born small, or large, or powerful, or powerless. Achieve this small success, this breath, and you will have taken a step beyond anyone else. Breathe. Be, do not do. The infinitesimal realized is better than the grand unfulfilled.

Organization

The Tradition is organized in monastery-like Chantries. These Chantries are usually in remote areas that are conducive to the quiet and focus required for all aspects of Do.

Meetings

Members of the Tradition typically live and work at a Chantry. Here, daily life is organized as dictated by Do, so every moment of every day is effectively a meeting.

Initiation

New members are chosen from those who have proved themselves worthy in any of the practices that are a part of Do, like Zen, martial arts or yoga. Despite the Tradition's name of "Brotherhood," female initiates are chosen as often as men.

Chantry

Members of the Brotherhood share the knowledge of a hidden mountain monastery in Tibet.

Acolytes

Martial artists, Zen practitioners, fraternal orders, monks, spiritualists, Buddhist scholars.

Sphere

Mind.

Foci

Do: Correspondence/Mind/Prime/Time, *Purification:* Spirit, Entropy, *Sash:* Forces, *Weapon:* Life/Matter.

Concepts

Martial artist, wandering wise man, Zen monk.

Quote

"First you must learn the craft of magick. Then forget the craft and embody the art of living through Do."

Stereotypes

- Celestial Chorus – They seek wisdom much as we do, but mankind can be but a part of or key to the divine, not the divine itself.
- Cult of Ecstasy – How can they know if they have achieved some part of the truth or just the satiation of their inner desires?
- Dreamspeakers – They should not look outside of themselves for the answers.
- Euthanatos – A person should control his own destiny, not have it decided for him by those who feel he has more to learn. All people are ready for the first steps of Do.
- Hollow Ones – They are aptly named. They will never reach Ascension or even self-acceptance until they can find a center for their thoughts and feelings.
- Order of Hermes – They separate magick from themselves with their charts and tables.
- Sons of Ether – Their interest in comprehending the reality possible through science is commendable, but they would do best to reconsider before they trap themselves as has the Technocracy.
- Verbena – They see too much in the beauty of the forms around them. They should look within.
- Virtual Adepts – They seek a vision of reality to hold before man, but it must come in its time and cannot be forced.



CELESTIAL CHORUS

Every God ever worshipped devoutly in the hearts of men is the One True God.

— Roderick MacLeish, Prince Ombra

No Tradition has lost so much over the last thousand years as has the Celestial Chorus. The rise of technology has damaged this Tradition more than any other. Members of the Celestial Chorus view their magick and power in a religious framework and seek the means to return to the embrace of the One.

To the Celestial Chorus, this One is none other than the combined mind and desire of all mankind. For reasons unknown, this One granted itself life, but subsequently fragmented itself many, many years ago. It is the duty of the Chorus to make all people again sing with one voice and gather to share the wisdom that life has taught them.

More than any other Tradition, except perhaps the Akashic Brotherhood, the Celestial Chorus is concerned with the well-being of all men and women. The Chorus seeks to protect humanity from the myriad evils of the universe. Some members feel that meeting these evils head-on is one reason the One granted itself life. Members of the Chorus have therefore taken up arms very militantly to battle the forces of "evil." They are effective and determined foes, though sometimes their fervor has gone too far and beings not deserving of such treatment were inexplicably punished. Rumors have surfaced of dungeons full of "heretics" the Chorus imprisons as part of a foul Inquisition.

Members of the Chorus believe that a great cosmological implosion called the Reconciliation is coming or must be initiated. The Reconciliation will recombine the fragments of the One. The particulars of the Reconciliation are not well understood, but the event seems to involve all of the Realms within the Tellurian recombining with Earth in a great juxtaposition of realities.



All members of the Tradition carry a holy symbol in the stylized image of the Sun. This was the home of the One prior to the fragmentation, and is where all mankind will return when the Reconciliation is complete.

Philosophy

As the One is above, so we are below. Life is a precious gift that the One has given us. It has given us voices so that we might sing. We sing in harmony, not as a sacrifice but as a hymn, a chorus reaching out to the Source, the Light of All Lights, the Unmoved Mover. One day we will turn and see the thousand stars below us, and we will shepherd those stars all the way to Ascension. We will guard and guide Humanity until that day comes, working to spread the Song the One has given us.

Organization

The Celestial Chorus is tightly organized into a hierarchy reminiscent of many organized religions. All members are expected to follow the instructions of their superiors, as those of higher rank are by definition privy to deeper secrets of the One. As all members share the same general fervor concerning their task, there are rarely problems of dissension. However, the very nature of the Chorus' system does create ambition in its members. The ensuing political maneuvering sometimes diverts the Tradition's attention.

Meetings

Nightly meetings punctuate the lives of members of the Tradition, but the major meetings occur every Saturday.

Initiation

Members of the Celestial Chorus require four years of schooling in the history and ways of the Tradition. At the end of this time, the candidate may accept vows making him a member.

Chantry

The Celestial Chorus has placed its Chantry in the holiest of cities (from a Western perspective, anyway) – Rome.

Acolytes

Red Cross workers, TV evangelists and their viewers, the faithful.

Sphere

Prime.

Foci

Fire: Prime/Spirit, *Holy Symbol:* Forces/Mind, *Pure Water:* Entropy, *Song:* Correspondence/Life/Time, and *Touch:* Matter.

Concepts

Witch-hunter, priest, theologian.

Quote

"Friends, all of you are I. You speak of joining minds, but our thoughts speak only of my myriad ability to think all things at once. Together we are I, and I will answer the riddles life allows us to pursue."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood – Each person at base has the same truths, so why do the Brotherhood's members all seek different paths in their Do?

- Cult of Ecstasy – Delinquents! Mankind needs guidance and they do nothing but escape into dreams of pleasure.

- Dreamspeakers – It is easy to think yourself part of something that is so close. It takes courage to accept that you are far removed from what you are.

- Euthanatos – There is a bit of the darkness in every being, even a god. Those who follow this Tradition are the darkness in my soul.

- Hollow Ones – The fire inside has obviously gone out in our youngest brethren. They are not yet beyond redemption, but they must come to us.

- Order of Hermes – They try to quantify that which cannot be counted.

- Sons of Ether – The science they practice is a grim reminder of the outrageous ideas that allowed the Technocracy to begin its ascent to power. We tire of this slap in the face.

- Verbena – There is a power in nature, but it serves mankind, not the reverse.

- Virtual Adepts – They at least show the courage to break from their kind, but they pursue mere shadows of the truth.

Cult of Ecstasy

Nothing is true. Everything is permissible.

– Hassan i Sabbah

The Cult of Ecstasy has influenced cultures around the globe for centuries. The Cult encouraged the worship of Bacchus in ancient Greece, promoted the theater in the time of Queen Elizabeth, and sparked the cultural revolutions in Paris, New Orleans and Detroit. The Cultist-inspired Summer of Love resulted in a huge coincidental effect – Woodstock. The newest members of the Tradition have returned to the idea of music as revolution by sponsoring the rise of punk, and later, rap.

Ironically, the radical and undisciplined Cult of Ecstasy has produced some of the most talented mages in recent years. However, the Tradition does not encourage participation in magick beyond the level addressed by the doctrines of the Tradition. These doctrines hold free action and self-expression to be the pinnacles of human achievement. While these are in and of themselves noble goals, they tend to be used by cult members as convenient excuses for blatant self-gratification.

The Tradition's practices of magick are disapproved of by the majority of mages. Its members have a tendency to pursue their comforts and pleasures via the use of wild, unrestrained magick. This often leads to meteoric lives and swift deaths. Many of the vices of society, including drugs of all kinds, are employed by the Cultists as part of their magick. Even members who do not use such substances defend the right of other





Cultists do so on the grounds that such practices are defensible means of investigating reality. Others, though, claim that such vices only allow a mage to find a reality he wants to find.

Philosophy

Turn on. Tune in. Drop out. Get off your ass! Life's a party, and most poor bastards are *not invited!*

Organization

The Cult has a strange, anarchic quasi-organization. Most of its members constantly travel the world, but certain Nodes have been established as havens. However, there is no guarantee that a Cultist will recognize anyone upon returning to a given location – Cultists are notoriously nomadic and unreliable. Cultists make notoriously poor Chantry members.

Meetings

Cultists tend to hold meetings and ceremonies spontaneously, i.e., whenever there are enough members around to warrant such an exercise.

Initiation

There is no set procedure for becoming an initiate of the Tradition. When a likely candidate is found, the highest-ranking Cultist determines an appropriate ceremony. This ceremony could be anything from an elaborate peyote ritual to a three-day, non-stop mountain trek.

Chantry

The base Chantry of the Tradition is located in Berkeley, California, the home of many who yearn to push the fringes of society.

Acolytes

Entertainers, playboys, thrill-seekers.

Sphere

Time.

Foci

Incense: Correspondence/Spirit, *Music:* Forces/Mind, *Ring:* Entropy/Matter, *Vice:* Life/Prime/Time.

Concepts

Musician, Hollywood agent, primitive drummer.

Quote

"Why do you subject yourself to such pain? Leave your life behind and embrace our ways. Oh, my existence may seem care-free and pointless to you now, but that is only because of the indoctrination you have accepted for 30-plus years."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood – They waste years in meditation to reach what we achieve out of joy.
- Celestial Chorus – Warped and petty dictators of a lost and forgotten tyranny.
- Dreamspeakers – A lot like us, except they don't like to party.
- Euthanatos – Forsake life for death? Gross!
- Hollow Ones – There is so much good in life – so much they have forgotten.
- Order of Hermes – They're too serious and boring for words. Get a life, guys.
- Sons of Ether – This is what science oughta be: funny goggles and Frankenstein.
- Verbena – They throw really great parties. Too bad there's a purpose behind every one.
- Virtual Adepts – These guys are cool. Check 'em out.

DREAMSPEAKERS

Science speaks to the universe in terms it already understands, while magic speaks in terms it cannot ignore.

— Anonymous

The Tradition known as the Dreamspeakers is probably the most ancient of the Traditions. Many of the Dreamspeakers' methods and philosophies were developed by prehistoric cultures. The Dreamspeakers are primarily concerned with the salvation of the earth spirit they call Gaia.

Dreamspeakers can best be described as shamans. Indeed, many members began their studies of magick through the lore of their own people. They feel an obligation not so much to other humans, but to the desires of Gaia. They believe that the world and everything in it, including all humanity, are reflections of the desires of Gaia. Dreamspeakers actively work to advance Gaia's will.

In their efforts to communicate with Gaia, Dreamspeakers pursue every possible course. The most rewarding thus far has been communication with spirits and entities in the spirit world – beings that obviously know a great deal about the true nature of reality.

The obligation of Dreamspeakers in the Sleeper world is to care for the spirits of men and women, enabling them to rejoin Gaia at the time of death. They may be a little too connected to Gaia, though, for their fortunes have mirrored the health of the planet. Just as the planet is slowly being crystalized through science, so too are the Dreamspeakers. The dreams have faded and the roots of their power are now tainted. Many mages of this Tradition have simply gone insane as a result.

Dreamspeakers are perhaps the most loosely organized of all the Traditions. In fact, the only organization they would seem to have is a recognition of new members and an obligation to initiate these members when they seek such a ceremony. This loose structure has all the strengths and weakness one would expect. The Dreamspeakers have the potential to accomplish many goals, for their energies are not channeled in any specific direction.

Consequently, however, they retread much of the same ground. Dreamspeakers often unknowingly “discover” something another may have learned last week – or last century.

Philosophy

You must remember a time when you were not dead, when the places within you that are wild and free were just another part of the great Dream, Gaia's Dream. You must know that there are others like you, others who cry in the night because they cannot feel Her light. I tell you this because it is your job to go to the place where our Mother lies sleeping and carry to us the words of her dreams. You must speak for Her, for she cannot. You must go, and quest, and find, and return. And then you will speak of Her, and tell us all.



Organization

Dreamspeakers have almost no organization beyond simple acknowledgment of one another.

Meetings

The only ritual meetings are the ceremonies to initiate a new member. Only one Dreamspeaker is required to oversee such a ceremony, though others are welcome to attend.

Initiation

New Dreamspeakers are summoned to their path; rarely can a person choose to become one. The potential member is contacted in his dreams by spirits who show the candidate how to contact another Dreamspeaker. Once in contact with another Dreamspeaker, the candidate must suffer ritual death and rebirth. This process varies from one Dreamspeaker to another; it has been known to go so far as the actual death of the candidate and the transferral of his Avatar to another body. This practice has only recently begun; many consider the mages' connection to a dying earth the explanation for their Euthanatos-like madness.

Chantry

The Dreamspeakers are unique among the Traditions in their lack of a Chantry. They claim to speak to one another in dreams.

Acolytes

Environmentalists, Garou, sleepwalkers.

Sphere

Spirit.

Foci

Crystals: Life/Mind/Prime, Drums: Correspondence/Entropy/Forces/Matter/Time, Feathers: Spirit.

Concepts

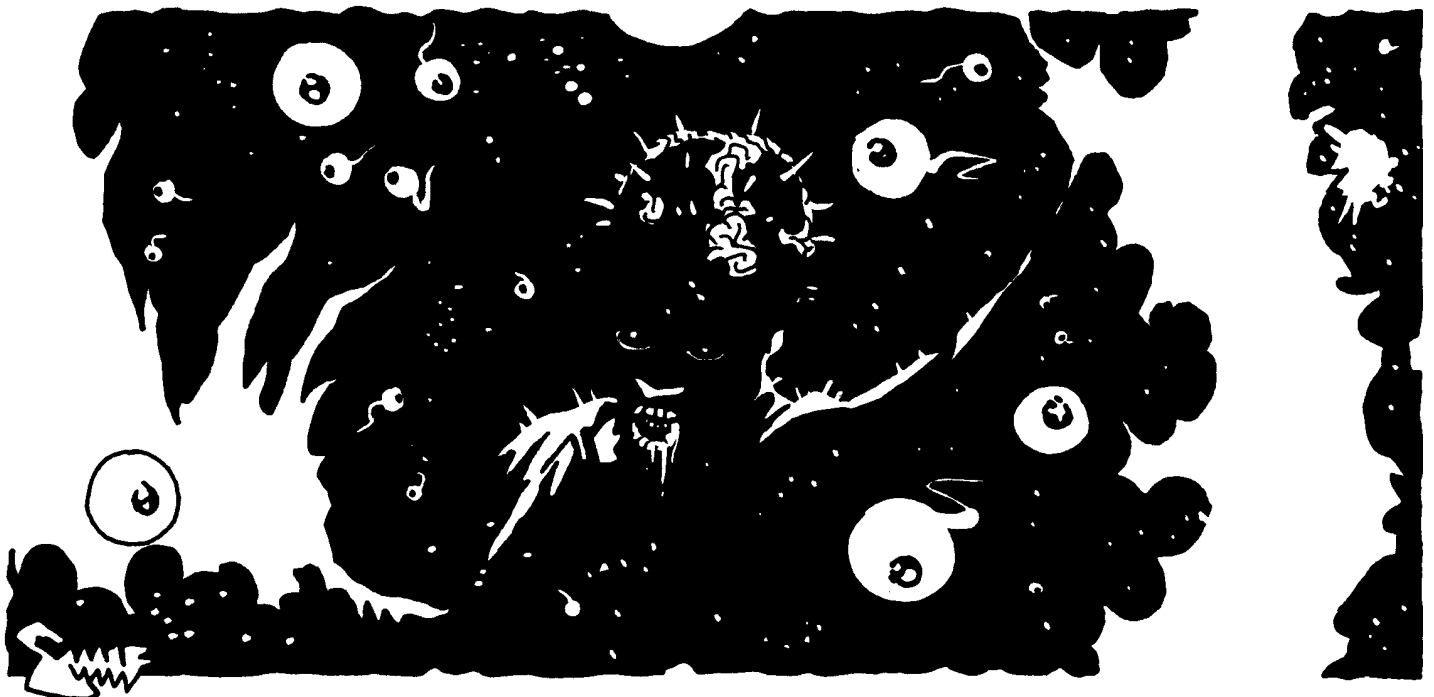
Shaman, hitchhiker, ecologist.

Quote

"Gaia is sleeping. Be certain, mortal, that you trouble her sleep. I ease such nightmares."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood – They know that the answers are within them; now they must learn that the truth also connects them.
- Celestial Chorus – They sense the connection but still seek to attribute it to a greater, unknowable god.
- Cult of Ecstasy – They claim to search for true meaning in life, but they only avoid it by dulling their senses.
- Euthanatos – They overstep their bounds and play with the pieces of Gaia's dreams. Men are meant to live once and then pass on their Avatar.
- Hollow Ones – More than any others, they are the clues to awakening Gaia and finding the path to Ascension.
- Order of Hermes – We number them among the Technomancers, for their magick is nothing save a progression of rules and restrictions that ultimately leads to stagnation.
- Sons of Ether – If science offers any true answers, we must rely on these mages to find them. However, they are likely to find nothing. If so, they walk the same path as the Technocracy, only at a more pleasant pace.
- Verbena – They understand the power of Gaia but are trapped at the level of forms. They must go beyond trees and blood.
- Virtual Adepts – Technomancers on the path to recovery. They again look at the illusions of the world. Unfortunately, they still seek to use them.



Euthanatos

*That is not dead which can eternal lie,
And through strange aeons even Death may die.*

— H.P. Lovecraft

The Euthanatos is the most ruthless and widely feared Tradition. The mages of this bizarre cult have historically had little interest in cooperating with other mages. They are preoccupied by what they feel to be their sacred duty to the Sleepers – killing those who are ready to die.

Mages of the Euthanatos feel that humanity has contemptuously spurned the greatest gift the universe has ever deigned to grant – life. Instead of using life to an even greater end, humanity, in the opinion of this Tradition, has perverted life by sucking it dry of every possibility. Humanity is running out of options, so the Euthanatos mages seek to provide more options by returning certain humans to a more fundamental level of existence, spirit form. These spirits are then eventually reborn into new bodies. With any luck, they retain some memory of their journeys and will hopefully apply this in their next life.

Few other Traditions take so active a hand in the lives of individual people, for most mages are more concerned with sweeping changes affecting entire cultures. The granting of the “Good Death,” as those of the Euthanatos call it, is the Tradition’s way of achieving the same end.

There are rumors, though, that there is an ulterior motive behind the Good Death. Some say the Euthanatos have led several mortals through many lifetimes and in fact are grooming a messiah. Others tell stories of the abominations the Euthanatos have bred – human and otherwise. Some mages even blame this Tradition for such social aberrations as serial killers, claiming that the Tradition’s blind manipulation has created men and women who think like the mages but on a human scale.

Because of the Tradition’s focus on redemption and extended life, the mages of the Euthanatos are extremely interested in vampirism and pursue information about the Kindred with a passion.

Philosophy

Things fall apart. Fact. Everywhere the clock of chaos ticks on. Tick, tock. Tick, tock. Is it any wonder that we spend a third of our lives dead? Is it any wonder that life decays, putrefies, and returns to the slime that birthed it? You can see it all around you. Rust. Cancer. Revolution. We think we know the answers, but we don’t. We don’t have to. One night, the sun won’t rise, the wind won’t blow, and we’ll discover the real truth of it all: there is no Truth, and everything we have made will crumble to dust.

Organization

The Euthanatos are guided by consensus opinion and the Tradition thus requires frequent meetings. Individual Chantries are responsible for carrying out the decisions of the Tradition as a whole, but the decisions themselves are the duty of all members.



Meetings

The Euthanatos meet at their Chantry on the first day of every month. At these meetings they discuss the progress of their mortals and consider others for the Good Death.

Initiation

The initiation ceremony of a new member always involves a near-death experience. Poised on the edge between life and death, the spirit of the candidate must make the decision to escape to the Beyond or return to the responsibilities of the physical world. Those who return are welcomed as members. Candidates who have experienced the Good Death are sometimes exempted from this initiation, though the Euthanatos generally hold that failure to participate results in a weaker member.

Chantry

What better place to investigate death than in Calcutta, India? The Euthanatos have several groups spread throughout the city, and one main Chantry amidst the squalor and human misery. The strong influence of the Euthanatos in this part of the world is largely responsible for the belief in reincarnation.

Acolytes

Voodoo priests, occult storekeepers, terrorists, doctors, gravediggers.

Sphere

Entropy.

Foci

Bones: Entropy/Matter/Prime, *Dancing:* Correspondence/Spirit, *Dolls:* Life, *Rattle:* Mind/Time, and *Weapon:* Forces.

Concepts

Voodoo witch-doctor, mortician, assassin, doctor, scholar.

Quote

"Come, little man. Let me show you the kind of world you have helped create. You think you control it? Let me show how it can be used against you. Pain, death and torture are your legacy. How proud of these are you now?"

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood – Those of the Brotherhood live lives of purpose; never have we encountered one who required the Good Death. We also respect the personal power they wield.

- Celestial Chorus – They attempt to diminish their blame in the course of the world by assigning their faults to the mortals who weigh them down.

- Cult of Ecstasy – How they delight in the clay of their physical forms! If they were mortal, none would be considered for the Good Death. Best to let them die and be gone . . . forever.

- Dreamspeakers – Their expert communion with the spirits is teaching them what they should know, but they have a problem with implementation.

- Hollow Ones – They claim to be one with death and decay, but that's fallacious. It is indeed amusing to watch the reaction of their sheltered psyches when confronted with the real thing.

- Order of Hermes – They skillfully define the parameters of the physical world, but their magick is ultimately of little use.

- Sons of Ether – Living proof that science could be a valid means of exploring reality. They squeeze every drop of information out of ideas tossed too casually aside by the Technomancers.

- Verbena – They are so close to understanding us. If they could but see the power of life in death, and not the weaker power of life itself.

- Virtual Adepts – Do they think they can live forever if they escape deeper into machines? The computer only eats their souls and leaves them absolutely nothing.

HOLLOW ONES

My sense of god is my sense of outrage at the universe.

– Michael R. Singer

Though not an actual Tradition of magick, the Hollow Ones are a breed of young mages that have grown significantly within the past 15 years to become a notable force in mage society. They are a reaction to and a result of the oppressive forces of the modern world. Hollow Ones have little interest in Ascension, and are thought by other Traditions to be its signposts, not its sign-bearers.

The Hollow Ones are for the most part separate pockets of tightly knit friends. They are usually found in cities, but also exist in the suburbs. Around the mid-'80s, they began to find one another in significant numbers, and the first of their cabals

(they call them *Cliques*) started proliferating. These punk covens are usually found in graveyards, funeral parlors, churches and nightclubs. The point of these gatherings is to share the misery of existence and have fun at the same time. Hollows mature (experientially) around the age of 13 and carve out a niche of perfect freedom from school, job and family matters before they even consciously realize they are using their magick.

The Hollow Ones are just one subset of a larger group known as Orphans, mages who have Awakened on their own without the help of other mages. While this is the principal reason why they are distrusted by the Traditions, it also makes them valuable allies against the Technomancers, for they are underestimated and well hidden.

The Hollow Ones are generally defeatists in overall attitude, yet this attitude never seems to get in the way of doing good deeds or entertaining themselves. Unlike the Sleepers, the demographics of the Hollows show more gothic taint than punk: for the most part, they are not the bullies and criminals who plague society. Instead, they are fish who swim peacefully in that violent environment. Their Ascension is a dark thing, tied to a deep narcissism.

Philosophy

Ascension? No such thing. It's a cat's cradle – no cat and no cradle, right? A lie to keep going. Well, the Orphans don't need the lie, especially not us Hollowers. We don't need to keep going either, except that there always seems to be great new music in the nightclubs. So the procession lurches on, and weren't the flowers on the casket just so exquisitely beautiful? Ascension? Okay, maybe. It's a deeply flawed world, but sure, it can Ascend in its way. Maybe the Garden of Eden would have Ascended with grace and beauty and goodwill for all mankind, but this isn't Eden.

Organization

The Hollow Ones recently elected a King and Queen, the two prettiest goths from among all the Cliques. The leaders of the five or six biggest Cliques are known as Princes or Princesses. Every Halloween the "royal" Cliques throw a huge Ball during which the leadership roles (except for King and Queen, which are "until death") come up for election again. The winners are chosen by the most influential handful of Orphans in a Clique, and a glass slipper (usually a powerful magickal talisman) is the trophy.

Meetings

Each Clique holds a Midnight Mass at the Clique headquarters Saturday night, which usually devolves into a party after the biggest decisions are out of the way. The electoral Ball every October 31st is never to be missed, if only because that's the biggest party of all. Other meetings are held at the whim of each individual Clique; it is customary to have an impromptu meeting after any important funeral (for fellow Hollows and Sleeper human friends alike). Inter-Clique meetings occur rarely, if at all, and few nationwide Orphan policies are ever enforced – so far.

Initiation

No such thing. Upon entering a new Clique, Hollow Ones are sometimes taken to a cemetery where the greatest number of previous Clique members and hangers-on are buried, and are told to commune with a ghost at random, doing whatever it asks. If they are unable to contact a ghost, then they must commune with a hot local singer while she sleeps.

Chantry

The Way Down, a Gothic church/nightclub in San Francisco.

Acolytes

Blood Dolls, runaways, night-shift workers.

Sphere/Foci

Hollow Ones have no special Sphere and require no foci, but they do pay a higher price for all Spheres (see p. 50).

Concepts

Blood Doll, occultist, artist.

Quote

"My tongue carries the taste of blood and the dust of bones, an ashen elixir to choke my lover as I scream my kiss deep inside her soul. I guide her gently into the Sepulchre of Ascension."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood – Mysticism is an escape, not a rescue. The real world is frantic and ugly. How can you dig through dirt without getting dirty?
- Celestial Chorus – The Godhead lie isn't a bad one in theory – it's as good a lie as science or magic – but in practice it often weakens the souls of those who approach it incorrectly.
- Cult of Ecstasy – Ah, now these folks have a clue! If only they could appreciate the darker things in life.
- Dreamspeakers – They make perhaps the only strong case for the tendency to eschew the here-and-now, but after every spirit trip high you need to feel that crash back to the low for comparison.
- Euthanatos – The world of dying things is a rose-garden funeral of sores; these mages want to tour it in a bulldozer rather than on foot. Still, they do bring the party with them, don't they?
- Order of Hermes – The dull monotony of high school taken to the Nth degree. These are probably the same people who memorize and count out their dance steps.
- Sons of Ether – Interesting ideas, great atmosphere. The only problem is their tendency to spend nights in the lab instead of in the clubs.
- Verbena – They seem right on target, but approach existence in a more rural sense than we do. Reality is blood and sweat, and the Verbena do not delude themselves into thinking it's cleaner.
- Virtual Adepts – Their world is a bit too antiseptic, but there seems to be some good mood behind it – style over substance may be just as accurate an assessment of things as our own milieu.



Order of Hermes

Do not meddle in the affairs of wizards, for they are subtle and quick to anger.

— J.R.R Tolkien

The Order of Hermes is the embodiment of what has come to be regarded as the Western occult tradition. The basic tenets of the Tradition were established in ancient Egypt; they have since continued to evolve, diverging into dozens of splinter groups. Groups like the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and systems of magic like Enochian and the Kabbalah are the results of this experimentation. While these groups and methods have sometimes continued to exist on their own, most have been reabsorbed once their usefulness passed.

The Order of Hermes has quantified many levels of magick over the centuries. In fact, this process seems to be its purpose. This knowledge is then to be applied for the benefit of mankind as a whole, though such application must be implemented beyond the notice of man lest his fear and ignorance destroy the Order.

The magick of the Order is expressed in arcane languages, profound metaphors and esoteric numerologies. Magick in this form is easy to record and pass to later generations so they may build on the work and understanding of those who came before. Such nomenclature also serves the purpose of making the magick of the Order unintelligible to the other Traditions; the Order is the most secretive of all of the Traditions.

The Order was responsible for the creation of the “public” group called the Order of Hermes, an experimental magickal group allowed to operate in direct sight of mankind during the Middle Ages. The failure of this experiment has caused the Order of Hermes to withdraw into themselves; its members attribute the failure to internal corruption within the Order – a dark need to summon and control malefic creatures.

Now the Order wavers, fearing retaliation from the other Traditions should it again attempt to exert influence on the mortal world. Some other Traditions view the complex numerology and astrological formulas of the Order to be little better than the structured reality model of the Technocracy. Still, the Order produces some of the most powerful mages, and so it is wholeheartedly accepted into the Traditions’ Ascension army.

Philosophy

What was once will one day be again. People laugh at us because we employ formulas and chants, but we know the power that is inherent in tradition. What we do utilizes the True Forms of which Plato spoke. We work with the fundamental principles of magick throughout time: the laws of sympathy and contagion. How can one fail to understand that every movement we make, every word we incant, every formula we inscribe has meaning not just on one level, but on all levels? Our strength is the strength of our Tradition, and we will never give it up.

Organization

Though there are many Chantries, those in authority control every member. To maintain secrecy, the Order has established the most rigorously organized Tradition.



Meetings

The meetings of the Order adhere to a schedule that reflects the alignment of the stars in the heavens. Ceremonies are held every day, but the size and importance of these ceremonies depend on the rarity of the conjunction at hand. Other numerologically important dates (like the impending close of the millennium) warrant special rituals as well.

Initiation

New members are welcomed into the Order of Hermes only one time per year. The date of the induction ceremony is the day of the most important conjunction of the year. The Order generally believes that the most promising initiates are those inducted on days of more infrequent conjunctions, so the Order tends to view its initiates as classes, with classes from certain years having more potential than others.

Chantry

Most of the Chantries dominated by the Order are found in Europe, and the main Chantry is located in Cordoba.

Acolytes

Mathematicians, members of secret organizations (Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, CIA, etc.), scientists.

Sphere

Forces.

Foci

Circle: Spirit, *Hermean Language:* all Spheres, even those with another focus, *Seal of Solomon:* Forces/Prime, *Showstone:* Mind/Time.

Concepts

Alchemist, Kabbalist, scientist.

Quote

"Trust me on this matter as you would in any other, for I can tap a reservoir of knowledge beyond your comprehension."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood – Of all the others, they have the greatest potential to find some degree of enlightenment. They are sufficiently organized to recognize truth when it appears.

- Celestial Chorus – They accept far too much on faith alone. We will believe their claims only when they deliver proof.

- Cult of Ecstasy – Certain experiences are undoubtedly noteworthy, but it is best to study these experiences in others rather than practicing them upon oneself. How can one report in an unbiased fashion about something one has personally undergone?

- Dreamspeakers – The powerlessness of their magick is evident in the thousands of years they have practiced to no noticeable gain. Are they mages at all?

- Euthanatos – While we cannot respect their callousness toward life, we do respect that they have definite goals and work to achieve them.

- Hollow Ones – Contemptible. These bastards of magick have no place among true mages.

- Sons of Ether – They adhere to the limitations of science without reaping any of its benefits. Their procedures don't allow them to make enough of the categorical decisions and divisions that classical thought entails.

- Verbena – They are too fractious to enact any long-term changes, and their beliefs are too religious to allow movement toward higher thought.

- Virtual Adepts – Computers could be put to useful work, but generating false images of reality is not the answer.

SONS OF ETHER

What is "rational" depends on logic – but also on the premises from which your logic proceeds.

– Stanley Schmidt

This Tradition has an unlikely origin. It began with an Islamic scroll that made its way into the Spain of Alfonso X ("the Wise") in the late 1200s. The king's translators in Toledo stumbled across it during their mammoth task of translation. The scroll is said to have contained radical departures from the science of the Europeans. The Muslims of the time studied a more advanced science, but the scroll is said to discuss things unknown or inconceivable even in the Islamic homeland.

The information in this scroll sparked something in the head of the translator who struggled with it. It detailed a belief very similar to the Metaphysic of Magick. The scroll claims that empirical observations do not depend on the observed, but on the observer. All observations, even those that others might call objective or factual, are in fact based upon the beliefs of the observer.

This fundamental theory led the unknown translator to form a secret society which espoused the study of reality as a means to find what each seeker desired. The society's experiments served to create a science based on an invented reality model. Unfortunately, some early mistakes caused membership to plummet, and the society became an underground phenomenon for centuries. The translator apparently stuck to his instinct, though, for a group called the Sons of Ether appeared in the early 19th century. Its members created life from the assembled limbs of dead bodies, swapped thoughts between two bodies, and even traveled to the moon buoyed by the ether they knew was in space.

The Sons of Ether have long maintained a policy of total separation from society. They work feverishly in their hidden laboratories, occasionally sharing with one another the new scientific phenomena they have created. They seek to build a new science, one based on their own theories and occasionally incorporating those that mankind has discarded.

Only over the course of the last century have the Sons of Ether grudgingly accepted the term magick to describe what

they do, and have begun to interact with the other Traditions. There is a fierce rivalry between the Technocracy and the Sons of Ether. The Technocracy views the Sons of Ether as lunatics who scavenge the lost branches of disproved scientific theory. By imbuing new life to these forgotten concepts, the Sons turn the old theories into thorns in the side of the Technocracy. They squeeze every drop of information out of ideas tossed aside too casually by Technomancers.

For once, the Technocracy may be right, at least with regard to the Sons' mental stability. There are whispers among the other Traditions that some of the Sons' experiments have gone horribly wrong. The Sons refuse to issue comment regarding the rumors of a strange and foul case of spontaneous generation in a Russian laboratory. The same rumors say that the resulting obscenity is kept under lock and key by the Tradition.

It might be noted that though the Tradition is named the Sons of Ether, it does welcome female reality scientists into its ranks. The women within the Tradition have been campaigning for a revision of the name, with little success.

Philosophy

The Technomancers are cowards. They are afraid to go where their inner vision takes them. Now people can't even see that another science – another mathematics, biology, physics and cosmology – is possible. We will not accept the yoke of conformity and stupidity that the Technomancers would have us wear. We will not allow them to turn our fine and graceful machine into a matte-black, formless engine. Call the process magick if you wish, but we decide how our science should operate and develop it to be so.

Organization

Sons of Ether are loosely organized on each continent through a non-hierarchical structure similar to a colloquium of university science professors. They communicate through a scientific journal called *Paradigma*, trading thoughts on each others' experiments and reporting their own work. Most status within this Tradition comes through successful experiments.

Meetings

All Sons of Ether congregate once a year (or more often during crises) to discuss the current direction of experimentation. Specialized groups conducting similar work meet more often to collaborate.

Initiation

Normally, Ph.D students whose theses are deemed too radical by established science, yet who cling to their research despite institutional rejection, are the most desirable candidates to join the Sons of Ether. Often, one of the members of the Tradition will become interested in the thesis work and slip the prospective initiate a copy of the original Islamic scroll. If the prospect responds well to the scroll, the Son will gradually bring the initiate into the fold and tutor him in the ways of the Tradition.

Chantry

France has long been an intellectual capital of the world. These seekers of a new science have gathered in Paris.

Acolytes

Inventors, eccentrics, mechanics.

Sphere

Matter.

Foci

Abacus: Correspondence/Entropy, *Electricity:* Life/Prime. *Ether Goggles:* Mind/Spirit, *Scientific Meter:* Forces, Matter/Time.

Concepts

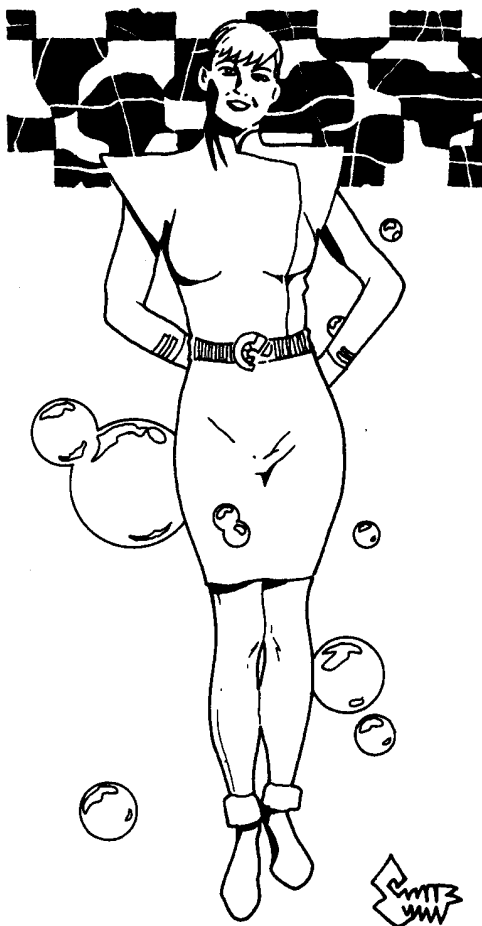
Mad scientist, absent-minded professor, gadgeteer.

Quote

"Real science, the true picture of reality, will not come from the dead-end laboratories of the Technocracy, but from true paradigm experimentation."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood – Interesting people, but their views are only a philosophy of human life, not a theory of reality.
- Celestial Chorus – A bunch of dogmatists, caught up in a theological wheel that keeps winding down but hasn't yet stopped. They don't realize from whence their beliefs are derived.
- Cult of Ecstasy – Be serious. It's a waste of time to discuss these nonsensical faddists.
- Dreamspeakers – A fascinating anthropological study. I wonder how a specimen would respond under beta-wave induction.
- Euthanatos – A group too radical to be safely observed for study. Use caution with them.
- Hollow Ones – A science that can disenfranchise so many is not the science we want. These mages would find more meaning in a world built on our truths.
- Order of Hermes – We could learn some things from this group, and often do. They at least have a systematic approach to their studies, though their interpretations are hopelessly skewed by the arcane gobbledigook they use for technical vocabulary.
- Verbena – A primitive order whose sole purpose in life seems to be relishing in biologically based rituals.
- Virtual Adepts – Very useful. They can often be used in experimental collaboration. Although they seem to stay open to paradigm experimentation, we must beware of their links to the Technocracy.



Verbena

Are you a good witch, or a bad witch?

— Glinda the Good

The Verbena are the kinds of mages that give witches a bad name in Sleeper society. Witches have been persecuted for centuries. As long ago as the days of ancient Greece and Rome, Sleepers believed that witches transformed into beasts, destroyed crops, and gave people the "evil eye." This view of witches has gradually softened, especially now that more of the authentic nature of Wicca is understood. Behind the scenes, though, the Verbena continue their magical practices unabated.

Verbena believe in the power of the self to overcome and understand through group interaction. They believe in the power of mankind. Verbena understand, however, that humanity as a whole will never achieve the proper awareness unless it is assisted (even if said assistance is against humanity's will and contrary to prevailing beliefs). Verbena thus work to ingratiate themselves to modern society through new kinds of witchcraft. Exposure of the Tradition's true practices would be extremely damaging to the Verbena's efforts.

Much Verbena magick comes from the natural world. The primal constituents of life are the most useful to Verbena, and create the most potent and lasting effects. Blood, whether from people or animals, is extremely powerful and is prominent in almost all Verbena gatherings and rituals. Tree sap and the juices of plants are likewise important to Verbena, and Verbena as a result usually excel at herbalism.

Outsiders accuse Verbena of tree worship, for in the center of every Chantry is a tree (usually an oak). Trees, however, are simply foci for the power of the Tradition. The Quintessence gathered by Verbena mages is stored in these so-called World Trees, as are the protections and powers gained through their rituals. Because of the bloody aspects of these rituals, Verbena trees gain a particularly crimson hue after a time. The power of a Verbena coven can be gauged by the age and color of its World Tree.

The Verbena understand very well that the body rules the mind. The lusts of the physical shell cannot be denied, and this blunt, unassailable truth forms the foundation of the Tradition. Physiology defeats ideology, and the Verbena are masters of all things carnal.

Philosophy

The power is the blood, plain and simple. We bleed. It is only through our blood that life goes on. Is it any wonder our births are such bloody affairs? So will the blood of humanity be used in our work. We are descended from the Twisters of Fate, and we will bend and twist reality until it is our own. Even those who hold power cannot deny the simple requirements of life and the passions thereof: rage, lust, envy, hate. We know all of these and we will use them to dominate, control, cajole and influence. We will bring down the lifeless Technocracy and replace it with our own Army of the Living, of Blood.



Organization

Members of this Tradition gather in groups they call covens, though they use the formal term "Chantry" to refer to their places of gathering when interacting with other mages. Covens vary in size, but the most powerful membership number is 13.

Meetings

The eight Sabbats of the calendar year. The four lesser Sabbats are the solstices and equinoxes, and the four greater Sabbats are Candlemas (Feb. 2), Beltane (May 1), Lammas (Aug. 1) and Samhain (Oct. 31).

Initiation

Initiation ceremonies are performed at any gathering or at a special gathering on the birthday of the initiate. The process involves a purifying bath and entry into a magickal circle. Here the new Verbena dedicates himself until candles set at each cardinal direction have burnt out. As with most Verbena rituals, the participants of the initiation ceremony are all "skyclad" (naked).

Chantry

The Black Forest in Germany is the home of these mages. The forest is dwindling despite their best efforts. Some force, or someone's potent influence, is overpowering the attempts of the mages to halt the deforestation. They may have to get serious about this matter soon.

Acolytes

Civil libertarians, Wiccans, butchers, New Agers, rustics, scholars.

Sphere

Life.

Foci

Blood: Life/Prime, Cauldron: Entropy/Spirit, Herbs: Matter, Wand: Correspondence/Forces/Time, Weapon: Mind.

Concepts

Druid, explorer, witch.

Quote

"You may call our rituals bloody and primitive, but with your illusions of cars and comforts you are infinitely farther from the truth than I."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood – They have the capacity to understand, but they have created a world for themselves apart from that of others. How can one know that which one cannot see?
- Celestial Chorus – They have been successful through the years because of the pretty pictures they can paint. Their truths are nothing but sugar that melts away in the mouth.
- Cult of Ecstasy – They squeeze every moment out of living, but rejoicing in every moment for its experience leaves little time for understanding.
- Dreamspeakers – Through their incessant contemplation of the world they have lost the ability to interact with it.
- Euthanatos – Vile! They are the ones who should die. Life is too sacred for such treatment.
- Hollow Ones – The life we seek to return to the world has slipped from these people. Hollow Ones are reality's way of showing us what mankind will become if the Technomancers win.
- Order of Hermes – They overanalyze the world and are entangled in the minutiae of it.
- Sons of Ether – Their science is not as sanitized as that of the Technocracy, but that makes it little better.
- Virtual Adepts – Pretty pictures, even ones you can touch, smell and taste, do not reality make.

VIRTUAL ADEPTS

A computer terminal is not some clunky old television with a typewriter in front of it. It is an interface where the mind and body can connect with the universe and move bits of it about.

– Douglas Adams, Mostly Harmless

Computers have become an integral part of modern society. As they have come to dominate the world, so too has a new Tradition of mages, the Virtual Adepts. Ever since Babbage's first machine was invented over 100 years ago, the Virtual Adepts have been working to ensure the acceptance of the computer by society. In this they have been very successful. The work of the Technomancers helped create a world where the computer has become ubiquitous. This has given this young Tradition enormous power.

The Virtual Adepts were at one time a Convention of the Technocracy. However, they were careful to steer clear of the traps into which the other Conventions have fallen. They see the growing acceptance of computers into society as a sign that their star is rising. The Virtual Adepts feel that they are using technology to create new possibilities, whereas other

Technomancers are simply devouring the present for maximum gain.

Like all Technomancers, the Virtual Adepts operate beyond the cutting edge of modern technology. They possess laptop computers of sufficient speed and capacity to render Sleepers' largest super-computers obsolete. To promote the view of computers as power for the people, Virtual Adepts have supported the vision of virtual reality. They seek to create new Realms within the spirit world of their cyber-reality Net.

Virtual Adepts are grudgingly accepted by most other mage Traditions despite their Technomancer origins. However, the Technocracy now despises the Adepts above all other Traditions; they are recognized as the greatest threat to the long-term domination of Technomancer science.

This situation suits the Virtual Adepts just fine. They feel that technology can save mankind, but prefer their technological vision to that of the Technomancers. The Adepts have created the first counterculture with enough power to implement true change.

Philosophy

We represent all to which humanity aspires. No longer will we go the way of all flesh, because after the flesh is dead our souls will live on. In our crystalline towers we'll live forever. Before then, however, we'll rip through the barriers that block us, the locks that keep us out, and the security systems that try to stop us. It's our destiny to know, to sense, to alter, to crash, to steal, and to become one with the Ghost in the Machine, the soul of the computer. We are the future. We will continue to evolve in this way until we become the tools of our Ascension.

Organization

The Virtual Adepts have an unusual manner of organization. Because they usually meet one another online, they often have no idea of the mundane world identity of their fellows. The Tradition's only organization is within the Net, where a loose hierarchy based on ability has been established.

Meetings

Virtual Adepts rarely meet face-to-face. Instead, they rely on communication via computer networks and BBSs.

Initiation

Initiation into this Tradition is possible only by invitation. Virtual Adepts keep an eye out for potential candidates as they travel the Net. When one is detected the candidate is brought to the attention of all the members. Membership is offered if the candidate can pass a series of secret tests.

Chantry

Because it is home to so many government facilities, Omaha, Nebraska is a tangle of phone lines. The main Chantry of the Virtual Adepts exists in a Realm created online in this area. Members attend in their online guises.

Acolytes

Science fiction fans, hackers, computer game players, programmers, couch potatoes.

Sphere

Correspondence.

Foci

Computer: all Spheres, *Electricity:* Forces, *Network:* Prime/Spirit.

Concepts

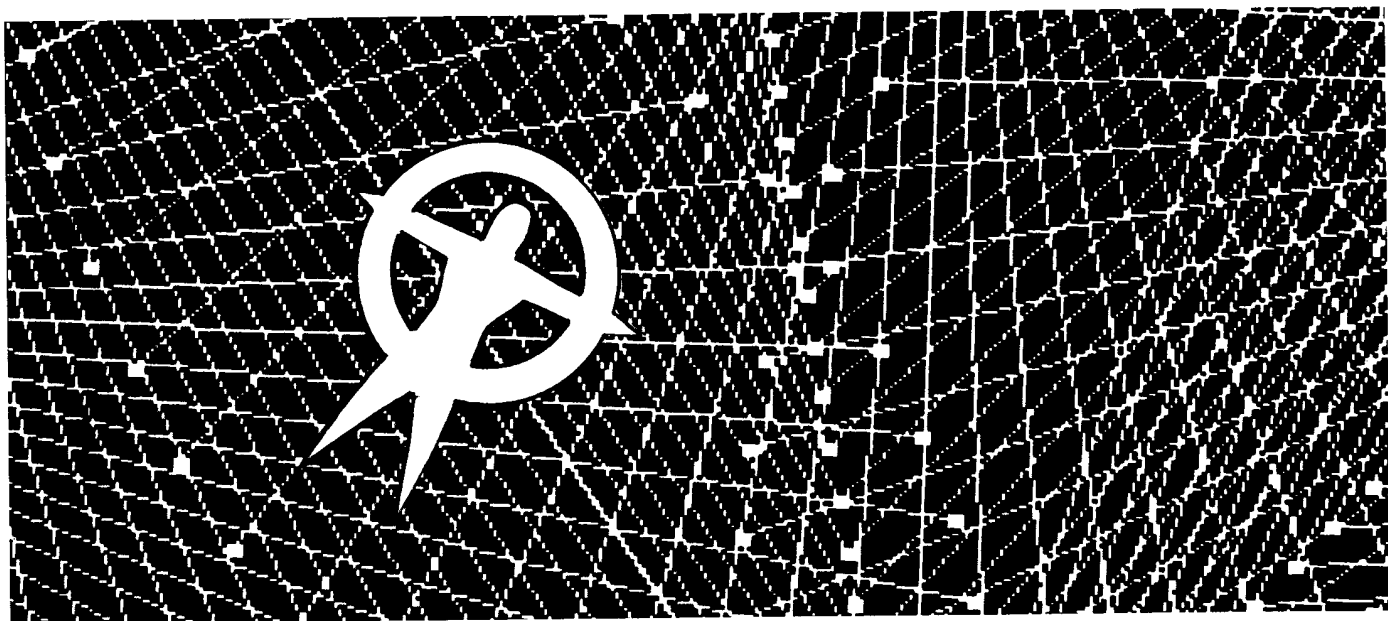
Hacker, software designer, computer net operator.

Quote

"Do you understand now that you have touched, seen, heard, smelled and tasted it? I knew you would."

Stereotypes

- Akashic Brotherhood – Their way worked in older times, but things change too fast today. People want more and want it sooner.
- Celestial Chorus – Didn't thoughts of gods and salvation die out hundreds of years ago?
- Cult of Ecstasy – They're a lot of fun to talk with, but ultimately they're one-dimensional.
- Dreamspeakers – If they were better organized they could actually recombine the sciences with humanistic thought under the Gaia concept.
- Euthanatos – These mages are really frightening. People can learn without dying.
- Hollow Ones – They're okay, really. If the world isn't good enough for them now, we can create virtual worlds that will set even them on fire.
- Order of Hermes – They have the right idea, but they need to remove the mysticism from all their charts and numbers and find the science that's waiting for them.
- Sons of Ether – They're certainly more fun than true scientists, but their research is an aside more than a true pursuit. We have left some things for them to find, though, because we're curious what they can do with the ideas.
- Verbena – No wonder witches have been burned for centuries. Such rituals have no place in the modern world.





Sascha dropped and rolled as the wall above her head sprouted clawed arms and lashed out at her. How much longer? she thought desperately. Can I hold out until he accumulates too much Paradox?

She looked around frantically. There. Right there. A moment's concentration, just a little thought. She reached out to grab reality, and twisted. Suddenly, the concrete under the Nephandus' feet cracked last winter, and just as suddenly, a passerby had discarded a lit cigarette a few minutes ago under a bush that just now had become dead since September.

Surprised by the unexpected change in the ground underfoot, the Nephandus mage tripped and fell into the bush just as a stray spark from the cigarette ignited its tinder-dry branches. Sascha dared hope, but almost immediately the flame vanished, the cigarette doused by a passing dog relieving itself a few moments back.

Coincidental! Sascha realized through her disappointment, and a slender thread of hope grew anew in her breast. He is worried about Paradox! A plan blossomed in her mind, and she almost laughed out loud. I have him!

Before the Nephandus mage could launch a counter-assault, she began to shape the coincidence that would end him.

Chapter 4

MAGICK

"Magic is simply the art of getting results."

*– "Michael," quoted by Margot Adler in
Drawing Down The Moon*

To be a mage is to be awakened to know the true nature of reality. To be a mage is to wield Magick. Magick is "the process of causing reality to conform with will." It is the actualization of desire. Through magick, all things are possible, and whatever the mage desires to be, shall be. This is far different from magic (without the "k"), which is nothing more than stage tricks of misdirection and illusion performed by entertainers. True magick involves an enlightened understanding of reality and an iron willpower to bend that reality.

The appearance of magick often seems quite innocuous to those who have been fed youthful stories of fantasy and fable. The bedazzling displays of power described in legend are well within the capabilities of mages, but they often conceal their magick behind a veil of the everyday. If a mage suddenly desires to transport himself across town and just as suddenly an open taxi rolls up to the nearby curb, then the mage has fulfilled his desire to get across town by causing the taxi to arrive. An unenlightened observer might call the taxi's arrival luck, but mages create their own luck. Certainly, the unenlightened would not say that magick has taken place – after all, where were the pyrotechnics? Yet the mage's desire to transport himself across town has now been satisfied; he has indeed performed magick.

In the very same context, a mage who desires to wipe a city off the globe in a thermonuclear explosion might also actualize his desire and create such an effect. Sometimes true magick makes the fables seem tame.

The Metaphysic of Magic

Using words to describe magic is like using a screwdriver to cut roast beef.

– Tom Robbins

In the real world, humanity predominantly takes an object-oriented view of reality. Through science, we seek a better understanding of nature and the laws of our universe. The precept of science is that by observing nature, we can increase our understanding of how it functions. It presupposes that there is a single, definite, objective description of reality that is out there waiting to be discovered and understood.

In *GURPS Mage: The Ascension*, this system is completely inverted. Most mages believe in a subject-oriented metaphysics that they call the Metaphysic of Magick. They believe that observation of nature does not build understanding and belief; rather, one's own thoughts and beliefs build nature. In other words, they believe that the universe is not founded on set cause-and-effect relationships waiting to be discovered and identified by science, but rather that the minds of those inside reality define the nature of the universe based on their beliefs. If people believe that the Earth is a sphere, or that DNA encodes life, or in Newton's law of gravity, then those beliefs define cause to operate that way.

This Metaphysic of Magick is instrumental to a mage's ability to shape reality to his desires. A mage's level in Arete essentially designates how well he has absorbed this metaphysic into his thought processes. Before a mage can perform magick, he must realize that simply by believing in a reality that behaves a certain way, the mage is free to work within the confines of his imagined reality. He can enact any phenomenon that the laws of his own reality allow. The mage must have in mind what he wants reality to be; otherwise he is confined to working within reality as it is.

"Sleepers"

Every human being possesses an Avatar – a fragment of the near-mythical Pure Ones. Those who have realized that they possess an Avatar, and the power that it provides, are said to have been Awakened. Mages with their power over reality are the result of Awakening.

The vast majority of humanity are not aware of their Avatars. Mages use the terms "Sleepers" (or, less frequently, "mundanes") to refer to humans whose Avatars are un-Awakened.



CWTTZ
www

The Tapestry

Since time immemorial, mages have used the metaphor of the Tapestry to describe reality. They often speak of the Tapestry as the "true" fabric of the world. Such a definition of reality supersedes the division between the spiritual and physical. Dozens of metaphors of this type are used or have been spawned by mages. People think of sorcerers as "weavers" of spells. Power travels the globe along "ley lines." The effects of the Life, Matter and Forces Spheres all result from Quintessence channeled through a "pattern." These metaphors are accepted as fact by mages. The Tapestry is a theory as basic to magick as evolution is to science. The physical world owes its very shape and nature to the Tapestry.

Magic vs. Magick

There are several important differences between standard *GURPS* magic (here called "Mortal Thaumaturgy") and the magick of the Mages of the World of Darkness. Chief among them is scope and power. The Magi are able to literally reshape reality to suit their whims, because they understand the underlying nature of that reality. Mortal thaumaturges work their magics within the framework of the reality they know. Magi rely on techniques that are essentially improvisational, while thaumaturges follow rigorous formulae called "spells." A Mage can create virtually any effect that he can imagine and is within his understanding of reality. Lesser mages are limited to those specific effects learned through spells. Magi spend *no fatigue* – and sometimes just a little Quintessence – to work magick. Mortal thaumaturges can wear themselves ragged casting, even in a Very High Mana zone.

Lesser mages have many limits; true mages have few, and these pass with time and knowledge. In short, magic is to magick as handguns are to tactical nuclear weapons.

Mixing Magic and Magick

There are no inherent problems with mixing Mortal Thaumaturgy and Magick; each can (and does) coexist with the other in the World of Darkness. Each has its place and its users, and the two rarely come into conflict. When they do, the true mage is almost always the winner.



For instance, if a mage believed in a reality that was exactly like normal, static reality, his own thoughts would only reinforce that reality. If he wanted to control electrical energy, he would have to work within the laws of physics to manipulate the electrical energy. This would mean buying a generator, using conductive cables to route the energy, and getting transformers, motors, etc.

If, however, the mage believed in an alternate view of reality, his own ideas of how electrical energy can be controlled, then he could control electricity under the laws of the reality in which he believes. If he believed that the human mind alone can generate and control electricity, then perhaps he could use his mind to do just that. To the general populace, an individual who controls electricity with his thoughts is miraculously altering the laws of reality, but to the mage, the feat is well within the scope of his reality.

The pursuit of magickal knowledge therefore is the pursuit of alternate viewpoints of reality. It involves finding and studying beliefs to pursue a reality that allows the mage to do more. This is no easy task. Mages have been pursuing such bodies of knowledge since the dawn of human civilization. Simply saying that the human mind should be able to control electricity is insufficient. The mage must answer the hows and whys that explain his interpretation of reality. By what method can the human mind control the path of electrons?

Belief and Paradigms

Power is the wise application of will which enlists fatality itself in the accomplishment of the desires of the sage.

– Eliphas Lévi, *Transcendental Magic*

The underlying premise of magick is that the human soul, or Avatar, lets a person use his force of will to alter reality. Because everyone has some fragment of Avatar, everyone, even Sleepers (mortals who remain ignorant of magick), may shape reality to some degree. While mages affect reality through conscious and focused effort, mundane humans affect it only through unconscious belief. An individual's belief, the set of "truths" by which he explains existence, is known as his "paradigm." The unconscious consensus of belief among all humans (the "facts" about which humanity as a whole agrees) is the paradigm that creates reality – the world as we understand it.

Mages, however, live outside this static world-view, because their willpower allows them to impose their own paradigms upon the universe from time to time. Thus is magick permitted in static reality.

Static Reality

"I like reality. It tastes of bread."

– Jean Anouilh

If reality is governed by the Metaphysic of Magick, one might ask: how do the laws of nature on Earth remain so stable? If each individual's beliefs shape reality around him, nothing would be constant on Earth.

However, Earth's reality is based on the beliefs of its population. It's a sort of average reality based on everyone's collective beliefs. Each idea, substance, or other aspect of reality (dogs, the color red, the Social Contract, fear) can be thought of as an individual grain of sand; together, these various grains of sand compose a vast beach. By accepting a given world-view as absolute truth, people are scooping up a handful of sand and thereby ignoring the rest of the beach. Grains may occasionally slip through humanity's collective fingers, and

The Structure of Reality

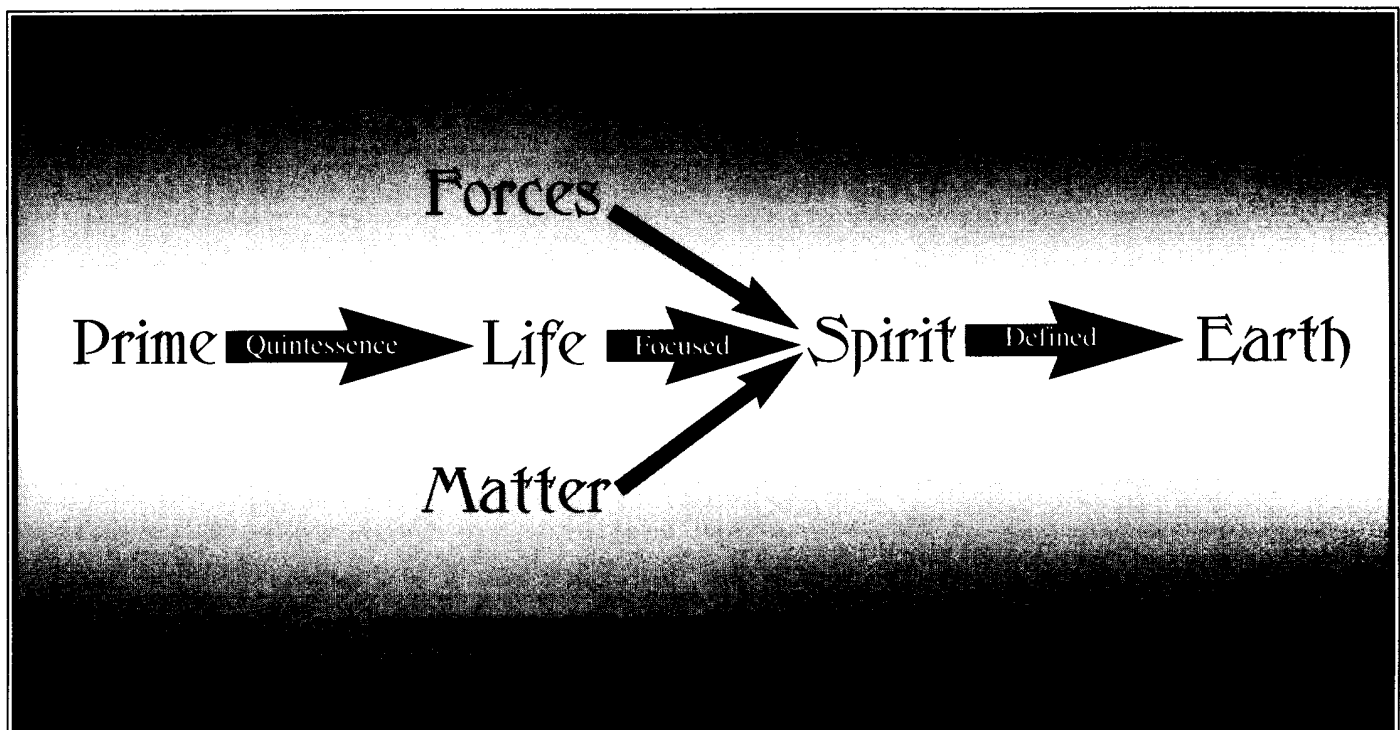
Under the Metaphysic of Magick, the structure of reality is defined by belief, and as long as there are different beliefs, there will never be one true structure of reality. However, just as different languages nonetheless possess some similarities, there have emerged some "absolutes" concerning the current structure of reality. Some mages, especially the Dream-speakers, argue that such structures derive not from the similarities of belief among Traditions, but rather from the sleeping mind of Gaia herself. Regardless, the vast majority of mages hold certain aspects of reality to be constants, and their Sphere theories are based upon these principles.

Each Tradition harbors a belief in four phases of reality: Quintessence, Pattern, Spirit, and Physical. The interaction between these four phases of reality is shown in the diagram below.

Quintessence

Quintessence is the primary component of reality. Most mages believe that there is a great cosmic pool of raw Quintessence that has not been incorporated into anything, but rather floats free. Any time a new phenomenon is created in reality, Quintessence is drawn from this pool to create it. Also, living things maintain a link to this pool, as all Patterns of life are continually fed a trickle of Quintessence.

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The Structure of Reality (Continued)

Pattern

If Quintessence is the raw substance of all reality, then Pattern is the means by which Quintessence is subdivided into the various forms of reality. All types of energy, life and matter have Patterns, which shape them and give them their unique properties. How various Patterns interact and distort one another translates into the known properties of reality. A Pattern of gravity interacting with a Pattern of a raindrop translates into a perception of a falling raindrop. Patterns are divided into three Spheres for study based on the differences between the Patterns of Life, Forces (energy) and Matter (the inanimate).

Spirit

When Quintessence is fueling or stored in Patterns, an image of reality called the spirit world is created. This level of reality remains intangible to humanity at large. Mages, however, see the spirit world as a truer version of reality than the physical world. The spirit world may be called the Umbra (see Chapter 6), they argue, but in reality the physical world is but the shadow of the spirit.

Physical

Finally, the physical completes the spectrum. Physical reality is the normal world perceived by all.

Through the Metaphysic of Magick, mages believe that the conceived reality (Quintessence) ultimately creates the perceived reality (physical). The Technocracy feeds society the opposite view. The Technocracy has ensured that perceived reality defines conceived reality, and because the perceptions of modern science now take place in highly specialized laboratories, it is relatively simple for Technomancers to control "perceived reality."

over time people may scoop up additional quantities, but this give-and-take is gradual enough that humanity's overall picture of the universe is never questioned. Because this reality is powered by the sentience of billions of people, it maintains a set structure of reality on Earth.

Humanity's reality, its particular handful of sand, is the mystic and mundane Gothic-Punk world described in Chapter 1 – a world created largely by the Technomancers. Mages call this average reality "static" reality. Static reality ensures that gravity always pulls down and one plus one always equals two.

Well, almost always; mages can break from the confines of static reality and impose their own beliefs upon the world. Even for mages, however, breaking the rules of reality is neither easy nor inconsequential.

Therefore, many Traditions and Chantries make it their primary goal to implement their ideologies among humanity. The mages hope that their ideas will gain enough acceptance among the normal population to become part of static reality. Mages across the world and throughout history have long engaged in ideological struggles to gain a power base among Earth's population and thereby control humanity's beliefs.

No group of mages has ever succeeded as thoroughly as the Technocracy has in the modern world. Now, the vast majority of humanity does not understand or appreciate the Metaphysic of Magick. The Earth's population has been duped by the Technocracy into believing its brand of metaphysics. Under the guise of "scientific discovery," the Technocracy determines which ideas are released into and accepted by the world.



Quintessence

The combined essences of heaven and earth became the yin and yang, the concentrated essences of the yin and the yang became the four seasons, and the scattered essences of the four seasons became the myriad creatures of the world.

– Huai-nan Tzu, *Huai-nan Tzu*, 3:1a

The essence of magick is the spiritual energy mages call *Quintessence*. Quintessence ebbs and flows through and about every conscious creature in existence – especially mages. It is drawn from the origin of reality, Prime. Any act of creativity or imagination adds a sliver of Quintessence to the world. Creative and self-possessed individuals, such as most mages, virtually radiate Quintessence.

Quintessence is an indefinable thing. It is neither energy nor matter, and while mages conceive of it as being found in variable quantities called "Tass," it is also commonly perceived as an indivisible whole. Mages believe Quintessence to be the basic building block of all reality; everything in reality – matter, energy and the ethereal – is made from Quintessence. Mages battle over Quintessence because it is the tool with which reality is forged.

Nodes

Power when wielded by abnormal energy is the most serious of facts.

– Henry James, *The Education of Henry James*

Just as the sun has its sunspots, places where the magnetic field creates a dense knot of unseen pattern affecting the blaze of gases around it, so too does Earth have its places where the raw essence of Prime is thickest. Menhirs. Burial mounds. Occult libraries. Churches. Temples. Sacred caves. Haunted houses. All such places on Earth are known as Nodes.

In terms of the Tapestry, Nodes are where ley lines intersect and knot. Sometimes they manifest as direct connections to the spirit world, through which Quintessence may “leak” into the physical world. Quintessence often collects at the Nodes as it travels along the lines. As the primary repositories of what little free Quintessence still exists, many Nodes suffer raids by mages in pursuit of vulgar might.

Nodes are important to many other beings as well. The Garou, the werewolves, center their culture around the Nodes they call caerns, and travel about the Umbra using “moon bridges” that connect the caerns together. Stealing from a werewolf caern is very dangerous, but highly profitable.

Nodes are important strategic locations. Extradimensional beings can most easily reach Earth through Portals connected to Nodes. Technomancers naturally use this fact as an excuse for shutting down the Nodes of others, stealing their Quintessence in the process. In so doing the Technomancers are able to close an entry point for potentially hostile beings, strike against their mage enemies, and collect large amounts of Quintessence – all at the same time.

Earth is the only known source of Quintessence (and thus all mages must eventually return to Earth, no matter how far afield they may stray). Because Quintessence is such a vital commodity, most battles in the Ascension War are fought for control of Nodes.

A mage need not plunder a Node of its Quintessence in order to make use of it. Simply casting magick while on a Node gives a bonus to the magickal effect roll; the bonus varies depending on how powerful the Node is.

Tass

Eye of newt, and toe of frog,

Wool of bat, and tongue of dog.

– Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, IV, i, 14

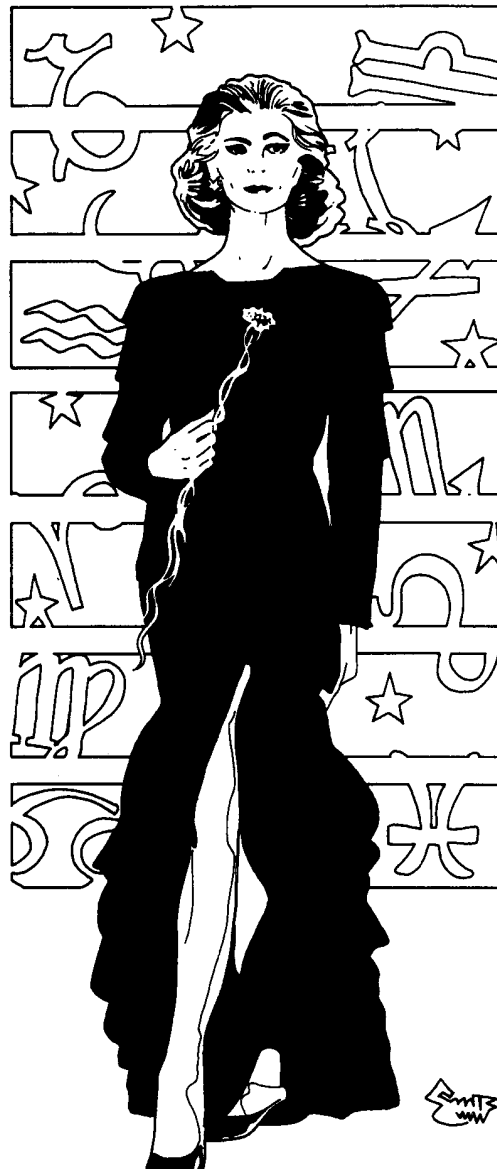
Quintessence sometimes becomes trapped in physical objects, either because a mage stores it there or because of natural mystical processes. It is very common for Quintessence to collect at Nodes and become embodied in the Patterns of physical objects. Mages refer to physical objects that store free Quintessence as *Tass*. Tass may take almost any form: water from a sacred spring, crystals dug from a mystic cave, leaves from an ancient tree, mushrooms grown over a mage’s grave. It can also accumulate inside the bodies of mystic and supernatural creatures – werewolf tails, demon horns, vampire blood and the like.

At one time collections of Tass were more common, but they have slowly disappeared from the world. In the modern age of reason, Tass can be very difficult to locate and dangerous to seize. Expeditions to the few remaining sites of Tass are common pursuits of young mages.

Mind

Some mages claim that sentience, or soul, is the single thing that can exist without having Quintessence fed through a Pattern. Ultimately, these mages argue, Quintessence is a conception of the mind, and to say that sentience did not exist before Quintessence is to build a paradoxically circular thought. Others argue that the mind conceiving of its own building block does not violate the Metaphysic of Magick.

Mages who support the independence of the mind still agree that the biological body is made of Quintessence, but the intellect is not. Along these lines, some mages perceive time and space as likewise distinct from quintessential reality. Many mages argue that time and space are nothing but concepts created by the mind to interpret reality. The debate over the origin of the mind continues in the meeting places of mages, primarily between Masters of Mind and those of Prime.



Quintessence and Mana

While the Garou believe that mages use "Gaia mana," (see p. WTA159) this is actually not the case. True Mages do not spend fatigue and/or mana to create their magickal effects. Instead, they use Quintessence to bolster their magick; even so, Quintessence is not a "fuel" in the sense that mana is for lesser magics.

What is the difference between Quintessence and mana? It's simple, actually. Quintessence is the fundamental stuff of reality. When employed by mages, it adds power to efforts to undo and then rework the fabric of reality. Because it shatters the *current* laws of reality, its use always risks Paradox.

Mana is a kind of watered-down and filtered Quintessence. Spirits of one kind or another (the Celestine Gaia, the Wyrms, caern spirits) absorb or channel Quintessence through themselves and then "leak" mana into the physical world. Mana retains many of the same qualities that gives Quintessence its power, but it has been diluted and limited by its passage through the spirit. The only effects that can be created with it are dramatically weaker than true magick – but these effects are available to Sleepers, Vampires and werewolves. Both dynamic and static magickal effects are possible using mana, but its users are not subject to Paradox because the spirit "leaking" the mana into the world acts as a "surge suppressor" that intercepts and diverts the Paradox energies away from them.

Caerns and Tass

This is not to say that pure Quintessence does not also leak through at caerns; in fact, quite the opposite. Caerns are always located at places where great quantities of Quintessence are present, either naturally or because of the Garou's process of caern-building. This Quintessence eventually invests itself in physical objects – up to and including the Garou themselves! – that remain in the vicinity of the caern for any length of time, creating the form of Quintessence known as "Tass" (see p. 79).

Mages who have at least 1 level in Prime can use Tass points in the same ways as Quintessence. All of the Tass must be used in a single turn; the object is completely "burned up" when it is used. Tass can power huge magickal effects, enchant Talismans and recharge a character's Quintessence. The advantage of Tass is that it allows a mage to have huge quantities of Quintessence on hand; the drawback is that it can be easily stolen.

Finally, the word "Tass" has also become a common term among modern mages to describe a general quantity of free Quintessence. One Tass corresponds to one point of Quintessence.

Creating Magickal Effects

In the darkness of future past

The Magician longs to see.

One chants out between two worlds,

"Fire, walk with me."

– David Lynch, *Twin Peaks*

Armed with the understanding that whatever the mage believes is reality becomes reality, and versed in the use of the Spheres, the mage should be able to accomplish any magickal effect. Unfortunately, it is not so easy. When a mage's personal beliefs conflict with the beliefs of billions of sentients, the mage inevitably faces appalling limitations when he attempts magick.

The contrast between the mage's reality and others' reality is the key conflict that must be overcome to create a magickal effect. This conflict has divided magick into two forms: static or "coincidental" magick, and dynamic or "vulgar" magick. Both types of magick are capable of the exact same effects, but one seeks to work within the confines of static reality, while the other ignores reality altogether.

These two forms of magick are dramatically different from standard *GURPS* magic. The mechanics for both types, though, are very similar and relatively simple to use.



Static, or “Coincidental,” Magick

Reality is a great way to fake things.

— Anonymous

Reality as we know it is based on the collective beliefs of every sentient creature in the Gaia Realm. The pervasiveness of these beliefs is a formidable barrier to mages. For example, a mage would find it very difficult to become a 10-story-tall giant and stomp through downtown Manhattan. Reality holds that such a magickal feat is impossible, a paradox, even though the mage might believe otherwise.

Mages, being “smarter than the average bear” types of folks, tend to circumvent this restriction rather than face it head-on. Whenever possible, most mages allow the effects of their magick to conform to what is commonly accepted as possible. Thus, magickal effects often take the form of elaborate coincidences – odd, unlikely, maybe even extraordinary, but not impossible, events.

For example, a mage’s enemy flees down a subway tunnel. The mage desires the man dead and seeks to accomplish this by smiting the man with a stroke of lightning. The mage is a Master of the Sphere of Forces, so he could simply create lightning, send it crackling from his fingertips, arc it through the air, and ground it to earth through the fleeing man, killing him. However, the laws of reality hold that such a feat is not possible, and therefore the clever mage alters how this magickal effect appears in physical reality.

No bolt of lightning sizzles down the tunnel; the fleeing man seems to “accidentally” step upon the high-voltage subway tracks and is electrocuted. The witnesses standing around the mage on the subway platform view the event as a terrible accident. The mage, however, knows that his electrical attack was successful and that only the appearance of the magick was altered. Of course, another mage witnessing the scene will also know what has actually transpired.

Mages often refer to static magick as “coincidental” magick because its effects so often appear to be happenstance, luck or accidents. Reality will go to amazing lengths to veil the most powerful and dramatic magickal effects in the guise of the believable. Mage characters find this effect to be very beneficial, allowing the mage to preserve the secrecy of his magickal art from humanity at large.

As a general guideline, magick is static if Sleepers would in the end accept what they saw as believable. A man would be baffled by a mage who flipped a coin 100 times and had it come up heads every time, and he might claim that the mage was using a specially weighted coin, but he would not accuse the mage of altering reality to make this happen.

Dynamic, or “Vulgar,” Magick

Chaos is King, and Magic is loose in the world!

— Robert A. Heinlein, *Waldo*

Forget the banal reality of the unenlightened masses. The mage knows the road to true power. Why not flex his mystic might for all to see?



The Oracles

Once Mastery of a Sphere has been obtained, most mages leave Earth to pursue a place among the Oracles. The Oracles are a select group of mages who dwell in the distant reaches of Earth's Umbra. There are nine Chantries (houses) of Oracles, one for each Sphere. A mage who has Mastered a Sphere will often seek a second apprenticeship among the Oracles of that Sphere in order to pursue further knowledge of that Sphere. The Oracles are purported to possess secrets beyond the ken of other mages, and unimaginable powers that come with such knowledge.

Joining the ranks of the Oracles is no easy task. The Oracles' nine Realms are located deep in the Umbra. If a prospective apprentice even finds the Oracles (by no means certain), he may be accepted into their ranks, made a Postulant and accepted on a probationary period, or rejected. It is rumored that the Oracles mark the Avatars of those whom they reject. Mages of the Traditions also rumor that the Oracles do not allow another into their ranks until an existing Oracle dies or Ascends.

Little is truly known about the Oracles. Occasionally, Oracles visit lesser mages to offer cryptic explanations of events or request services. More commonly, the Oracles send their Postulants to conduct such errands.

Patterns

A Pattern is the reality underlying any object or energy, a complex construction of Quintessence that defines its nature and behavior. Mages picture Patterns as webs of etheric material woven into distinct designs. Mages often speak figuratively of "weaving" or even "quilting" Patterns. Thus is derived the so-called "Tapestry" of reality (see sidebar, p. 76) and the "threads" that mages "fray."

Patterns are divided into three Spheres: the Patterns of Life, Forces (energy) and Matter (the inanimate). The working of magic based on these three Spheres is collectively called Pattern magick. Pattern magick allows a mage to control every aspect of the physical world. Mages who seek to master any type of Pattern magick must also study the Sphere of Prime, because the act of creating a new Pattern also requires some knowledge of and control over the flow of Quintessence.

Occasionally out of pride, more often out of necessity, the mage cannot bother with the limitations imposed by reality. He must rip reality apart and reform it to his whim. When a mage performs magickal effects that cannot possibly be explained logically, he is performing dynamic magick. Mages often refer to this as "vulgar" magick because its appearance is an obscenity to normal reality.

A mage who uses dynamic magick may evoke awesome, breathtaking effects, but risks dire repercussions. Each time the mage performs dynamic magick, he creates a cancer on the skin of reality, and reality will deploy its defenses – in the form of Paradox (see p. 133).



Foci

The most important magical instruments are the wand, the sword, the lamp, the chalice, the altar and the tripod.

– Eliphas Lévi, Transcendental Magic

Foci are the items used by Tradition mages to facilitate the use of magick. All Traditions require the use of certain foci and do not even teach their magick without incorporating the items. The benefit is tremendous – what used to take a mage a decade to learn can now be learned in much less time because the magick inherent in a focus allows a mage to tap magick otherwise beyond him.

As a mage becomes increasingly skilled, he is able to dispense with the use of certain foci. Until that time, however, a focus is necessary if the mage is to use the Sphere to which the focus is connected. For example, an Akashic Brother must be purified (i.e., have just cleansed his body) in order to use Spirit magick.

One focus may be dispensed with for every level of Arete the mage possesses over the first. At Arete 1 a mage is Awakened and gains the ability to use magick. At Arete 2, the mage may choose one Sphere that he may use without the benefit of a focus. The aforementioned Akashic Brother might suddenly realize how he can use the Spirit Sphere without first having to purify his body.

A physical focus may still be necessary for the mage, though, if more than one Sphere is tied to it. For example, a member of the Sons of Ether needs an abacus in order to perform Correspondence or Entropy magick. At Arete 2, the Son may discard the abacus for the purposes of working with the Entropy Sphere, but he still needs it for Correspondence. Later, when the Son gains another level of Arete, he may dispense with the abacus for Correspondence magick as well. At that point, the mage need no longer carry around an abacus when he thinks he'll need to tap one of those Spheres.

The Process of Magick

Realities alone constitute the proportions of the ideal, and the Magus admits nothing as certain in the domain of ideas save that which is demonstrated by realization.

— Eliphas Lévi, *Transcendental Magic*

Magick follows the steps below. The chart on p. 77 gives a visual interpretation of the metaphysical process of magick. What follows is a detailed account.

Description/Conception

The player controlling the mage character (or the GM if the character creating the magick effect is an NPC) must explain the magickal effect the character seeks to create. The description must be specific to the situation at hand and specific to the exact effect the mage desires. For example, it is better to describe a magick effect as “I’ll reweave the man’s Life Pattern to stop his heart attack,” than “I’ll save his life.” The player must explain what Sphere knowledge his character is using and the nature of the magickal effect – whether it is dynamic or static.

Once the magickal effect is determined, the player must also describe how the effect will appear in physical reality if the effect is a coincidental one. The player must devise a means by which the same effect can result through a different appearance. The description can only involve “realistic” events, and must be at least remotely believable. The events can be highly unlikely, but as long as they are conceivably possible, the character can attempt the effect as static magick. To describe his character’s magickal effect, the player will need to call on his creativity. The more plausible his explanation, the better the story will flow.

Note that the player does not have to describe the magick’s “normal” appearance if the mage employs dynamic magick. Vulgar magick is not bound by the laws of reality. Dynamic magick does not have a duplicity of appearance; it appears in its true form.

If the spell has a target, the player should decide if the spell affects its victim directly (for instance squeezing a carotid artery to put him to sleep) or indirectly (creating a gas that puts the victim to sleep). This will determine if the target can resist the effect, as explained below.

Finally, the character should decide if the spell’s effects are instantaneous (a ball of flame that burns its victim and then disappears) or sustained (causing a target’s arm to wither). Note further that the mage must somehow be able to sense his target, usually visually.

Scope of Power

The GM must decide whether the player is using the proper Spheres (a character with no levels in Forces cannot control a magnetic field) and whether the character’s levels in those Spheres are sufficient to allow the character to produce the effect (a character with only one level in the Time Sphere does not yet understand how to travel into the future). See pp. 96-127 for a complete description of the Spheres and the effects they allow.



Quintessence and Tass

A mage’s Quintessence will usually undergo large fluctuations during the course of play. This primal energy can be expended to make magick easier to cast, so Quintessence is required for the creation of most major magickal effects. It cannot be gained through experience, but must be gathered from the Nodes of the Tapestry.

The specifics of gaining or regaining Quintessence are covered in large part in the discussion of the Prime Sphere (see p. 119). Quintessence is a precious, and in its raw form, finite, commodity. As a result, Quintessence is a major source of conflict among mages.

Tass is an excellent reward for players, and can be the motivation for innumerable stories. Raids on werewolf caerns are the stuff of legend among some Traditions, and mages who steal Tass from Technomancers gain great prestige in addition to the power of the Tass. Recovery of Tass is perhaps the most common and easiest Mage adventure to run.

Apprenticeship

The process of becoming a mage is never easy. Successfully mastering the Spheres requires great determination, stamina and ambition. It is a dangerous undertaking, and survival is far from certain.

A mage is set on the path of enlightenment by a Mentor. After years of observation and contemplation, the Mentor decides how to Awaken the Sleeper's Avatar – whether through direct intervention on the mage's part or through subtle manipulation.

An apprentice rarely remains with his first Mentor forever, even though he may have been associated with the mage for years. Many tutors are required to give the developing mage the perspective and breadth he needs. Without diversity, the apprentice would only become an imitation of the master, and lose his own developing identity.

Any human can potentially become a mage. All Sleepers have at least a small Avatar within them, but few have the will, sense of self, or intelligence to be Awakened. Strong-willed or brilliant Sleepers often work coincidental magick unknowingly, making things happen for their own benefit.

A mage who sees a worthy Sleeper and desires to recruit him typically approaches him obliquely at first, learning more about his character, discipline and disposition. The mage may even begin quietly training the subject through exercises like meditation before revealing his true nature.

Once a recruit has become aware of the existence of magick, he is called an initiate. Each Tradition has a different set of procedures and policies for training initiates. The Dreamspeakers, for instance, often approach their apprentices through dreams, and may even train them in their sleep. Certain mages of this Tradition have never met their Mentors in person.

Although there are no mandatory requirements for training an apprentice, most Chantries have rules concerning apprenticeships written into their covenants. Most covenants insist that a mage be a Master of one Sphere and an Adept of two others before taking the title of Mentor (one who trains an apprentice and watches over him in the years to come). Mentors may only train apprentices through methods appropriate to their own Traditions. It is rumored that some mages who have left behind the trappings of their Traditions have taken to training Orphans – Sleepers who have a penchant and skill for magick without the need for the props of the Traditions.

Continued on next page . . .

If the character is performing static magick, the GM must first decide if the events the player described are possible within the bounds of reality.

For example, if the player describes his character becoming 10 stories tall, the GM must rule that such a feat is simply not possible within static reality. No possible circumstances can explain the appearance of a 30-yard-tall human. The player must rethink his magickal effect while his character similarly ponders.

Most often, the player has confused the desired magickal effect with the magick's appearance. The player should stop and think: what specifically did the character want to accomplish by becoming 30 yards tall, and is it possible for the effect to manifest in some other way? If not, the character can attempt the feat as dynamic magick.

Difficulty and Modifiers

If the effects the player describes are possible and within the character's ability, then the GM must determine how difficult they are to create. The character's base roll for the effect is equal to the *lowest* skill level he has in the Sphere or Spheres he will be employing. For conjunctural magick, every Sphere beyond the first used in the effect gives a penalty of -1 to skill. *Example:* Siona Stormsdaughter has Forces-14 (4), Matter-13 (1) and Time-13 (2). She attempts to create an effect that requires all three of these Spheres. Her base roll will be 13 (the lowest skill level of the three); because she is using three Spheres, she has a penalty of -2, so her final effective skill for this effect is 11.

However, a number of factors can raise or lower the mage's effective skill. For instance, spending 1 point of Quintessence increases skill by +2. By doing so, the mage uses his own store of quintessential reality to mold reality to his whim. The maximum amount of Quintessence that can be used in this fashion equals the mage's level in the Avatar advantage. *Example:* Siona is not satisfied with her effective skill. Since she also possesses Avatar 2, she chooses to spend 2 points of Quintessence on the effect. This gives her a +4 to her effective skill, raising it to 15.

Casting time is normally 1 second, but mages who take additional time working an effect may also improve their effective skills. If the mage chooses to double his casting time, he gains a +1 to his skill (+1 is the maximum bonus from this procedure). *Example:* Siona's not in a hurry. She takes an extra second, raising her effective skill to 16.

On the other hand, trying to create an effect quickly when the character would normally have to spend a lot of time with a focus (i.e., a Virtual Adept having to program his laptop before his opponent can shoot at him) imposes a -1 (or more, at the GM's option) penalty to skill. The mage may also try to evoke the effect *instantaneously*, at a penalty of -3 or more (GM's call, depending on the usual casting time for the effect).

Casting magick while on a Node gives a skill bonus equal to the level of the Node (see p. 46). Also, possessing some item that was once part of a target or meant a lot to him (i.e., toenail clippings, a favorite toy, etc.) can give a +1 to skill.

Trying to create a magickal effect while distracted can be especially hard. Some mages have trouble focusing on their view of reality while other events compete for their attention. In such a case, the Mage must make a Will roll with a penalty of -1 for every distraction. If he fails the roll, he must take a penalty to his magickal effect skill equal to the number of competing distractions, to maximum of -5. Mages with the Enhanced Time Sense advantage or successfully employing the "Multi-tasking" effect possible with Mind-1 (see p. 116) are not subject to distraction penalties except from overwhelming sensory

input. *Example:* Siona is so diligent about ensuring her success because she is casting while driving a car and listening to a radio for vital information. She fails her Will-2 roll, and must take a penalty of -2, for two separate distractions. Her effective skill is now 16-2, or 14.

Finally, Coincidental Magick is easier to perform than Dynamic. By virtue of working *with* reality than trying to shatter it, the mage gains a bonus to his effective skill equal to half his Arete level (round down). *Example:* Siona does not like to risk Paradox, so she casts her effect as Coincidental Magick. She has Arete 4; this gives her half of 4, or +2, to her roll, for a final effective skill of 16.

Roll the Dice

The test for a successful use of magick is called a magickal effect roll. The more points by which the player makes his roll, the more powerful the magickal effect will be, and the closer to the mage's desires the effect will come.

Determine Success

Manipulating reality is an all-or-nothing affair. If the character does not succeed in creating *exactly* what the player called for, then nothing happens. Additionally, rolling more points of success than were needed does not necessarily evoke more spectacular results. The accompanying charts shows how many points of success are needed to achieve certain results. Some spheres have special results on certain charts; these are given their own columns distinct from the "usual" results.

Range Chart

Success by	Range (General)	Range (Correspondence)
0-1	Touch	Line of Sight
2	One close target	Very familiar (home, office, etc.)
3	Immediate vicinity (all)	Familiar (local grocery, mall)
4	Immediate vicinity (selective), or line of sight (one target)	Known of (seen picture, heard described)
5+/Crit	Any or all within sensory range	Anywhere on Earth

Apprenticeship (Continued)

Finally, there is the actual initiation, in which the Awakening is ritualized. Again, the initiation is different for each Tradition, and sometimes varies from Chantry to Chantry. If the apprentice survives the experience, he is considered a full mage, and is now called a Disciple.

Mages seek out apprentices for a variety of reasons. Usually they want to recruit them before the Technomancers or other enemies can. Additionally, a mage can often learn much himself during an apprentice's years of study! Other, less scrupulous, mages may seek to profit from a talented student's innovations.

Conjunctional Magick

Often, a mage must possess knowledge in several different Spheres to manipulate reality as he desires. A magickal feat that requires knowledge of more than one Sphere is called "conjunctional magick." Conjunctional magick gives a mage much more diverse control over reality.

One of the reasons that mages use conjunctional magick is the advantages it provides. When creating an effect, the mage uses the best results possible from each Sphere he employs – the highest damage multiplier, the farthest range and so on – found in the effects charts on this page and the next.

However, there is a penalty to conjunctional magick as well. For each Sphere used in a magickal effect after the first, the mage suffers a penalty of -1 to his magickal effect roll. See the example on p. 84.



Key Elements of Coincidental Magick

While coincidental magick can create complex situations, the rules of common sense guide what is and is not possible using it. Players should soon get the hang of describing such effects, and will find that such description makes each Mage game quite thought-provoking. The description need only take into account the perceptions of Sleepers – all Awakened beings, including vampires, werewolves, ghouls and other supernatural creatures, will realize what really happened.

To help visualize the key elements, here is a simple example of the use of coincidental magick during a game. An Adept of Matter desires to transmute the bullets inside an enemy's gun into harmless oxygen. The player of the mage character explains that the gun was simply never loaded, or was loaded and later unloaded. So, while the mage has actually transmuted the bullets into oxygen, in physical reality it appears to a Sleeper that the gun is simply unloaded.

No Sleeper witnessing the event would ever think that something extraordinary happened. Witnesses would have no reason to believe that the gunman did not forget to load the gun. However, the bullets no longer exist, and the gunman will have fits trying to remember where he left them.

Unobserved Magick

Static reality does not confine magick when no Sleepers are present. If no mundanes are around to observe the magick, a mage can enforce his view of reality ("I can turn bullets into air") with little fear of Paradox. Thus, a mage could go off by himself to the middle of the Sahara Desert and be free of the barriers imposed by reality when he attempts to work magick. This explains why so many mages tend to be recluses.

Paradox spirits generally require the focus of their creators (humanity) in order to function, though they may appear when characters least expect them. Many mages believe they are better safe than sorry, and use coincidental magick on the off-chance that a Sleeper or a Paradox spirit is around.

Continued on next page . . .

Use the *General* range column for determining areas of effect. "Immediate vicinity" is up to 15 hexes, or line of sight, whichever is less.

Duration Chart

Points of Success	Duration
0-1	30 seconds
2-3	30 minutes
4-5	1 day
5-6	1 week
7+/Critical	Permanent

Damage is based on the mage's rank in the Sphere causing the harm. Take the number of points by which the roll is made (0 becomes 1 for this purpose), and multiply that by the damage multiplier for the Sphere to determine the number of dice of damage. The damage type is considered "generic" (equivalent to crushing) unless the magickal effect evoked has a nature that indicates a different damage type (fire, lightning). (See the guidelines in the sidebar on p. 89.)

Damage Chart

Sphere Rank	Entropy	Forces	Life	All Others
1	x0	x0	x0	x0
2	x0	x1	x3	x0
3	x0	x2	x3	x1
4	x4	x3	x3	x2
5	x5	x4	x3	x3

If the player fails his roll, or does not score enough points of success to achieve the results he wants, then nothing happens, although Quintessence points spent to raise effective skill are lost.

Paradox

The next step is to determine whether or not the mage has caught the attention of Paradox spirits.

If the mage attempted coincidental magick, Paradox is incurred only on a critical failure, gaining 1 Paradox point per level of the highest Sphere involved.

If the mage attempted vulgar magick without a Sleeper observing him, he automatically gains 1 Paradox on a successful roll. On a failure, the mage gains 1 point of Paradox for every point by which the roll failed.

If the mage attempted vulgar magick with a Sleeper observing him, he automatically gains 1 Paradox point per level of the highest Sphere employed if his magickal effect roll is successful. On a failure he gains 2 Paradox per point by which the roll fails.

With Vulgar Magick, a critical failure always indicates that the GM should roll for Paradox Backlash (see p. 134).

Counter Magick and Resistance

Once the character has successfully created his effect, other mages may use counter magick against it (see *Counter magick*, below). If the defending mage wins by enough points in the Quick Contest, he has cancelled the effect.

If a direct effect is used against a target, the victim can resist, as per p. B150; all direct effects are resisted with Will. Direct effects are those like *Control Mind* (p. 117), where the mage uses magick to affect his target directly. Indirect effects, such as lightning bolts, balls of flame, and the like, are those in which the magick operates by creating an object or energy, which itself then acts upon the target. Indirect effects generally cannot be resisted, although Toughness and DR have their usual effect (unless otherwise noted), and some effects may be Dodged (GM's call).



Only at this point, after all defenses have had a chance to function, does the GM tell the character the results of the effect: if it hurt the victim, if the character teleported, if the flow of time stopped, or whatever.

Countermagick

That which does not kill me had better be able to run away damn fast.

— Anonymous

Mages have a direct means of resisting magick. A mage who has at least one level in the Sphere used in the effect being created can see the magick coming, just as someone involved in a fight can see a punch coming. (For any conjunctural magick, the target mage must have *all* the Spheres used in the attack in order to detect it coming.) Just as someone in a fight can then dodge, the mage can then try to counter the effect.

The mage attempting to counter an effect rolls against the maximum Sphere skill allowed by his Arete (regardless of his actual Sphere skill levels). Mages with Arete 10 roll against a 20. Every point by which he makes this roll reduces the caster's points of success by one, thus diminishing the magick's effectiveness. If the roll succeeds by more points than the effect roll, the attacking magick is completely cancelled (as in a standard resistance roll). The attacking magick is also cancelled if the points of success on the countermagick reduce those of the attacking magick to parameters beneath those which the original mage intended.

Example: A vile Nephandus mage with Arete 6, Entropy-15 (5) and Life-15 (4) casts an Entropy/Life spell upon his foes, seeking to devolve them into hideous blobs of protoplasm. He decides to try to affect all targets in the immediate area (requiring that he make his roll by at least 3 points). His effective skill is 15. He rolls and gets 11, indicating that he indeed achieves his effect. However, one of his targets is a mage who also has levels in the Life and Entropy Spheres, as well as Arete 7 (which imposes a maximum level of 16 for Sphere skills). He detects the incoming effect and casts countermagick; he rolls 3d versus 16 and gets a 14, making the roll by 2 points. This reduces the Nephandus' points of success to 2. Two points of success do not allow the Nephandus to affect everyone in the vicinity (as he had intended); the magick thus fizzles and dies. If the Nephandus had tried to affect only the mage, and the countermagick had reduced the points of success to 2, the mage would still be affected by the magick; the damage of the effect, however, would be reduced to that inflicted by 2 points of success.

It is possible for several mages to attempt countermagick in concert (see below).

Key Elements of Coincidental Magick (Continued)

Repetition of Events

Because imagining static magick's appearance in physical reality can be a difficult creative process, players will inevitably be tempted to reuse the same coincidences for similar magickal effects over and over. For example, the player of an urban-dwelling Master of Forces might explain the explosions his mage creates as gas pipes corroding apart and a chance spark igniting the gas. If the player elects to use this coincidental appearance repeatedly to explain the Forces magick, the quality of the game will inevitably suffer.

Experienced players should be creative enough to avoid making their characters' magick become clichéd, but the GM may find it necessary to urge novice players out of a rut. The easiest way to do this is to impose a cumulative penalty to the magick roll when the player overuses a given coincidental effect. In terms of the game setting, it becomes increasingly odd that more and more gas mains are spontaneously exploding all over town, and therefore the "gas main explosion" explanation becomes increasingly less probable.

As long as the player can elaborate the description, weaving in more detail, the GM can relax this increasing penalty. For example, the player might explain that the exploding gas pipes were all recently replaced with a new type of piping material. This explains why the different pipes are all exploding around the same time even though they might be in different parts of the city. The GM, impressed with the player's creativity, forestalls the penalty until the next time the player uses the same reasoning.

Effect Modifiers

Below are the more common modifiers that may be applied to magickal effects rolls. As always, the GM may impose any additional modifiers that he feels are appropriate.

Activity	Skill Modifier
Spend Quintessence	+2/Quintessence
Double casting time	+1
At a Node	+Level of Node
Connection to target	+1
Coincidental Magick	+½ Character's Arete Level
Coniunctional Magick	-1 per Sphere after the first
Fast-Cast	-1 or more
Instantaneous	-3 or more
Distracted	-1/distraction

If at First You Don't Succeed

If a character fails a magickal effect, the forces of static reality have prevented the character from altering reality. The character has failed, and it will do no good for him to retry the same effect. He must settle for a different magickal effect attempted next turn, or wait until the circumstances have significantly changed before attempting the same effect again (e.g. many Mind effects can be reattempted on a subject after the subject has slept).



Magick

Acting in Concert

Together we shall achieve victory.

– Dwight D. Eisenhower

At the GM's discretion, multiple mages can cooperate to increase the effectiveness of a particular magickal effect. While some magickal effects do not lend themselves well to working in concert, many others, such as temporal manipulations or spatial warps, can easily benefit from the work of several mages.

All of the mages involved in the effect must have sufficient levels in the appropriate Sphere(s) necessary to perform the magick, and all of the mages must both work simultaneously and remain in communication with one another through some means. They must all be able to see one another, either through normal line of sight or through Correspondence. Each mage rolls for the effect as normal. The total number of points of success made on all of the rolls powers the magickal effect.

The downside to acting in concert is that any Paradox gained by one mage is gained by all others in the group. For example, if two mages are working together, and one gains 1 point of Paradox from the magick effect roll while the second gains 3 points, *each* mage gains a total of 4 points of Paradox.

Also, if any one mage makes a critical failure on the effect roll (even if the others all succeed), the magickal effect automatically critically fails.

Rotes

*Hush, and be mute,
Or else our spell is marr'd.*

– Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Rotes are magickal effects that have been documented by mages for centuries. Rotes are often used to provide apprentices and Sleepers with examples of what is possible with magick. They are descriptions of how magickal knowledge can be applied effectively and efficiently.

Most mages of the Traditions forget the rotes their Mentors teach them once they have graduated to a higher level of enlightenment. Among apprentices, though, rotes serve as a vocabulary of sorts – a way of referring to what has been accomplished in order to describe what can be achieved. Some tomes penned by mages have new rotes described within them, to provide concrete examples of how the knowledge presented can be applied.

The Technomancers are infamous for their systematic rotes, which they call “spells.” Technomancer apprentices are required to learn and employ these rotes; as a result the Technocracy works uniformly and has tighter control of its operations. On the other hand, Technomancers become so tied to their rotes that they find it difficult to create unique magickal effects of their own. In fact, it is rare for Technomancers to use any effects other than their “spells.”

Each Tradition has rotes of its own culled from its own legends and mythologies. Therefore, a rote has the mark of its parent Tradition. It's quite simple, however, to convert rotes from Tradition to Tradition; the fundamentals always remain the same. Therefore, when a Mentor teaches a Sphere to his apprentice he often uses rotes from the legends of the Tradition most associated with the Sphere (e.g., Euthanatos when Entropy is taught).

Learning Rotes

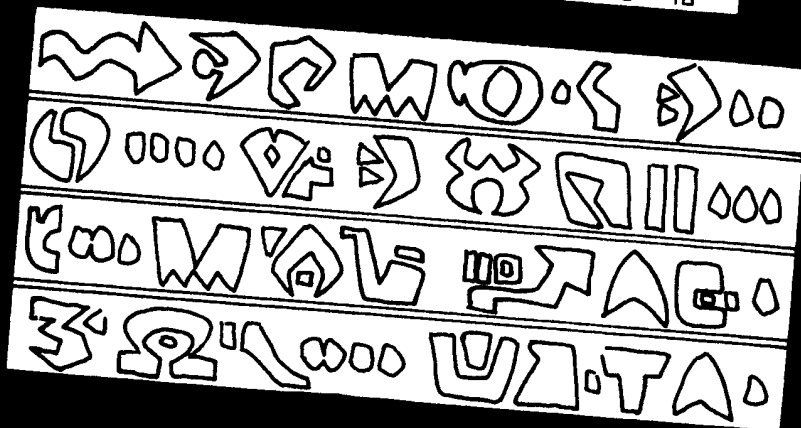
If the character chooses to retain the rotes he used to learn his Sphere(s), or wants to learn new ones from tomes or other mages, he may.

Program 1111

Mystronik Electrotome

7 Sphere: Entropy

Rote: 4b



Rotes are handled as *maneuvers*. A character's skill level in a rote defaults to the skill level of the Sphere it is from; if the rote is a conjunctural effect, it defaults to the lowest Sphere skill that applies, less any penalties for the additional Spheres. A rote will have no prerequisites except for the proper level(s) of the Sphere(s) it employs.

It is possible to become very adept at a rote, to the point that one can perform it at a skill level above the ceiling normally imposed by Arete! Arete restrictions do not affect rotes. Rotes can be improved according to the table below:

Sphere skill	0 points
Sphere skill+1	1 point
Sphere skill+2	2 points
Sphere skill+3	4 points

A rote may not be known at more than Default+3. When a Sphere skill goes up (either through the raising of the Arete ceiling, or through improvement of the skill itself), the rotes that default to it will increase as well.

Using Rotes

Rotes are handled exactly like "normal" magickal effects, except that the character rolls against his skill level in the rote rather than a Sphere skill level. All the modifiers to the mage's effective skill, as outlined on p. 84, apply to rotes except those that affect casting time; each rote always takes the same amount of time to cast. This will normally be 1 second, although certain Traditions – such as the Virtual Adepts – may require more time due to their foci. Unlike standard **GURPS** spells, high skill with a rote does not reduce its casting time.

Rotes may be cast both Coincidentally and Dynamically; the mage chooses at the time of casting the way he wants the effect to manifest. A rote does not require the same Coincidental effect every time it is cast.

Sample rotes are provided in the description of each Sphere.

Determining Effects

The GM – or the players – will frequently be called upon to determine exactly what results are produced by the magickal effect rolls. The tables on pp. 85-86 provide basic guidelines, but here are other rules of thumb that will help provide consistency.

In any description below where a quantity of change is given, note that such change can be positive or negative. It is just as possible to lower a suit of armor's DR as it is to make a silk shirt into a bullet-proof vest.

Making Effect Rolls: Treat making a roll exactly as 1 point of success. Especially difficult (or powerful) effects may have an initial penalty to the roll.

Advantages/Disadvantages: 1 point of success per 10 (or -10) character points' cost. Round to the next full 10 points (15 points becomes 20, -25 points becomes -30) when determining costs.

Attributes: A mage may alter his own attributes at 1 attribute point per point of success; another person or creature's attributes are changed at 1 point per 2 points of success. When creating living things with the Life sphere, attributes are created at 1 point per point.

Damage: Basic damage is 1d per point of success, with a multiplier from the Sphere(s) involved. Any damage type may be declared as long as the mage's knowledge allows for it, but in general, burning, impaling and cutting damage will be at -1 or even -2 on the die.

DR and PD: In any situation where a change in DR and/or PD is desired, 1 point of success gives 5 DR or 1 PD (but not both; the mage may choose how to use the points). PD has a maximum of 6, no matter how many points are rolled. Negative PD and DR are not possible.

Mass/Weight: This can vary depending on the Sphere, but in the absence of specific guidelines, use the following. For simply affecting a given mass, 0 points affects 1 lb., 1 point 10 lbs., 2 points 100 lbs. and so on, multiplying by 10 for each point. When *creating* matter, divide these quantities by 10. Remember that a mage cannot (usually) affect just part of a thing, but must roll enough points to affect *all* of it.

Temperature: Making the roll exactly allows 5 degrees Fahrenheit of change; each point of success doubles this.

Other effects not covered here must be extrapolated from these guidelines.

Magick in the Spirit World

The rules for magick use change when a mage leaves physical reality and enters the Umbra, as the enlightened often do. The properties of reality vary a great deal depending on where in the Tellurian the mage travels, and certainly the restrictions on magick change as well.

In the Near Umbra

In the Umbra, all things tend to be revealed in their truest form, and this is true of magickal effects as well. The forces of reality no longer need to veil the appearance of magick in coincidence. Thus freed from physical constraints, mages find magick easier to perform.

In terms of game mechanics, magick performed in the Near Umbra is treated as dynamic magick, with the following major exception: the mage gains Paradox energy based on the rules for static magick, not dynamic magick. This is true whenever the magick affects the Near Umbra or a target within it, regardless of whether the mage is spiritually present in the Umbra or is simply peering into it from the physical.

In the Deep Umbra

The laws of reality are completely annulled in the Deep Umbra. In such a place, a mage is free to explore the limits of his potential without interference, restriction or fear of Paradox.

In the Deep Umbra, a mage may do anything his Sphere ratings indicate he has the knowledge to do without the need for a skill roll. The Oracles of Forces have been spied using the Deep Umbra as a sort of testing range for explosions comparable to the mightiest nuclear blasts in human history.

The Realms

Once a mage leaves the spirit world of the Umbra to enter one of the Realms within it, he becomes subject to the laws of reality within that Realm. Each alternate Realm has a rating in each of the nine Spheres. These ratings delineate what is possible within the reality of the Realm; the Realm of Earth has a zero rating in each Sphere.

For example, the Forces Sphere rating of the Elemental Realm of Electricity is 3. This indicates that it is much easier to manipulate Forces within the static reality of this Realm than it is on Earth. A mage with a Forces level of up to 3 would not be hindered at all by the static reality of the electrical Realm when he performed Forces magick, nor would he incur Paradox, because such magick does not contradict the reality of the Elemental Realm.

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Talismans

The greater the importance and solemnity brought to bear on the execution and consecration of talismans . . . the more virtue they acquire . . .

— Eliphas Lévi, Transcendental Magic

A Talisman is a physical item instilled with magickal powers. Instilling magick into an item is a lengthy process informally referred to as enchantment. The act of enchantment places Quintessence into an item's Pattern, and also creates a flow of Quintessence through the item, similar to that which occurs in the Patterns of living creatures. When the stored Quintessence is depleted, the item runs out of fuel for its magickal effects. However, only when the flow of Quintessence through the Talisman is disrupted does it become a mundane item.

A Talisman must be tied to specific effects, whether vulgar or coincidental. Unlike the mage himself, who can enact any effect given a broad base of knowledge, Talismans are programmed with particular powers – rather than having a general Forces 2 power, for instance, a Talisman would have a specific Forces 2 effect instilled, such as the ability to reverse flows of electricity.

The advantage of Talismans is that they allow mages to utilize knowledge and powers that they may not possess personally but can employ with the help of the Talisman. Also, they are advantageous because the mage who uses one rolls against its Power, rather than his own Sphere skill(s), to utilize its abilities. This means that a mage who is backed into a corner can become very dangerous if he has a potent Talisman.

Talismans are rated by their Power. As with “standard” magic items (see p. B152), each magickal effect in a Talisman has a separate Power rating. (Unlike standard magic items, Talismans can have a Power below 15.) Some legendary devices, called Artifacts, have extraordinarily high ratings (in the 20's or even higher) and many different powers, but such Talismans are extremely rare. Specific examples of Talismans are provided on pp. 92-93.

The maximum amount of Quintessence that the Talisman may contain equals twice its lowest Power level.

For Talismans gained during character creation through the use of cash, each level point of Power costs \$1,000. Levels in Spheres cost \$2,000 for the first level, \$4,000 for the second, \$8,000 for the third, \$16,000 for the fourth, and \$32,000 for the fifth level. Sphere levels must be purchased separately for each effect. *Example:* Scott wants his character to have a Talisman that produces the effect of the *Ball of Abysmal Flame* rote (see p. 108), at Power 15. The rote requires Forces 5 (\$32,000) and Prime 2 (\$4,000), for \$36,000. A Power of 15 is another \$15,000, for a total cost of \$51,000. Because of its Power 15, Scott's Talisman would have a maximum 30 Quintessence. If he were to add another effect at Power 12, it would have a maximum of only 24.

Talismans bought at character creation are presumed to have a full charge of Quintessence.

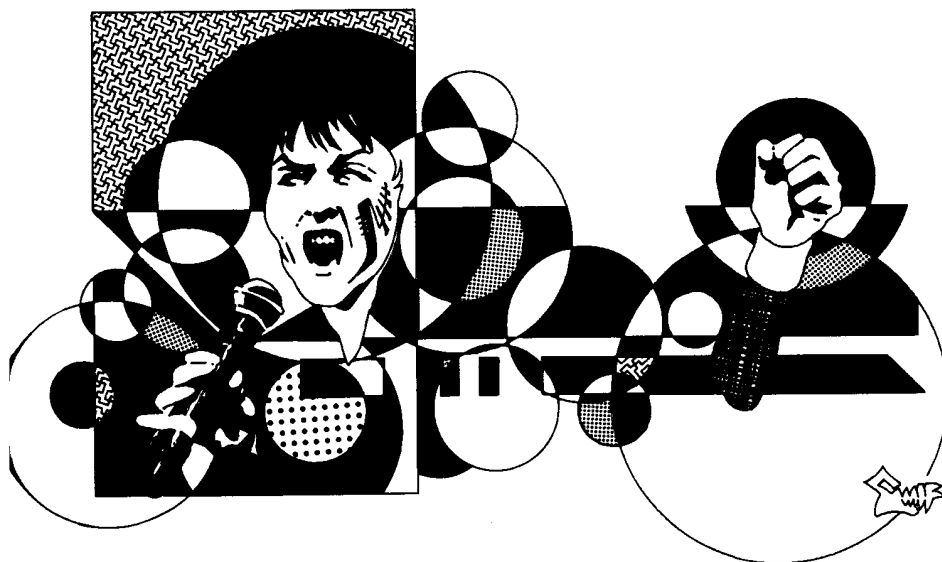
Using Talismans

Talisman powers may be used only by the Awakened. The user must make physical contact with the Talisman and spend one turn willing the power to activate (that is, taking the Concentrate maneuver). An accompanying command phrase or triggering gesture might also be required, depending on what the creator of the Talisman desired.

The rules for Talisman-created magickal effects are similar to those used for mages. Talismans that possess static magick effects do not have “preprogrammed” coincidences; their users must choose a coincidence at the time of

use. Any Paradox gained through the use of a Talisman is channeled to the user of the item (although rumors abound of Marauder Talismans that store their own Paradox, unleashing it on those unfortunate enough to use the item without special knowledge).

Each use of a Talisman requires the expenditure of 1 point of the Quintessence stored in the item. A mage always has the option to use a point of his own Quintessence in place of the one that must otherwise come from the Talisman. When all the Quintessence inside an item is expended, the Talisman can no longer produce effects, though it is still considered enchanted. Mages who have achieved Level 3 or higher in Prime can channel more free Quintessence into the item, "recharging" its mystic batteries. Only physical destruction or a supernatural assault equivalent to a Prime 4 magickal effect can actually disenchant a Talisman by permanently disrupting its flow of Quintessence.



Creating Talismans

Talismans can only be created within the confines of a Chantry's Horizon Realm. The sole exceptions to this limitation are the Sons of Ether and the Virtual Adepts, most of whose Talismans are sufficiently technological in form that they suffer no impediment to their creation on Earth. Even so, their most powerful works – or those most similar to the Talismans of the other Traditions – must still be created in a Horizon Realm. A high degree of magickal ability and knowledge is also required, and the assistance of a Master is recommended.

A mage must have the Talisman Creation skill and at least Level 3 in Prime in order to create a Talisman. He must also have sufficient Levels in the Spheres needed to produce the effect he wants. If several mages are working in concert to create a Talisman, they must all have sufficient Sphere levels, including Prime, to create the desired effects, but they do not all need to have the Talisman Creation skill.

In order to enchant the Talisman, the mage must make successful rolls against Talisman Creation, the magickal effect desired, and against Prime. The skill level for the magickal effect roll is calculated as though it were being cast normally. A failure on any of these rolls destroys the incipient Talisman, and a critical failure perverts or flaws it in some way (to be determined by the GM). The item's Power will be equal to the lower of the Prime or magickal effect skill levels, exclusive of any bonuses from Quintessence spent to raise them.

Magick in the Spirit World (Continued)

The ratings of Realms can be positive or negative. For example, a Realm that exists only in two-dimensional space (as in the book *Flatland*) might have a Correspondence rating of -4, reflecting that its reality is much more limited in terms of dimensional space than is Earth's. The same Realm might also have ratings of Entropy -2, Forces 0, Life 3, Matter -2, Mind 1, Prime -2, Spirit 0 and Time 4. All of these ratings reflect the scope of what is possible within that Realm's static reality.

Game play in a Realm whose Sphere ratings are radically different from those of Earth can be a wild experience. Such settings offer the most complex and evocative adventure possibilities you will find in *GURPS*. The following guidelines cover the use of magick in a Realm:

If the mage is performing a magickal effect or conjunctional magickal effect that requires a Sphere level higher than the Sphere ratings of the Realm, he must perform the magick using the normal rules for static or dynamic magick.

Note that certain Realms have negative Sphere ratings. Actions and perceptions that are standard and normal on Earth are miraculous in such Realms and will require the use of static or dynamic magick. For example, to lift an object in a Realm with a Correspondence rating of -4, where the only "true" directions are forward/backward and right/left, the mage must perform magick.

If the mage is attempting a magickal effect that requires Sphere levels lower than the Realm's Sphere ratings, the effect is automatically successful – no magickal effect roll is required. Just as a human uses depth perception as part of everyday life, so do denizens in some other Realms use clairvoyance. Mages who seek to perform magick that is within the laws of a given Realm's reality automatically succeed. They gain no Paradox because they are not creating a contradiction in the reality of the Realm.

If a degree of success must be determined for such an action, use an appropriate Attribute roll. For example in the Realm of Valhalla, the Sphere rating of Life is +3. Warriors are able to heal themselves very quickly to ready for the next battle. A mage with Life at level 3 would not need to roll for a magickal effect when attempting to heal himself (an effect learned at Level 3), but the GM might instead have him make a HT roll to determine how many HT the mage instantly regenerates.

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Magick in the Spirit World (Continued)

A mage is still limited by his own Sphere ratings, even if the Sphere ratings of the Realm are higher. It doesn't matter if the mage is traveling through the Realm of the Oracles of Time, which has a Sphere rating of Time 8; he is still limited by his personal Sphere levels. If he does not understand the process of traveling into the future, he cannot do so, even if the Realm's reality allows it, and all of the sentients of that Realm are hopping through time.

In the Chimarae

The dream worlds (see p. 147) are completely different places for mages. The reality of a dream world is defined solely by the entity controlling that world. A dream world's Sphere ratings shift up or down in accordance with the desires of the dream world's Lord. Indeed, reality in the dream worlds often fluctuates constantly.

Dream magick often involves calling upon the aid of the various Dream Lords, for it is mainly through their will that reality in a Dream Realm can be manipulated at all. The wars between the Lords of Dream are the stuff of legend, and by allying himself with some Dream Lords, a mage inevitably antagonizes many others, thus drawing herself into the demented politics of the Chimarae. Still, some mages feel that the benefits gained are worth the risk of involvement in their affairs.

Sample Talismans

The prices given apply *only* at character creation. All effects are at Power 15.

Spirit Goggles **\$17,000**

This Talisman is an enchanted pair of ether goggles, like those worn by the Sons of Ether. Like all such goggles, the Talisman is large, clunky and straps onto the head. A slight greenish mist floats suspended in the multifaceted lenses. As long as the goggles are worn, the mage can automatically see into the Near Umbra.

Sword of Discharge **\$38,000**

This katana can release a burst of electricity when it strikes an opponent. The effect resembles the Discharge Static power (Forces 2). A second Matter effect ensures that the edge of the blade is always razor-sharp.

X-ray Glasses **\$38,000**

These glasses have two different powers, one each from the Life and Matter Spheres. A conjunctive Correspondence effect allows a person wearing the glasses to see only the Life or Matter Pattern he desires, as long as it's in normal eyesight range.

The mage must also declare if the effect will be coincidental or vulgar when it operates. Although it makes no difference to the creation of the item, this decision will certainly affect the user, as Talismans gain Paradox for their users as per the usual rules.

The time spent on creating a Talisman varies with how many abilities are placed in it. The first effect takes ½ hour per level of Power to enchant, the second takes 1 hour per level of Power, the third 2 hours, the fourth 3 hours, and so on. Talismans with many powerful abilities take a *very long* time to create. If several mages are enchanting in concert, *all* must remain present for the duration of the process of adding an effect. If the process is interrupted, or a mage leaves, the effect is spoiled and must start again – but the enchanting time goes up as though the effect were successful.

The ability thus placed in the Talisman requires only a turn of concentration to manifest. Requiring the user to pronounce a command word or make a special gesture (or both) takes an additional hour per ability.

Example: Siona Stormsdaughter is creating a multifaceted Talisman. She enchants it with an effect at Power 16, taking 8 hours. The next day, she enlists the aid of Medge the Mage to add another effect, again at Power 16. The casting time would normally take 16 continuous hours, but Siona is exhausted from her effort of the day before and falls asleep during hour 13, spoiling the casting. The day after that, well-rested and their ability to stay awake enhanced with Life magick, Siona and Medge begin again; this time, the effect will take 32 hours to add to the Talisman.

In between adding individual effects to a Talisman, however, the mage may take as much time as he wants to rest or perform other activities.

Once the Talisman has been fully enchanted, a further roll against Prime 3 (or higher) is necessary to imbue it with its first "charge" of Quintessence and activate it so it may be used. This takes 10 minutes per point of Quintessence transferred into the Talisman. The item's full charge of Quintessence must be transferred in this step, and it cannot be interrupted; if it is, or insufficient Quintessence is available to reach its potential, the item's maximum charge will forever be equal to the amount of Quintessence transferred at this point. Once this step has been accomplished, additional effects can no longer be added to the Talisman.

The Burden of Foci

Man is a tool-using animal. . . . Without tools he is nothing, with tools he is all.

– Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*

While foci are incredibly beneficial to mages, they cause problems as well. For example, certain foci are simply too conspicuous to be carried and used in many societies. Imagine a Son of Ether donning his ether goggles in some backwater town in the United States. The locals are likely to become a little too curious.

Portability is also a major concern. Verbena just cannot lug a cauldron around with them everywhere. They may "coincidentally" find one nearby when their need is great, but even then it takes some time to prepare the nauseating fluids the cauldron must contain. The same is true of the circles employed by the Order of Hermes. Mages of that Order cannot summon a spirit on the spur of the moment as a Dreamspeaker can at the wave of a feather.

Additionally, foci may limit how quickly a mage can create an effect. While most magick effects can be created in the space of a second, some foci increase this time. If a Virtual Adept wants to make the bullets in a gun disap-

Continued on next page . . .

pear before she is shot, she will have to program it into her computer. While this may require only a few lines of code, it will increase the "casting time" to at least 2 seconds.

Unique Foci

Finally, there are "unique items." Unique foci are specially noted in the list on the following pages. A unique focus derives much of its power from the connection between it and its user, and the Spheres relying on that specific focus cannot be used if the unique focus is lost. For example, an Akashic Brother comes to view his weapon as an extension of himself. If he loses that weapon, he cannot use the Spheres of Life or Matter until it is recovered. Alternately, the mage can dedicate a replacement unique focus, but she must relearn the Sphere from the beginning.

This relearning process doesn't require nearly as much time as the original learning process, but it does set the mage back. A Sphere can be relearned up to its previous level at half character point cost. Once the mage has achieved his previous level in the Sphere, the character point cost returns to normal.

And, as mentioned on p. 44, the mage may also gain enough levels of Arete to dispense with the need for the unique focus, but Arete can be difficult to achieve.



Sample Talismans (Continued)

Therefore, when wearing the glasses a person who lost his keys could filter out all patterns but those of the keys, thus finding them easily. Of course, while he's walking toward the keys he should beware of obstacles, for he can see only the keys. Likewise, a person could filter out everyone in a crowd except for the victim he is stalking.

The wearer sees nothing else but the pattern sought, so eyesight range is potentially the horizon. A person using the glasses might see a tiny dot at the edge of the horizon if the object was that far away.

Peacemaker

\$62,000

This Colt .45 Peacemaker is an old weapon by mortal standards (about 1870), and even older to mages, who saw its predecessors in the early 1800s. A dedicated mage worked powerful enchantments on one of these guns, causing any bullet it fires to be affected by a sort of Matter immunity. The bullet will pass harmlessly through any matter except biological material, which it impacts normally. A bullet fired by the gun could pass without restriction through a wall and strike a foe on the other side. If the target is wearing a bullet-proof vest, the bullet will pass through even that. (Colt .45 Peacemaker: Dam 2d+1, SS 11, Acc 2, ½D 150, Max 1,700, Wt 2.5, RoF 1, Shots 5, ST 11, Rcl -2.)

Peacemaker also has a "speed draw" Correspondence power that can be used. With this effect that mage could outdraw the fastest gun of the West and get the first shot in gun battle. This power gives the gun wielder an automatic win (by 1 point) on any Quick Contest of Quick-Draw skills.

Prodigy

\$219,000

This amazing computer is the work of a genius Virtual Adept. Essentially, it provides the processing power of a NSA Cray supercomputer in a portable terminal that weighs about four pounds. It has a number of powers, but the most amazing is its data collection ability. The computer can tap into any electronic storage system on the planet and retrieve information from it. This is possible even if the target system doesn't have a modem. Even a floppy disk sitting on somebody's shelf can be targeted for retrieval. Prodigy completes the task through a phenomenally advanced technology (magick).

Prodigy can also speed time up for itself and its user, allowing its user to do more work in a shorter amount of real time. The effect includes anyone within a few paces of the computer if the owner of the Talisman desires it. The slowing effect doubles the local timeflow and the effective work performed by the computer.

Prodigy functions as a Complexity 7 megacomp. Except for its remote access power, it has no special interface abilities and must be operated by keyboard.

Focus List

Descriptions of each focus follow. Mages are presumed to acquire their unique foci from their mentors upon becoming Disciples in a Sphere, and do not need to purchase them.

Abacus

This focus is a holdover from the early days of the Sons of Ether, when calculations had to be done by hand. If the mage wishes to use Correspondence or Entropy, he must still perform his calculations by hand. Using an abacus will usually cause casting time to increase to 2 or 3 seconds, depending on the complexity of the effect.

Blood

This primal fluid is necessary to work some Verbena magick. The blood can be that of any animal, but human blood seems to work best when Prime is used.

Bones

Any kind of bone will work for the Euthanatos – cow, dog or even human. The bone must be waved like a wand for it to be effective.

Cauldron

Practically immobile, the cauldrons of the Verbena are the real things – big and heavy black pots. Various vile liquids must be mixed into the pot in order to work the magick. Such a process takes at least five to 10 minutes. If the brew is already prepared, a cauldron will usually cause casting time to increase to 2 or 3 seconds, depending on the complexity of the effect.

Circle

Hermetic mages must surround themselves with an ornate magickal circle prior to using the Spirit Sphere. Such a circle takes a minimum of two hours to create, but most Hermetic mages have far more elaborate ones in their Nodes or elsewhere.

Computer

The heart and soul of a Virtual Adept, a computer is required for all magick that the Tradition uses. The usual Adept laptop is a TL10, complexity 5 machine. The computer must be on and in use in order for the magick to work. Using a computer will usually cause casting time to increase to 2 or 3 seconds, depending on the complexity of the effect, but especially powerful effects may take as much as a minute or two to program.

Crystals

Quartz crystals store the energy of the earth, so Dreamspeakers require them to use some Spheres.

Dancing

The Euthanatos practice a variety of dances, ranging from the odd to the obscene. Outsiders usually see these dances only when the mage performs magick. Dancing usually increases the casting time to 2 or 3 seconds, depending on the complexity of the effect.

Do

An Akashic Brother must be performing this martial arts form in order to use some magick. Using Do can draw attention to the mage, and the environment can sometimes be distracting, as meditation is often an essential aspect of Do.

Dolls

When using certain magick against a person, a Euthanatos mage must first prepare a doll that bears some resemblance to the victim. Such a doll requires a short time to make, assuming the materials are handy. Many Euthanatos carry extra dolls, which can be linked to a target in seconds.

Drums

Dreamspeaker magick often requires the pounding of a drum.

Electricity

The Sons of Ether and the Virtual Adepts require electricity to use some Spheres. This electricity can be siphoned from nearby power cords, overhead lights, or portable storage batteries/power cells.

Ether Goggles

The bane of Sons of Ether who wish to work magick without drawing attention to themselves, ether goggles are globular, semi-translucent goggles that obscure most of the face. The mystic substance ether (from whence the Tradition derives its name) permeates the goggles.

Feather

This can be the feather of any bird or winged mythical being, and is used by Dreamspeakers for any magick of the Spirit Sphere.

Fire

A small fire must be burning nearby in order for a mage of the Celestial Chorus to reach through to Prime. A match or lighter does not produce enough flame, though two lighters sparked at the same time will do.

Herbs

Verbena must use a variety of herbs to perform their magick. The GM and player are encouraged to vary the way the herbs are employed – from sprinkling on the object to swallowing by the mage.

Holy Symbol

A mage of the Celestial Chorus must wear a necklace or other item of jewelry that has an icon of the mage's belief engraved or attached. This could represent a modern religion or an ancient faith that only members of the Tradition remember.

Incense

Aromatic incense must be inhaled by members of the Cult of Ecstasy for some Spheres to operate. It takes at least a minute to prepare incense in this way.

Language

The Order of Hermes teaches all apprentices a mystical tongue that only they know, and which is used for all their magickal rituals. This language, Hermean, is detailed as a skill on p. 43.

Music

Mages of the Cult of Ecstasy must play an instrument in order to evoke their magic. This usually increases the casting time to 2 or 3 seconds, depending on the complexity of the effect.

Unique

Unique

Network

A Virtual Adept must be connected to a reasonably large communications network – either telephone or computer – in order to employ some Spheres.

Pure Water

Water, either from a natural spring or “holy” water, must be sprinkled when the Sphere is used.

Purification

To use the Spirit Sphere, member of the Akashic Brotherhood must have cleansed their bodies. The GM must determine the cleanliness of the mage.

Rattle

Euthanatos must shake a rattle when using Mind or Time.

Ring

The physical world and its dissolution is represented among mages of the Cult of Ecstasy by a ring they wear.

Unique

Sash

The most portable of the Akashic Brotherhood’s foci is the sash, a belt that must simply be worn.

Scientific Meter

This hand-held device generates various readings of the surrounding environment. The Sons of Ether need this information to use some Spheres.

Seal of Solomon

This seal is also called the Star of David. It consists of two interlocking triangles (one pointed up, the other down) that form a hexagram. This seal must be engraved or drawn on something the mage holds in his outstretched hand.

Showstone

A showstone is a gem or crystal of some kind.

Unique

Song

Mages of the Celestial Chorus must sing aloud when using several Spheres. The song can be anything from a Gregorian chant to rap.

Wand

A slender stick made of wood must be manipulated in order for a Verbena to use some Spheres.

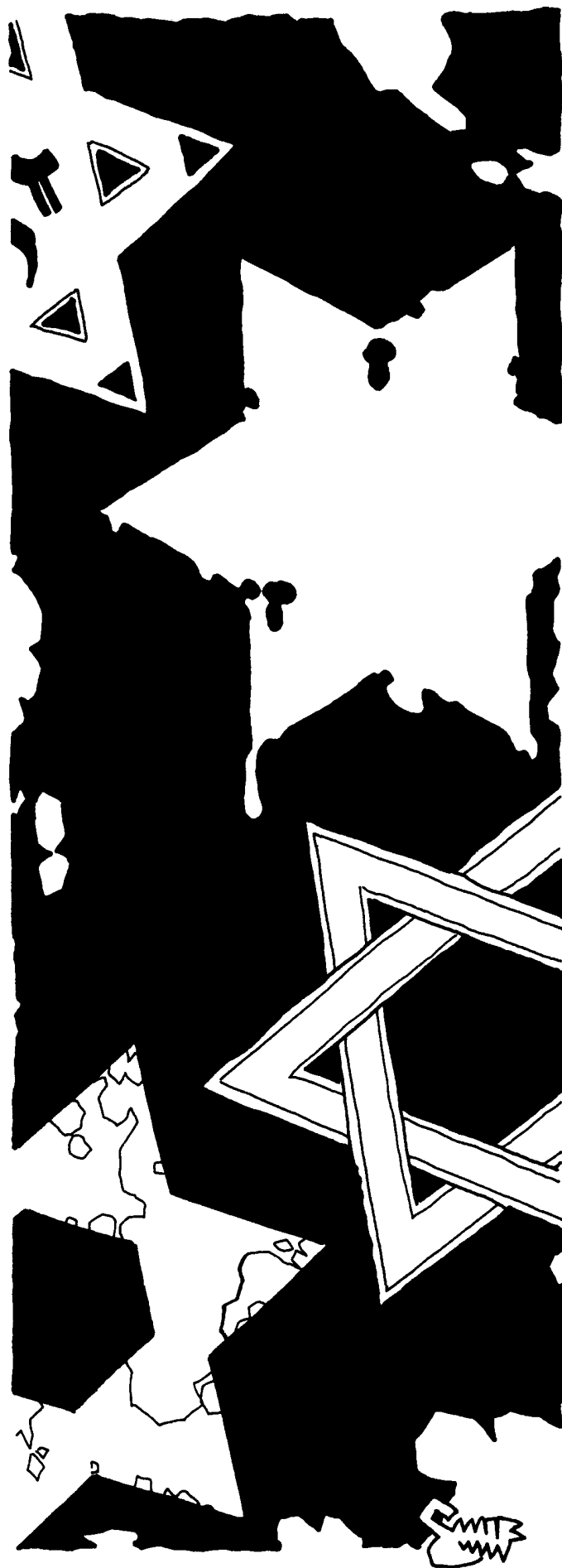
Weapon

Varies by Tradition

As part of their Do training, Akashic Brothers learn how to use a weapon of choice. This can be any weapon, but is usually an Oriental one, like a katana. Thereafter, performing moves with the weapon is required for magick. A Brother’s weapon is a unique item. Euthanatos also require a weapon; they often choose grisly weapons like spiked whips. These are not unique items. A Verbena’s weapon must be a dagger; it is not unique.

Vice

It’s easy – too easy – for mages of the Cult of Ecstasy to get trapped in their hard way of life, so they either acquire or never lose bad habits. To work some magick a mage must be indulging in his vice.



The Nine Spheres of Knowledge

When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.

— John Muir

Luckily for the inexperienced mage, his predecessors have left him a large body of knowledge. This great body of knowledge is organized into the Nine Spheres of Knowledge, known simply as the Spheres.

As a mage studies a Sphere, he learns a body of theories that allows him to perform magickal effects. For example, with enough study of Forces, a mage discovers how the human mind can reweave the etheric Patterns that create electricity. As with any pursuit, though, the beginning student cannot perform at a doctorate level. As he progresses in his studies, the mage gradually learns more and more about the Spheres. As his knowledge increases, he becomes able to work more and more miraculous effects.

Most mages accept that the Nine Spheres cover every aspect of reality that can be defined and controlled. Any magickal effect can be achieved through the understanding and application of one or more Spheres.

Note that each Tradition has its own way of approaching the Spheres. The Do of the Akashic Brotherhood embodies a different understanding of reality than the theology of the Celestial Chorus. Nonetheless, Disciples of each Tradition generally progress along similar lines, gaining similar “powers” as they progress through their study of the Spheres. This also lets characters of different Traditions support each other’s Ascension; the most open-minded mages advance the fastest.

Unfortunately, many Traditions now cling so strongly to their own tenets that they have lost sight of the fact that these tenets are themselves artificial. The ancestors of each Tradition understood the Metaphysic of Magick and therefore deliberately created a concept of reality that was self-consistent, allowed for paranormal effects, and was understandable by the general unenlightened populace. The goal of each Tradition was to build the best possible description of reality, a description that would advance humanity to Ascension.

Current Disciples of most Traditions do not realize that they are studying a subjective view of reality invented by the founders of their Tradition. Even the Disciples’ Mentors may believe that they are teaching the one and only, true, objective view of reality. Often, neither the student nor the tutor fully understands the Metaphysic of Magick. Instead, each views magick as an imposition of “true” reality over the false reality of the general populace.

Luckily for such mages, this difference in philosophical approach is a moot point until they achieve Mastery of a Sphere. At this point, they reach the limits of their current understanding.

Beyond Mastery - The Oracles

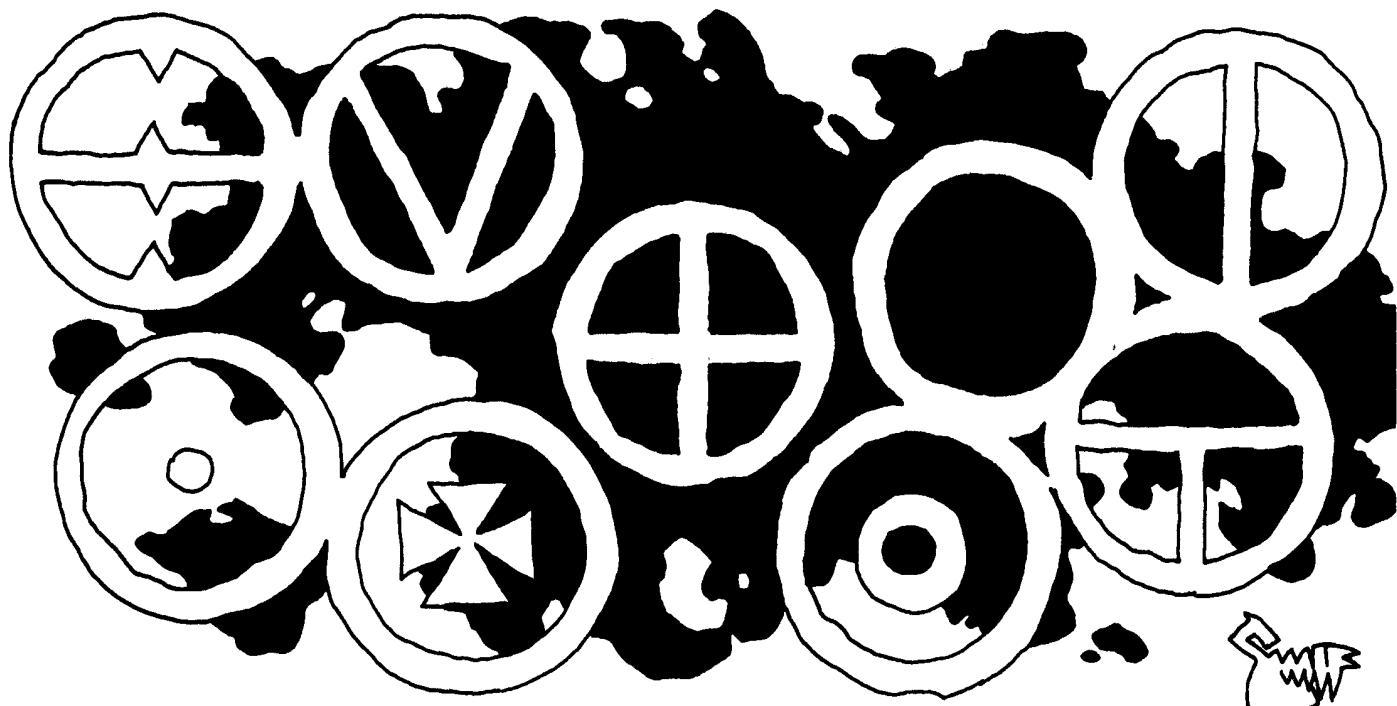
Infinite players play best when they become least necessary to the continuation of play. It is for this reason they play as mortals.

— James P. Carse, *Finite and Infinite Games*

At the point of Mastery, many mages cease to pursue knowledge. These mages may (falsely) believe they have reached a full understanding of reality, or perhaps they are simply satisfied with their level of knowledge. These mages often become the rulers of their Traditions, espousing their beliefs and increasing the power of the Tradition within the Tellurian.

However, a few mages realize that the beliefs of their Tradition, to which they have been subscribing and from which they have been drawing power, are an arbitrary construction and can be improved. These mages become the Oracles of their Spheres. They seek to transcend the limitations of the Traditions by inventing a concept of reality that allows for even greater feats.

The Oracles of each Sphere operate in secrecy. Occasionally, they request service from lesser mages; even more rarely, they venture forth from their sanctuary Realms to spread word of developments in the Spheres or to undertake their own perilous quests. Lesser mages are rarely allowed to visit the nine sanctuary Realms of the Oracles. Those foolish enough to try are usually driven mad by the alien nature of the Realms long before they find the Oracles.



THE SPHERES

The world is a phalanx of maybes in which a handful of trues and falses can occasionally be found.

– Anonymous

The following descriptions of the Nine Spheres are intended to provide a broad explanation of each Sphere. The explanation illustrates what effects each Sphere covers and what magickal powers are gained at each level of a Sphere. Keep in mind that there are often many ways to accomplish the same effect. If a character wants to make a heavy object easier to move, he might use Matter to make it less dense, Forces to alter gravity around it, or Correspondence to shift it through space. Any of the three Spheres could accomplish the desired effect. The method used depends on which Spheres the character has studied, and how the player approaches the problem.

The description of each Sphere is divided into the following sections:

Opening Dialogue: A master who has studied the Sphere discusses it with the new student.

General Description: The scope of the Sphere is discussed, along with notes on the Sphere's unique properties, and in some cases, a chart describing what can be accomplished with especially good die rolls.

Level Description: A general description of each level is provided to show the primary magickal effects that become possible at each progressive level in the Sphere. These descriptions are the true guides the GM should use for determining the effects a character is capable of creating at each level.

Always remember however, that any effect is possible using some combination of the Spheres. If a mage desires a magickal effect that cannot be found under any Sphere's Level Description, the GM should decide at what level of what Sphere or Spheres the effect becomes possible. The only limitation on characters is that some incredibly dramatic effects can only be performed by the Oracles, whose knowledge transcends the five levels listed here.

With each level are provided examples of specific magickal effects possible at that level. These effects are meant to be generic guidelines only. They should not be mistaken for absolute definitions of how a certain effect will operate every time in every game situation, and they certainly do not represent the only effects possible at a given level. These examples merely show that, for example, one of the things knowledge of Forces allows a mage to do is Discharge Static.

Sample Rotes. At the end of each Sphere are listed several well-known rotes (see p. 88) that are taught under that Sphere. Specific game mechanic information for each rote is given in square brackets.

Correspondence

First, you must remove this word "where" from your vocabulary. There is no "where" or "here" or "there;" rather, all space is one. Locality is a universal singularity. You will come to understand that space is nothing more than an oversimplified translational tool for interpreting reality – a crutch used by the static mind to comprehend true reality. You must exercise your mind to prepare it for experiencing reality without the facade of space. Once this is accomplished, you will have the knowledge and perceptions that free you from the prison of dimensional space. You will see the Correspondence between all points in space, and you will recognize your existence there – at the Point of Correspondence. To those whose perceptions are still bound by three dimensions, you may appear anywhere and everywhere instantly, as you so will it.

This is the promise of the knowledge of Correspondence, but lest you take the pursuit of this Sphere of knowledge lightly, know that mental aberration and lifelong frustration await most who desire this path of enlightenment. Because you are determined enough to begin this study, let us examine a lesson in two-dimensional space – the first step in breaking your lifelong three-dimensional paradigm.

The Sphere of Correspondence involves an understanding of three-dimensional reality. Mages who have gained understanding of Correspondence have come to the (almost) unanimous conclusion that space, as the human race knows it, is ultimately an illusion. In truth, all patterns are "stacked" upon each other in one "place," referred to by most Traditions as the Correspondence Point or All-Space. In order to interpret and interact with the world around them, the unenlightened need to perceive the Correspondence Point as three-dimensional space.

To overcome such a deeply entrenched thought-pattern, the mage must undergo rigorous mental exercises. These exercises tax the mind's spatial awareness to such a degree that many students give up the pursuit or develop mental abnormalities before they overcome their fallacious perceptions.

Still, the Theory of Correspondence holds an exalted state among magickal theories. Correspondence is the one Sphere on which all Traditions agree to some extent. The terminology differs, but seldom are any theories besides Correspondence pursued when a mage studies space.

Mages who persevere through the study of Correspondence gain knowledge that allows them to transcend spatial limitations at will; their perceptions and movements ignore spatial restrictions. When his knowledge of Correspondence is combined with other magickal Spheres, the Master of Correspondence is unassailable.

Mages who advance in Correspondence ahead of other Spheres appear to be "spaced out." Their eyes are unfocused, as they now rely on their spatial sense rather than sight. Their physical movements are very precise; these mages never bump into objects, trip or stub their toes.

Level 1: Immediate Spatial Perceptions

At this stage of understanding, the mage has begun to see the fallacies of spatial concepts, but is still caught in the paradigm of three-dimensional space. Nonetheless, the mage possesses a keen understanding of how objects relate to space. He can intuitively sense distances between objects, calculate the exact volume of objects, and sense objects in his immediate vicinity without having to perceive them through the normal five senses. However, finding things that have been consciously hidden must still be handled normally.

Effects:

Landscape in the Mind. When the Virtual Adepts sought to construct their virtual realities within their computer domains, they ran into a stumbling block. It was impossible to reproduce senses such as smell, touch, and even some aspects of sight within the computer worlds. The Virtual Adepts solved this problem by borrowing techniques used by a sect of the Akashic Brotherhood. These martial artists had developed a Zen-like sixth sense whereby they attuned themselves to the space around them. The Brothers "felt" their surroundings via a radar-like sense, and then "built" an imaginary landscape within their minds based on that spatial sense. Thus, the Brothers no longer had to see enemies approaching behind them. They sensed their foes in the landscape constructed in their minds' eye.

The Virtual Adepts adopted this spatial sense to their needs, incorporating it into mystic software programs and reproducing the effect within their virtual reality. Since that early time, the Adepts have found other techniques for incorporating the full range of human senses into their computer domains, but the spatial sense remains crucial for accurate sensory input in the virtual reality.

This effect is available to all Correspondence Disciples. It allows a mage to sense the shapes of the objects and entities that fill the space around himself. A mage can extend the area of perception, but this requires more and more active concentration; after the area reaches a diameter about equal to a city block, the sensory input becomes too much to bear.

Level 2: Correspondence Perceptions

Many mages never attain this level of understanding. The mage has now shattered the spatial illusion of physical reality. While his understanding is far from complete, the mage can now use the Correspondence Point as a gateway of sorts to extend his normal sensory perceptions beyond his immediate environment.

Effects:

Correspondence Sensing. The mage can shift his senses through the Correspondence Point, allowing him to perceive other locations. The mage need only picture the location in his mind's eye and extend his perceptions there. The mage can then see, hear and smell anything at the remote location and can rotate the perspective as if he were standing there. Tactile sensory input is very limited, but the mage can vaguely feel temperature and concussions. The mage does create a disturbance in space at the remote location he is viewing. Although this disturbance cannot be seen, it can be sensed by anyone with spatial senses such as *Landscape in the Mind*.

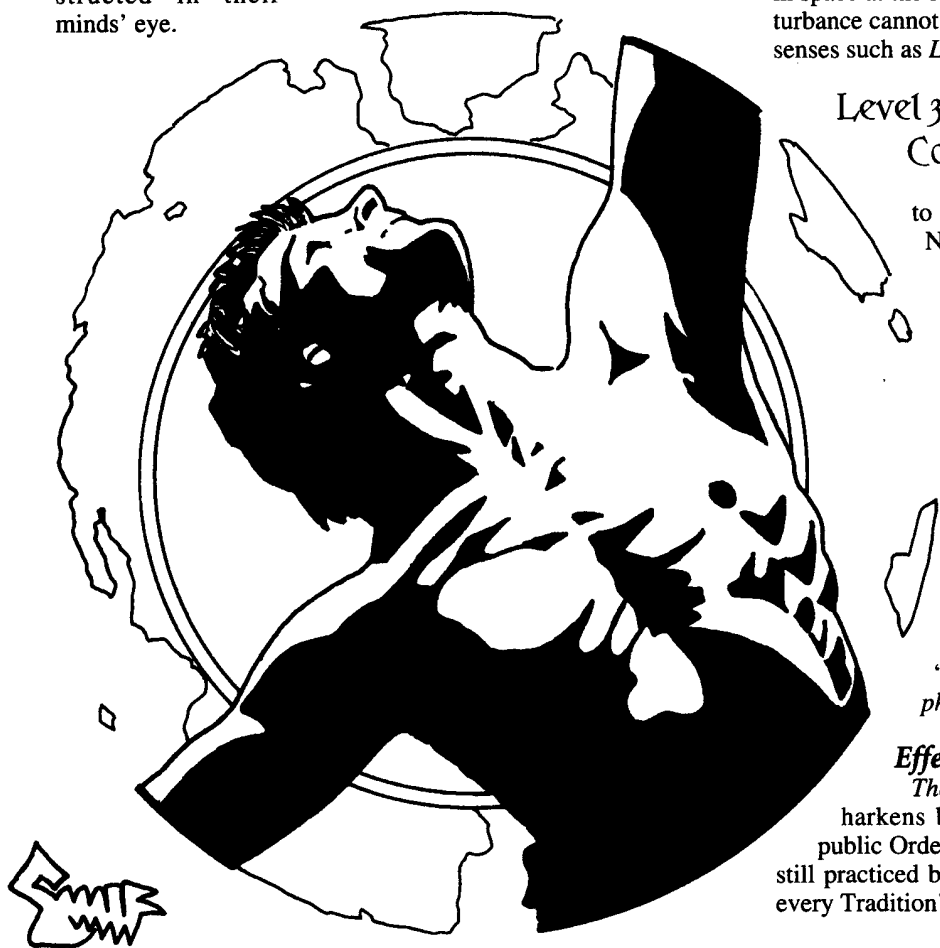
Level 3: Shift through Space/ Co-locality Perception

At this level, the mage's knowledge allows him to shift position instantaneously to other locations. Note that to the mage's enlightened perceptions, he is not even moving (he, along with everything else, exists at the Correspondence Point); he is simply changing where he appears to be within the illusion of three-dimensional space.

Furthermore, a mage with a sufficient understanding of the Correspondence Point can potentially perceive all points in space at once, though such a mind-expanding experience would be catastrophic to the human psyche. A mage may, however, desire to view multiple locations at once. He would perceive the various scenes as several ghostly landscapes overlapping one another. This "stacking" of landscapes is called the *co-locality phenomenon*.

Effects:

The Seven-League Stride. The name of this effect harkens back to medieval times and the mages of the public Order of Hermes who first developed it. The effect is still practiced by the real Order today, and has become part of every Tradition's Correspondence teachings.





Level 4: Conjoin Localities/Co-locate Self

A mage of this level can shift other people and objects through space, and may create pathways through the spatial fabric to join two locations. These pathways usually appear as two-dimensional windows connecting two locations, but can take another appearance depending on the mage's desire.

Additionally, the mage's understanding of the co-locality principle increases. He is now able to manifest physically in multiple locations at the same time.

Effects:

Dreamer's Shroud from Day. This power allows mages to achieve an invisibility effect around any object simply by warping space around the object into a perfect envelope. Light traveling toward the object will warp around the object and continue on its original path. Because light never reflects from the shrouded object or person, it cannot be seen. The more points by which this roll succeeds, the greater the mage's spatial control and the less noticeable the field of warped space will be. Moving objects are more difficult to cloak and thus require more points of success, as do larger objects such as buildings.

Ripple Through Space. Mages using this effect can shift the position of any one object to another location. Larger objects and structures require more points of success to be moved, and the process inevitably imparts a disastrous amount of Paradox to the mages responsible. It is rumored that a cabal of drunken Cultists of Ecstasy once attempted to teleport the Eiffel Tower to Mexico City. The cultists were never seen again in this reality.

Hermes' Portal. The Order of Hermes claims to have been the first to advance magickal knowledge of Correspondence far enough to create rifts through space, portals that connect two locations in dimensional space. They label these warps Hermes' Portals. Other Traditions dispute the Order's claim and use the same effect under different names.

Regardless of its name, the effect creates a "window" in space that connects two or more different locations. These windows have as many faces as the sites connected: two sites are conjoined by a flat window with two sides, three sites are conjoined through three windows arranged in a triangle, four sites by a square gate, etc. Each side of the portal shows a blurry view of the location it connects.

Anything that desires to pass through the Portal may do so. However, using the magick involves an act of will, so inanimate objects and nonsentients cannot pass through the gate freely. They may, however, be ushered through by anyone using the gate. This restriction isolates the environments connected by the window; thus, a window connecting a living room to the deep ocean will not allow water to flood the room.

Polyappearance. With this effect, a mage can use the co-location principles to make his physical form appear in many locations at once. This effect parallels *Divided Sight*, but in addition to sensing locations, the mage's physical form actually appears in each location as well. Observers in each location will see the mage and can interact with him normally. The mage, however, must simultaneously interact with each location into which he has projected himself. Anything he says or does will be heard and seen by observers at all locations.

The mage will perceive items in each location to be superimposed on one another visually, and all surfaces he touches will be solid to him. This can create an odd spectacle for observers viewing the mage. To the observers, the mage will appear to be a mime extraordinaire, as he opens doors and leans against walls that do not exist in the location of the observer,

A mage using this effect is able to manipulate his position within three-dimensional space. He can instantaneously blink out and reappear in another location within Gaia's physical reality. This effect does not immunize the mage to his new surroundings. For example, if the mage shifted to the ocean depths, mistakenly thinking a submarine was there, he would be crushed by the intense water pressure. Barring such untidy circumstances (usually avoided by first *Correspondence Sensing* the destination), the mage can safely transport himself throughout physical reality. The mage may need to make a Will roll to keep his equilibrium as he changes his location.

Divided Sight. The mage extends his senses just as with *Correspondence Sensing*, except that he can simultaneously view several locations at once. Each different location superimposes itself on the others, allowing the mage to perceive ghost-like images moving through one another and resting on top of one another. The mage can hear, see and smell each location simultaneously.

There is no limit to the number of locations the mage can sense at once, but too many locations viewed at once produces an indeterminate blur, and the mage will eventually be unable to distinguish what anything is, much less be able to tell which objects are in which locations. To distinguish which objects are in which locations, an IQ roll is needed, at a penalty equal to the number of scenes being viewed. The maximum number of scenes the mage can safely view equals half his IQ. Going above this limit is dangerous, as the cacophony of the combined perceptions can quickly drive the mage into catatonia or even Quiet (p. 136). (Make a Will roll at a penalty equal to the number of scenes above the safe limit in order to avoid ill effects.)

A peculiar Doppler coloring effect aids the viewing of each scene. Objects in the location farthest from the mage's own location in dimensional space have a red tint or aura around them. Scenes closer to the mage have correspondingly colored auras – orange, yellow, etc. – all the way to violet. For example, a mage in New York City would see objects in Frankfurt, Germany with a red tinge; Austin, Texas with a green aura; and New Jersey with a blue or violet coloring.

Filter All-Space. Given certain knowledge about any object or person, the mage can search through All-Space to find where that object exists in three-dimensional space. Different Traditions require different base information (hair or skin from a person, piece of the object, picture or sketch, etc.) for the search to have any chance of success. Because All-Space contains everything, it can take the mage a very long time to find the object. Searches of a week or more are not uncommon. During the search, the mage lapses into a trance as he mentally plumbs reality.

but do exist in one of the co-locations into which the mage has projected his form.

Note that this interaction is only one-way – from the mage's perspective. Items in one location do not affect observers who are in a different location, but the mage is affected by all objects in any of the locations into which he is co-locating. His sight will be blocked by the walls closest to him, and he will suffer from assaults directed at any of his co-located body positions.

Mages can use this phenomenon to their advantage. The Do martial arts of the Akashic Brotherhood contains an advanced movement called the "Kick of the Four Winds." The attacker executes a flying spin kick at an opponent, and while in midair, co-locates to four positions directly around the opponent, so that the one kick impacts the opponent four times. Masters are able to crush skulls like rotten melons with this devastating technique.

Another Akashic technique is called "Sounding the Gong." To evoke this effect, the Do practitioner strikes a nearby object, or even the ground, and through Correspondence magick transfers the power of the strike to any chosen target within sight. For example, an Akashic mage strikes the ground with a balled fist, but the effects of the blow are felt on the back of the neck of his opponent, who stands 10 paces away. The movement derives its name from the training method used to perfect it, wherein the practitioner tries to sound a gong from across the training field.

Stalking the Void. When an Adept of Correspondence detects a disturbance in the fabric of dimensional space near him through his spatial senses (see *Landscape in the Mind*), he can choose to track the disturbance to its origin. The mage actually tracks the disturbance through the Correspondence Point and back into dimensional space. This ability is called "Stalking the Void" by the Euthanatos, who use it to hunt down anyone foolish enough to spy on the Euthanatos' Chantries.

There is, of course, no guarantee what is actually causing the disturbance. Therefore, a word of caution is normally taught with the practice of Correspondence tracking. A few Adepts have tracked disturbances, shifted through the Correspondence Point to follow the trail, and were never seen again. Some disturbances are not what they seem, and their apparent origins may be illusory, bait in a trap set by beings not altogether human.

Stalking the Void also allows mages to detect the point at which any gates or warps that conjoin locations (such as Hermes' Portals) reconnect with dimensional reality, i.e., where does the gate lead? Correspondence tracking can usually be done very quickly, unless the disturbance approaches the mage's location through a circuitous route.

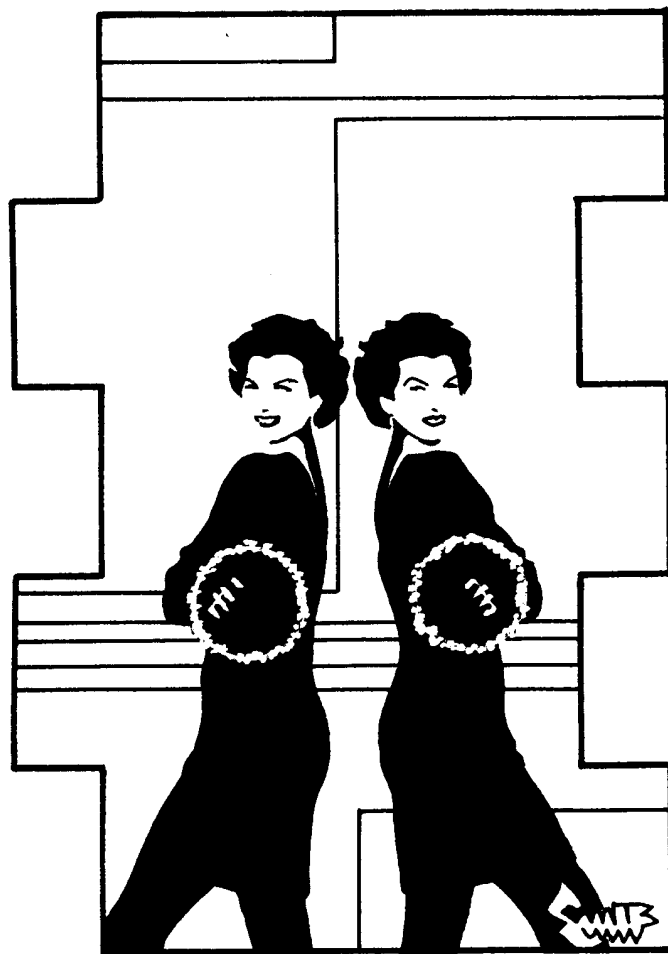
Level 5: Mutate Localities/Co-location

The final exercise taught to mages of Correspondence is the knowledge of distorting space. A mage of this level can affect distances and sizes around himself, stretching them and shrinking them to fit his needs. In scientific terms, the mass of objects cannot be changed, but their volumes and dimensions are potter's clay to the mage.

Also, a Master of Correspondence is no longer limited to himself or his senses; he can now "stack" different locations on top of one another in a field of co-location.

Effects:

Spatial Mutations. The mage is able to stretch distances, change the sizes of objects, and warp space around him. The



number of uses for this magick are infinite. A gunman firing on a mage may suddenly find himself 10 kilometers away from his target as the 10 meters of pavement between the two stretches out like a ribbon through warped space. Meanwhile, from the perspective of the mage or gunman, pedestrians using the nearby sidewalk would appear to zoom down the 10-kilometer stretch, for they are walking on the 10-meter sidewalk outside the warped space.

Note that the mass of objects does not change, just their size. Changing mass requires a conjunctional magick effect using Life or Matter. Thus, the momentum of moving objects remains the same unless Forces magick is used to adjust it.

Free Conjunction. This effect is identical to Hermes' Portal (p. 99), except that the rift through dimensional space is more severe, and the environments connected by the window freely diffuse into one another. This can produce violent effects, as in the case of connecting a dining room with the bottom of the Marianas Trench.

Co-location. The final mastery of co-location allows the mage to co-locate an entire area around himself, including all other entities and objects, on top of another location. Stacking more than two locations is possible, but extremely difficult (-2 to skill for each location past the second). No damage is done to objects that superimpose themselves upon one another during co-location, yet they are solid to one another and once separated, they will not again superimpose. For example, during co-location, a chair is superimposed on a large rock. Both objects remain intact, and something heavy flung into them may knock the chair aside yet leave the rock standing. If the chair is lifted away from the rock, it cannot again superimpose on it.

Correspondence Rotes

Play Back (Correspondence 2, Time 2)

The well-known Virtual Adept named Dante had the task of recovering data from computer data storage devices that had been deleted and then overwritten with garbled data by the Technocracy. As if this weren't problem enough, Dante was no longer at the site where the data was stored, so he had to work from a distance. Fortunately, he was able to apply his knowledge of Time to the problem, and performed postcognitive data retrieval that allowed him to read the storage media as they had been hours earlier.

[This rote also requires the Computer Operation skill, but as long as the character could normally retrieve information via modem, no skill penalty is incurred. Use the Duration table to determine how far back the effect can reach.]

FOR/NEXT Loop (Correspondence 4, Life 4, Forces 2)

First used only a few years ago, this rote has become instantly famous among the Traditions. The acceptance accorded the Virtual Adepts by the older Traditions was due in no small part to this creative use of Correspondence. The FOR/NEXT Loop was used to break a Void Engineer's will until he divulged the information the Adepts sought.

The effect began when the Void Engineer was converted into energy and injected into a computer's CPU. From there, the energy-form Technomancer was sent to a powerful mainframe hundreds of miles away that had the memory capacity to hold so much information. When the mage was finally converted back into his mortal form he was a babbling idiot ready to comply with any demand.

[After being converted into energy, the victim has one chance to escape through a "back door" in the program before he's transmitted to the mainframe. The victim rolls against Will with a penalty of 20 minus his IQ. After the victim is safely in the mainframe, the Adept makes a magickal effect roll each turn. Each point of success causes the victim to (temporarily) lose 1 level from his Will. A failure means the victim has

another chance to escape. A critical failure means the victim reverts to his original form and position. Lost Will points return at a rate of 1 per hour once the victim is released.]

Personal Compression (Correspondence 5, Life 3)

The perfect infiltration tool, this rote teaches Virtual Adepts how to reduce their mass and size dramatically. The originator of the rote, an unnamed Adept, is said to have shrunk to the atomic level. If this is true, then a whole new area of reality lies open to investigation.

[The Master's size and mass decrease by 15 percent for each point of success rolled (0 counts as 1 point of success). There is virtually no limit to the size-reduction capacity of this effect, for these percentages are additive, and as 15 percent times 7 exceeds 100 percent, 7 points of success allow the mage to shrink to any size she desires. The Master may shrink his belongings with him if he also has the appropriate knowledge of Matter.]

Semi Auto CAD/CAM (Correspondence 5, Matter 3)

Perfected by one of the first Virtual Adepts, the infamous Farris, in the days before Babbage, this rote allows the Adept to combine two guns and intermingle the properties of both. This effect creates such things as a revolver that fires like a Mac 10 or a submachine gun that fires shells. The new weapon usually resembles both of the old guns in style, unless the Adept designs it differently.

Adepts have utilized this same concept for any number of what they call "fusings." Very powerful computer chips have been created by combining the most useful qualities of different materials, and extremely protective armor has been woven by creating coats that feel and weigh like silk but protect like Kevlar.

[Each point by which the magickal effect roll is made allows the player to exchange one of the statistics of the two weapons combined (Dmg, SS, Acc, and so on). ½D and Max count as a single statistic; Cost and TL cannot be modified. Fusing other technologies and substances should be adjudicated by the GM.]



Entropy

Uou can join us, young woman, we welcome anyone who can help us bring necessary disorder to the world for you must understand that there are parts of reality which we shouldn't destroy, and parts that must be destroyed if we are to move on to Ascension, everything must be recycled, providing more quintessential fuel to build the new reality in the new form, all the mages out there, with their own ideas of what reality should be, struggling to build the new reality, in a race to build the new reality in their image, yet their competition has made them turn a blind eye to the finite nature of reality, we must recycle forms, destroy them down to base Quintessence so that it may be used anew, the Reincarnation Manifesto is ours because all others are too blind to see its importance, without us, they would run into the great limiter of reality, then progress would stop, you must learn, you must perform the powers of disorder, destruction is necessary and proper.

Entropy is a peculiar Sphere of magickal knowledge that attracts an equally peculiar following of Disciples. The Sphere of Entropy covers the aspects of reality commonly called decay, chaos, randomness and destruction. The theorems used to explain Entropy are convoluted, seem to lack any fundamental principles, and often seem to have no relation to one another. The study of Entropy can be as chaotic an affair as the material the Sphere explains.



Traditions vary in their presentation of Entropy. The Sons of Ether and the Virtual Adepts use models of complex thermodynamic science, with its vernacular of work, energy and disorder. Other, more naturalistic Traditions personify Entropy as a harbinger of randomness and decay whose touch disintegrates the trees into pulp and the mountains into pebbles. Still others see it as the chaos in the Dream or the yin amid all yang. The particulars are different, yet the effects are similar.

Entropy is based on the overriding principle that all incarnations of reality eventually die or disintegrate. Lifeforms die, rocks erode, electricity scatters into random charges, organizations and empires all eventually collapse. While this tends to cause the Sphere to be viewed in a negative light, many mages see entropic destruction as necessary in order to achieve Ascension. They point to a concept referred to as the Reincarnation Manifesto, which the Oracles of Entropy seem to espouse. The Manifesto holds that Entropy is responsible for

breaking all things back down into a basic state of raw Quintessence, which can then be recycled into reality to become some other incarnation of the physical universe. Without this continuous reincarnation, new structures could not be created within reality. Without a continuous infusion of new and better fabricated reality, growth toward Ascension would come to a grinding halt. However, the Oracles of Entropy are rarely intelligible, and in any event are widely believed to the thralls of the Nephandi. Furthermore, the Reincarnation Manifesto has been interpreted and adopted by some mages for their own advantage.

Regardless of their motives, mages of Entropy command the power to destroy and disorder all things. From randomizing simple events to eroding the intellectual and moral base of societies, the mages of Entropy are concerned with destruction, a destruction achieved through total disorganization.

Entropy damage is determined from its own column on the damage chart.

Masters of Entropy often appear disheveled, speak in constant streams-of-consciousness, and behave unpredictably. It is difficult for students of this Sphere to find a Mentor who will stick to one topic long enough for the student to learn anything meaningful from him. Mages with the second level of the Awareness advantage will be able to detect a dark, impenetrable core in the Patterns of mages of Entropy. The greater the mage's level in Entropy, the deeper and more malevolent this "heart of darkness."

Level 1: Perceive Entropy

Mentors of Entropy often begin their lessons by teaching their Disciples to identify entropy's existence as a distinct phenomenon in reality. By attuning his senses to entropy, the Disciple is able to sense its manifestations. The mage can thus identify the weakest parts of objects, or the most disordered segments of an organization. By discerning which aspect of a structure is the most susceptible to entropy's effects, the mage can ascertain where entropy would begin to break down the object, energy Pattern, lifeform, institution or sequence of organized events upon which the mage is focusing.

By itself, identifying instabilities does not cause any dramatic effects, but once an enemy's weaknesses are discovered, it doesn't take Sun Tzu to determine how best to combat the opponent.

Effects:

Dim Mak. The members of the Akashic Brotherhood who become Disciples of Entropy learn the insidious martial arts technique of Dim Mak, the art of striking vital points. While many mundane martial artists pursue Dim Mak (called "Atemi" in Japanese), only the Akashic Brothers learn the technique in its true form, as it requires the use of magick.

Using their knowledge of Entropy, the Akashic Brothers identify the weakest parts of an inanimate structure or living body – the locations most susceptible to debilitation and destruction. By identifying these pressure points and then physically striking them, the mage may inflict more damage upon the object. Hand-to-hand damage is increased by +1 per point of success when evoking the magickal effect (of course, a normal combat success must be scored as well). The damage itself is not magickal in nature.

Every structure and every living being has different weaknesses and therefore the mage must apply his magickal senses to each individual object in order to identify its particular pressure points. Also, the pressure points of living things slowly change depending on the time of day, season, and other more esoteric factors, so the mage must re-examine living targets at each meeting.

Other Traditions, especially the Euthanatos, are known to use similar Entropy effects.

Locate Disorder. The mage can identify the area of greatest disorder in an institution or organized sequence of events. The more points by which the effect roll is made, the more precise the information gained.

For example, a mage wants to infiltrate the staff of a hotel. He makes his roll by 1 point and thereby detects that the restaurant operation is the most disorganized element. He decides to disguise himself as a chef and infiltrate that segment of the hotel, guessing that other employees will be least likely to care about the sudden appearance of a new recruit. More points of success might inform the mage that the greatest disorder in the hotel's business operation is in the pantry manager's personnel files, which are totally disorganized.

The mage must be somewhat familiar with the organization being studied to gain much benefit, though the ability does facilitate extraordinary deductive abilities. In the example above, the mage would need to spend some time walking around the hotel and talking to a few of the employees before he could pinpoint the lack of order in the business.

Level 2: Control Randomness

Disciples begin to learn control over the power of entropy by studying its effects in small events. After first witnessing how randomness propagates in events as diverse as card shuffling, dice rolling, economic market fluctuations, traffic jams, lottery winners, lost mail, roulette wheels, and many others, the mage learns to identify how entropy breeds randomness. The mage then develops the ability to control how randomness propagates in such events.

This gives the mage amazing, yet subtle control over hundreds of small events that are ordinarily random. The mage can control whom a waiter will serve first, what caller number he'll be at a radio station, what number between 1 and 10 someone has in mind, who picks the shortest straw, the flip of a coin, which chamber houses a bullet during Russian Roulette, etc. The mage can determine the outcome of any minor event that would normally be considered random.

The mage can also control the degree of disorder introduced by an event. A simple use of this power would be to take a new deck of cards, sorted by suit and number. By shuffling them once, some amount of disorder is created, but the cards could quickly be put back into order. However, a mage can control the overall amount of disorder caused by the single shuffle of the cards, so that they appear to have been shuffled dozens of times. Conversely, the mage could decrease the amount of randomness introduced by shuffling the cards a dozen times, so that the cards will appear to have only been shuffled once or twice – perhaps only a few cards will be out of place.

The mage cannot completely stop or artificially create the effects of randomness. In a shuffled deck, at least one card will be out of place, no matter how successful the mage is in reducing the randomness caused by the shuffle, and a new deck of unshuffled cards cannot be spontaneously put into random order without the randomizing action of shuffling them at least once.

Because control of randomness can only be used on small events, it may seem to be of little use, yet this effect has a large number of possible applications. Injecting randomness into an event is also widely used in conjunctural magick.

Effects:

Games of Luck. Using his power to control localized random events, the mage can virtually determine the outcome of any game of luck. The mage can control the throw of dice, the shuffle of cards, the fall of a roulette ball, and other such events. The more points by which the roll is made, the more precise the control the mage can exert.

Sons of Ether use a similar effect called *Causation of Statistical Deviation Through Paradigm Alteration* when inventing formulas for their branch of statistical mathematics.

Level 3: Diffuse Energy/Destroy Matter

Combining his perception of Entropy with his knowledge of how randomness breeds disorder within reality, the mage begins to learn how entropy diffuses some of the physical incarnations of reality. Specifically, he gains a great degree of power over entropy's effect on inanimate objects.

The mage acquires techniques for channeling the power of entropy, and by funneling this power, he can cause objects to disorganize at accelerated rates. He can cause rocks to erode into sand, or lasers to diffract into scattered light. Similarly, by channeling entropy away from energy or matter, the mage can spontaneously organize substances (e.g., rays of light become somewhat polarized, heat stays in a room rather than dispersing through an open window, gas clouds stay clustered rather than diffusing into the surrounding air, turbulent ocean waves calm to easy swells).

The mage still cannot perform absolute functions. He cannot instantaneously disintegrate boulders, nor can he remove all random diffraction from light to produce a perfect laser. Such effects require absolute creation or elimination of entropic energy, powers known only to the Oracles. A Disciple of Entropy can only change the rate at which entropy affects something.

Effects:

Slay Machine. The mage uses his knowledge of Entropy to infuse technological systems with raw chaos. Any modern machinery or electronic device can be caused to malfunction or even self-destruct.

Computer systems corrupt all of their stored data, rendering it unintelligible. Electrical currents within electronic equipment surge so radically that components melt. Phone networks randomly scatter their calls, routing them to wrong numbers. Power distribution equipment, such as a house circuit breaker box, behaves erratically – some breakers trip for no reason, while others fail to trip, thus surging currents through lines, blowing light bulbs and overheating power lines.

The more points of success made on the roll, the greater the magnitude of disorder caused. Several points of success may be required to cause large machinery to glitch once or twice, while small systems will run amok with the same number of points.

Erode Matter. By invoking this effect, the mage floods entropy into any inanimate object. The increase in the amount of entropy accelerates the object's natural tendency toward corrosion, erosion, rot and the like. Gases will quickly diffuse into the air, liquids will evaporate, and solids will disintegrate. The number of points by which the roll is made determines how quickly the matter dissolves, and how much matter can be affected. 3 points of success rot away a wooden door within a minute, and 6 points of success will corrode the steel body of a truck in under five minutes.

Level 4: Wither Life

Entropy's effects on living organisms are much more complex than the above processes, and more difficult for a mage to isolate and study. Adepts of Entropy study how lifeforms wither and die as their bodily systems gradually deteriorate and break down. They also study the hundreds of ways in which randomness affects living forms, from the effects of heredity to the form a tree takes as it grows. The Adept learns to control entropy's interactions with life, giving him immense power to destroy life and to control its growth.

Effects:

Blight of Aging. Verbena are able to brew a variety of hideous concoctions in their cauldrons, but one of the most feared is that which causes a *Blight of Aging*. The mere act of brewing certain ingredients into his cauldron focus allows a Verbena sorcerer to initiate the effect.

The mage infuses the primal force of entropy directly into the targeted lifeform, causing its body to deteriorate and decay with frightening rapidity. The appearance of the effect is very similar to advanced aging, and the lifeform will effectively age 5 years for each point of success scored on the magick effect roll.

Lifeforms aged past their normal lifespans will quickly die and turn to dust. Victims prematurely advanced to old age should roll for *Aging* penalties, as per p. B83. (Use the world's base of TL7 for bonus on this roll.)

Other Traditions use similar life-destroying Entropy effects, but the Verbena are best known for it. Because they normally relish in the vibrancy of life, Verbena see the removal of that vigor as the worst sort of punishment to inflict upon their enemies.

Heart Murmurs. The human body relies on complex feedback processes to regulate heart rate, breathing, body temperature, and countless other bodily functions. Using their magickal science of entropic biology, the Sons of Ether have perfected methods for disrupting the bodily functions of another living being. The mages work out their arcane calculations on their abacus focus and refigure the natural rhythm of the target's bodily functions to include randomness. The result is that the victim's body goes haywire. The victim sweats and shivers; his heart stalls and then spasms like a triphammer; insulin and adrenaline ebb and flow.

This effect does not give the mage selective control over the precise bodily functions affected. Such precision requires knowledge of the Sphere of Life.

Level 5: Intellectual Entropy

Masters of Entropy expand their control over reality by studying the ways in which entropy affects ideas. The effects of entropy on objects are fairly clear and indisputable, but the fact that entropy affects intelligent thought seems far-fetched. Yet entropy affects everything which is organized, be it the organized structure of a molecule or an organized body of knowledge.

Masters of Entropy point to human history for countless examples of theories and sets of knowledge that were useful at times, yet over decades or millennia became filled with so many apparent errors that they were eventually abandoned for newer theories. For example, the history of writing shows techniques evolving from cave paintings to modern alphabetic writing. Previous methods of writing, such as hieroglyphics, gradually disappeared over time as new and better means of writing evolved. Masters of Entropy point to this process, which other

mages might call dynamic growth or natural evolution, and claim that Entropy is responsible for the old ideas breaking down, making it possible for new ones to emerge.

Regardless of philosophy, it is evident that Masters of Entropy have the power to destroy ideas on an individual level. They do not have the power to erode entire philosophies on a societal scale, but many mages claim the Oracles can perform such feats as making victims forget who they are.

Effects:

Destroy Thought. The mage can cause any rational thought or feeling to dissolve away in the chosen subject's mind. For example, a gunman facing the mage announces, "Move and I'll shoot!" The mage can destroy this thought using his control of entropy. The gunman might begin to think, "If I shoot him, I'll go to jail – I don't want to go to jail – besides, maybe he's got friends that'll hunt me down for revenge if I shoot him – he looks like a putz anyway – he probably doesn't have more than five bucks on him – I'm getting out of here."

The victim usually begins to rationalize away the affected thought. As in the example above, the victim finds the weaknesses and illogic inherent in the idea or feeling and so abandons it. The thought is destroyed.

The GM must decide how many points of success are necessary for the effect, depending on the complexity of the thought (must the victim abandon his entire moral-religious philosophy to disbelieve the idea, or merely order something different on the menu?) or the passion of the victim (murderous anger or slight annoyance?).

Entropy Rotes

Delion's Haze (Entropy 2, Time 3)

A now-dead Euthanatos teacher named Delion fell into disrepute when it was discovered that what he passed off as enlightenment to his students was really just a magickal effect. By applying entropy randomly to a student's sense of time, Delion was able to create an effect that his students assumed was their own progress in temporal intuition. The end result was actually an increasing inability to think clearly. The effect has since been reproduced in a quicker variant.

[Victims of this effect are subject to a penalty to all mental skills, and must make an IQ roll (at the same penalty) in order to concentrate on any task; if the victim fails his roll, his mind immediately wanders. The penalty is -1 for every point by which the mage makes his magickal effect roll.]

Magdeline's Dynamic Mind (Entropy 2, Mind 4)

The sad case of Magdeline is well known among mages, especially the Euthanatos (who are too stubborn to admit that her experiment was a failure). Though she has survived the intervening years through the magick of other mages, Magdeline corrupted her own mind a century ago. She postulated that if dynamism is what all mages seek, then an appropriate step in that direction would be to become forever random in thought and desire. She applied entropic processes to her mind to alter the way it worked. The insights she expected never came. Instead, her attention shifted constantly and her thoughts became incoherent. One moment she wanted to begin a new experiment; the next she wanted a relaxing walk around the lake.

[If the magickal effect roll is successful, the victim will suffer as described above.]

Shango's Grave

(Entropy 3, Forces 5, Matter 2, Prime 2)

Controlling the patterns of weather, even in a localized area, is an incredibly demanding feat of magick, but the mage Shango mastered it. Shango determined how to create and destroy massive formations of moisture in the atmosphere, manipulate thermal energy, and control the thousands of random factors that produce weather. Shango put his mighty magicks to a use belittled by many from other Traditions. He summoned storms to drench the sites of recent battles so that the mud and muck made it impossible to remove the bodies. Shango's apprentices would then retrieve the bodies for experimentation. Soldiers who insisted on trying to remove bodies were hit by lightning that coincidentally struck in the same place twice.

[The degree of success on the magickal effect roll indicates how large the storm is and how quickly it can be summoned.]

Curse of the Mayfly (Entropy 4, Life 4)

The Euthanatos rote *Curse of the Mayfly* is a hotly debated topic among the Traditions, though little about the Euthanatos is not debated. Aside from the sinister ethical problems the rote raises, concern is often voiced over using the rote as a teaching aid because of the vulgarity of its effects. Chiefly developed by the mage Vareness during the Black Plague (when the effect did not draw undue notice), this rote allows the mage to alter the Pattern of Life in such a way that entropy is diverted toward it. The immediate result is a dramatic increase in the aging process. The target literally withers away, eventually to death.

[Each point of success on the effect roll ages the subject by 5 years, with the appropriate penalties as per p. B83. (Use the world's base of TL7 for bonus on this roll.)]



Forces

All things, even the great forces of nature, are controllable by mind and will. Modern man has been lured into the belief that he must build gigantic atom smashers, generators, and transformers to harness the forces of reality, but in truth it takes only an understanding of the true nature of these forces and the will to command them. It is not an easy task; the Patterns of energy ripple through infinite variations at speeds that stagger the mind. How to command the lightning bolt as it blazes across the sky, before it flashes out of existence? But such has been the determination of mages throughout the ages to master these energies that techniques for trimming their Patterns are now known to us.

If you desire to learn this path of magick, then I shall teach you, but be warned that reality does not take kindly to those who master the Forces. The effects are often vulgar, so prepare for your body to be subjected to the debilitations of Paradox. You should prepare your conscience and compassion as well. Commanding the fickle energies of reality can easily lead to abuses of power and responsibility.

Humans have long sought to control the energies of nature. Toward this end they have employed techniques ranging from the rain dances of tribal cultures to billion-dollar fusion power experiments. Modern man has progressed a long way toward harnessing many of these energies, but mages who master the Sphere of Forces understand that there is much that modern man does not know. Mages are enlightened beyond the bounds of Newtonian physics, quantum theory and special relativity. Masters of Forces understand and apply theories and practices that allow them to manipulate and create any of the powers of nature.

The description of the Forces Sphere given here predominantly uses terms of modern science, such as radiation, kinetic energy, chemical bonds and reactions, etc. While some Traditions (such as the Sons of Ether and Virtual Adepts) utilize these terms in their study of Forces, other Traditions use radically different terminology and symbolism to represent the forces of nature. For example, Dreamspeakers see Forces as aspects dreamed into existence by Gaia. For them, the act of using Forces is the process of enticing Gaia to dream a certain way, thereby causing the desired energy to manifest in physical reality.

Mages who seek to cause serious damage to their foes often study this Sphere. It causes direct damaging effects at lower levels than does any other Sphere. At the higher levels, Forces can kill with but 1 or 2 points of success. (See the Damage Chart, p. 86.)

Mages who master Forces reveal themselves in weird and distinct ways. Their bodies tend to store static electricity, making their hair stand on end and their handshake jolt. Small energy sources tend to fluctuate as the mage passes (e.g., electrical power may surge or candles flare brighter as the Master walks by them). Other mages tend to give Masters of Forces some distance, for they are infamously prone to Paradox effects and their critical failures tend to be very messy.

Level 1: Perceive Forces

The mage first learns to discern the Patterns of energy. By identifying these Patterns, the mage is able to perceive all types of energy flows. He can sense wavelengths far beyond the limited range of visible light and sonic frequencies upon which the unenlightened rely. Anything from infrared light to X-rays to



gravity waves can be perceived by the mage. Of course, such radiation must be present in the environment for the mage to sense it.

Effects:

Darksight. In the absence of visible light, the mage can shift his perceptions up or down the spectrum of electromagnetic radiation. This allows him to view infrared or ultraviolet light, radio waves, x-rays, etc. The mage will no longer be able to discern color, but other interesting perceptions can be gained from the various spectra, such as seeing an object's underlying structure using x-rays or seeing in the dark using infrared.

Quantify Energy. Sons of Ether commonly use this effect during their research. By invoking this effect, the mage can sense the type and amount of energy at work around himself. He can easily translate his perceptions into accurate measurement units such as volts, amps, teslas, g's, etc. Note that this includes kinetic energy, which allows the mage to determine an object's velocity relative to the mage if the mage knows the object's mass.

Level 2: Control Lesser Forces

Traditions typically divide the study of Forces into the study of various types of energy. The Traditions teach their Disciples to master the Lesser Forces before advancing them to more complex energy forms. These Lesser Forces include electromagnetic radiation of all wavelengths (radio waves to gamma rays), electricity, and magnetism. Naturalistic Traditions represent these forces with symbols (sun, lightning bolt, lodestone) rather than using the nomenclature of Western science.

At this level of understanding, the mage can control the flow of Lesser Forces. However, the mage is limited to using the amount of energy available to him in the affected environment; he cannot create more energy. For example, the mage can focus the light of a candle into a beam of bright light, but he cannot make the candle emit more light.

Though the mage is limited to controlling ambient energies, numerous effects are possible. Many mages concentrate on the use of light and other ubiquitous forms of radiation. The flow of ambient light can be altered to create areas of darkness or blinding light. In most civilized areas, a supply of electrical energy is also readily available for control.

Effects:

Discharge Static. The mage can cause the static electricity in the air to discharge spontaneously in a localized area. If the effect is centered around a victim, the target will suffer 1d of damage per point of success rolled. Non-metallic armor will reduce the damage taken. Targets must also roll against their HT or be Physically Stunned. This effect is easier to perform when the air is dry (low humidity), or when the mage is around powerful electrical machinery.

Members of the Akashic Brotherhood are known to use a similar control of static charges to make their bodies reservoirs of static electricity. Thus, when they strike an opponent in martial combat, the energy is discharged upon contact.

System Havoc. Using this effect, a mage can touch any electrical machinery or power distribution system and virtually destroy it by fluctuating the current entering the system into spikes of electrical energy. Many advanced systems are TEMPEST-hardened (protected against surges). TEMPEST-hardening may minimize the damage the mage inflicts, but virtually any system can be shut down, if not damaged.

Virtual Adepts who are Disciples of Forces use a similar effect to control electrical machinery. Their control is rudimentary at best, and the mage must also have a firm understanding of the machinery (gained via the appropriate skill or skills).

Call Lightning. Provided there is plenty of thunderstorm activity directly overhead, the mage can route lightning out of the sky to strike any visible target in the vicinity. Bolts act as per the *Lightning* spell, p. B158. Living beings may also be stunned as described above in *Discharge Static*.

Level 3: Spawn Lesser Forces

The mage can now create the Lesser Forces from nothing. No longer does he need an existing source of energy to bend to his will; he can produce the forces himself.

Streams of electrical energy can be produced. Fields or concentrated beams (lasers) of radiation can be created, and powerful magnetic fields can be summoned to allow the mage control over metallic objects.

As with the other Pattern magicks (Life and Matter), the act of creation requires some understanding of the Sphere of Prime (in order for the mage to fuel Quintessence through his newly woven Pattern to create the Lesser Forces). Therefore, all effects using Forces 3 are conjunctive, requiring Prime at level 2.

Effects:

Power Systems. With a successful magickal effect roll, the mage can set up a Pattern which will act like a power cell for an electrical device. The amount of power produced is indicated by the number of points of success: 0-1 is the equivalent of an A cell (see *GURPS Space* or *Ultra-Tech*), 2-3 a B cell, 4-5 a C cell and so on.

Level 4: Control Major Forces

Once the mage has mastered the Lesser Forces, he begins his study of the three Major Forces: gravity, nuclear and kinetic. The force of gravity is the elemental force that attracts all objects. Nuclear energy covers the forces involved with chemical reactions, such as those that cause fires to burn, as well as the “strong” and “weak” forces known to physicists. However, mages of this level may not unlock the power stored in the atom (nuclear explosions), although that power is said to be controlled by the Oracles of Forces. Finally, control of kinetic energy, the basic energy of motion, gives the mage a wide range of powers. Kinetic energy primarily controls the motion of objects through space, but it also controls the temperature of objects and the vibration of air molecules to produce sound.

The mage begins by learning to control the Major Forces, just as he did with the Lesser Forces. At this level, he may control the energy already present around him, but may not create more.

Effects

Telekinetic Control. The mage may telekinetically control the movements of an object, provided the object is already in motion. The object cannot be made to move faster than its original speed, though the mage can slow or stop the object by siphoning kinetic energy into the air around it. This velocity limitation results from the mage’s inability to create more kinetic energy to impart to the object. The Adept can, however, redirect the flow of kinetic energy and thereby instantaneously change the direction of an object’s motion. For example, bullets may be caused to reverse and strike the gunman, or a moving car may be forced sideways instead of forward.

The more points of success rolled for the magickal effect, the more kinetic energy the mage can command: 4 points would enable control of a speeding bullet or a sprinting man, 5 a moving car, etc. It is very difficult to maintain control of a living creature, as the creature can simply stop moving. An IQ roll is necessary for very fine telekinetic movements such as threading a needle (and the GM may wish to apply a penalty for especially fine manipulation).

Members of the Akashic Brotherhood use telekinetic powers to give themselves extraordinary leaping abilities when performing Do. There is also a rumor that the Verbena of old did indeed craft telekinetic Talismans in the shape of brooms, but this may just be stereotyping.

Embracing the Earth Mother. The Dreamspeakers believe that by beating their drums, they can stir the Earth Mother, Gaia, into brief moments of fitful wakefulness. By sounding their drums deep and loud, they can call Gaia to embrace a chosen target. The effect causes gravity to focus around the chosen area or target.

Each point of success on the effect roll allows the mage to create a gravitational field 1 “G” strong (a “G” being a force of gravity equal to Earth’s normal pull). So, with 4 points of success, the mage could create a field of gravity 4 Gs strong (in which a 100-pound boy would weigh 400 pounds). 5 points of success enable 5 Gs, 6 enable 6 Gs, etc. At higher G-forces, objects begin to collapse under the strain of their own weight; slender or lightly-constructed objects will tend to collapse before stout or heavily-built objects. For characters, the extra weight is based on that of both the character *and* his carried equipment, and is treated as extra encumbrance, as per the Fat disadvantage on p. B28; when total *additional* weight exceeds 30xST, the character is unable to move at all. (For full details on the effects of high gravity, see *GURPS Space, Second Edition*, p. 72.) If the character still can move, he may try to crawl out of the field.

Other Traditions use gravity-focusing effects as well. The Cultists of Ecstasy enjoy reversing the flow of gravity to create surreal building interiors reminiscent of M.C. Escher paintings. Euthanatos reverse gravity to slam opponents into the ceiling or fling them into the sky.

Level 5: Spawn Major Forces

Finally, the mage can weave Patterns that generate the Major Forces. Though Paradox may limit the magnitude of the energies created, the mage still holds incredible sway over reality. He can create gravity wells, cause fiery explosions, and completely control an object’s motion.

Like any Pattern Magick creation effect, spawning Major Forces requires the use of Quintessence. Therefore, all Forces 5 effects require knowledge of Prime 2.

Effects:

Walking on Water. The Celestial Chorus performs a miracle wherein its members walk across water as if it were solid ground. The effect is created using the Sphere of Forces to control the molecular cohesion on the surface of a liquid. The surface becomes so tense and resilient that the mage simply walks right across it as if it were ice. Depending on the number of points by which the character makes his roll, other people can follow along.

Other Traditions use similar effects. The Sons of Ether use the effect to build aerial “pipelines” of pure liquid, enabling them to mix chemicals in their laboratories.

Forces Rotes

Veil of Invisibility (Forces 2, Life 3)

The *Veil* is a classic rote. Tomes in Ancestral Chantries document the teaching of this rote in the Middle Ages, and an older, less polished version is known to have been used in the time of Hammurabi. The Hermetic mage Alexander found that by altering the interaction between his own Life Pattern and the Patterns of light energy, he was able to make his own Pattern “immune” to the Patterns of light. Thus, light did not interact with his body. The effect is that light passes right through the mage who employs this rote.

This spell shows how different Spheres can be used to produce similar effects. There is also a Correspondence effect that produces invisibility.

[With 1 point of success the mage appears blurry, or may still be visible in parts. 3 or more points of success allow complete invisibility.]

Pulse of the Electro-Stream (Forces 3, Prime 2)

A rote of fairly recent origin, the Pulse was created by the mage Jason Hemingway for use against the Virtual Adepts. Jason once took out an entire BBS by creating raw electrical energy and directing it through the ground at the NetNode. He prepared in advance, as his Solomon’s seal required charging while he stood in a ceremonial circle intoning the ritual words. To create the Pulse, Jason threw the seal to the ground.

The Pulse has actually become popular among the younger and more violent members of the Order of Hermes, who have taken to charging several seals at once and carrying them around like grenades to use against the Technomancers. Virtual Adepts dislike seeing the rote being taught and still do not appreciate its use even though it is no longer directed against them.

[Victims struck by the attack suffer 1d-1 electrical damage per point of success on the effect roll. The target’s Toughness applies to this damage, but the DR of armor will not help unless the material is nonconductive. Living beings who take damage must also make a HT roll or be Physically Stunned. The GM may choose to adjust the damage according to how well grounded the target is. For example, a victim standing on concrete in rubber-soled boots would take reduced damage, while someone standing barefoot in a mud puddle would get fried.]

Ball of Abysmal Flame (Forces 5, Prime 2)

The Order of Hermes has no idea who created this rote, but it (along with similar effects) has been a mainstay of the more temperamental among the Order for centuries. The version that

is typically taught to Adepts seeking Master status was developed by the mage Claudius, who reportedly produced this effect by weaving a Pattern for kinetic energy and feeding it with Quintessence siphoned through the etheric tapestry. The resulting energy is channeled into a targeted object. The kinetic energy consumes the target, agitating its molecules and causing its temperature to skyrocket. Pockets of surrounding air explode in blasts of superheated gases, and solids disintegrate into a gaseous state.

[Damage to victims caught in such carnage is simply ridiculous. Victims suffer 4d-4 of burn damage for each point of success rolled (minimum 1). A successful Dodge roll reduces the damage from the pyrokinetic explosion in a manner similar to Countermagick (see p. 87). Victims who survive will suffer horribly from painful, blistering third-degree burns. Note that this effect creates a fire using kinetic energy to produce a huge temperature increase. Flames can also be created via chemical reactions (creating nuclear energy).]

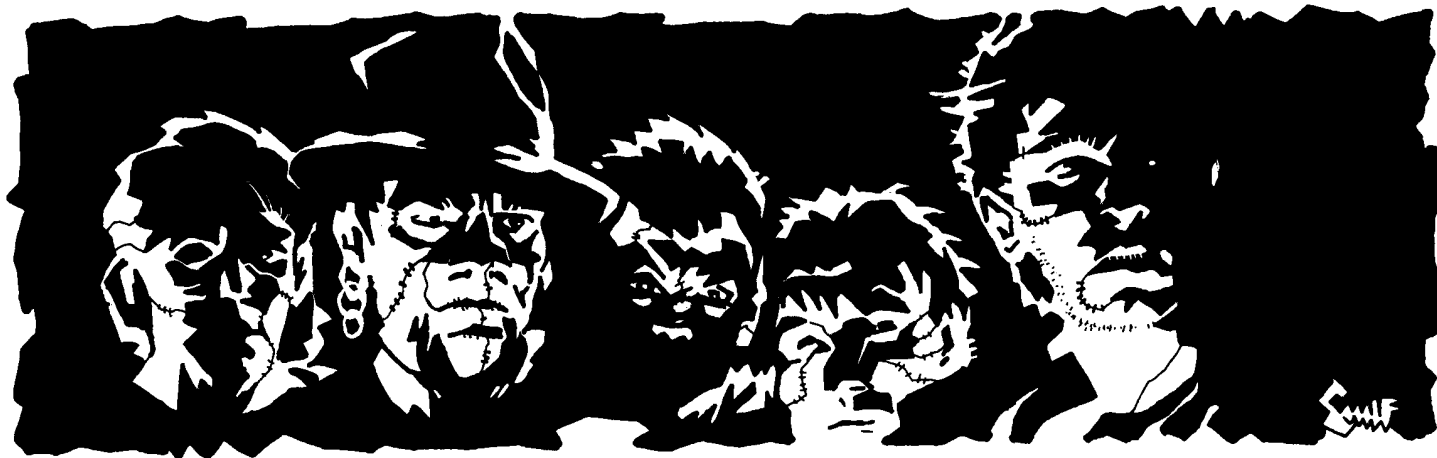
Unseen Arm (Forces 5, Prime 2)

By touching her seal to an object while speaking the correct formula, the famous albino mage Clarissa Donley found she could propel the object away from herself at high speed. In one of the most harrowing escapes from Technomancers ever documented, Clarissa employed a number of brilliant applications of this rote. She sent pennies flying from her hand with the speed of bullets. She was under the influence of powerful mind-altering Technomancer magick and was thus unable to use any other magickal effects, but Clarissa flung people, cars, and even an airplane away from herself with just a touch. She also used a similar effect to enable herself to fly.

By directly molding kinetic energy, the mage can instantly give any object whatever velocity he wishes.

[The more points of success rolled for the magickal effect, the more kinetic energy the mage creates. If the mage chooses to feed the energy into a more massive object, the object will have lower speed than a lighter one. 5 points of success impart enough energy into a penny to make it fly like a bullet, while a car may only go sliding across the pavement. It is generally assumed that any object thrown by the Unseen Arm will inflict 1d+1 damage per point of success rolled.

The mage can control the object’s direction of motion as long as it is within her sight. Fine manipulation and targeting of an object – especially while it is moving – require a IQ roll made with a modifier determined from the *Size and Speed/Range Table* on p. B201.]



Life

No, I do not profess to be a Master of the Patterns of Life. I do know enough to say the Technomancers' version of Life knowledge is shallow and binding. Genetics is another faith science that they have managed to root into static reality. The Patterns of Life are much more than molecular biology; the ethereal meshes which form life are intricately woven tapestries. In your mind's eye you can see these Patterns, and you can imagine them to change.

Even with my limited understanding, it is plain to me what sets life apart from the inanimate. The Patterns of life are infinitely more complex than those of the inorganic. The Patterns of life shift and flow as the form of life grows or dies, and most importantly, Quintessence flows through the Patterns of life like water through a sieve.

Countless things are possible when you change your understanding of Life. You will note that my body is free of scars, or wounds, or corrective eyewear. I do not trim my hair or nails, nor do I eat, sleep, drink, secrete or excrete. Reality has molded the human body into a form fit for survival, but the mind can make the body capable of far more. Come with me and I will teach you what I know of the Sphere of Life.

Life is arguably the most complex of the Pattern Spheres. The Patterns of Life are far more intricately woven than the Patterns of inanimate Matter or elemental Forces, and while the Patterns of Life do not fluctuate as quickly as those of energy, these complex Patterns comprise countless simultaneous permutations. Mastery of the Sphere of Life requires extraordinary mental agility and memory.

As with all Pattern magick, in order for the mage to create new Patterns of Life (i.e., new lifeforms) he must also have some command of Quintessence through knowledge of the Sphere of Prime. The mage can create Patterns of Life, but without Quintessence to feed them, the Patterns will instantly dissolve. The Sphere of Life can also be used to wreak havoc upon living creatures. It has been used to end lives in innumerable grotesque ways.

Masters of Life are known by their perfect health. Their skin is free of scars and blemishes, they eat and drink as much or as little as they please, and they rarely tire.

Level 1: Sense Life

The mage begins his study by learning to identify the Patterns of Life. By reading these Patterns, the mage can learn a great deal about a lifeform. A lifeform's Pattern reveals its age, sex, and every aspect of health. Also, by opening his awareness, the mage can sense the nearby presence of different forms of life.

Effects:

Genetics Scan. Using his computer, a Virtual Adept who is a Disciple of Life can execute a program to scan his immediate vicinity for signs of life. The program supplies graphics showing any nearby lifeforms' position relative to the mage himself, and can also display anatomical readouts of the detected forms based on their Patterns. The mage will usually filter the input so his computer doesn't show every gnat and cockroach. He can scan for single species, or even for specific individuals if he has the person's Pattern scanned into his computer's memory (automatic if the mage has previously scanned the target). After about a quarter-mile range, the scan becomes highly inaccurate and may even show ghostly images of imaginary lifeforms.



Prayer of Healing Revelation. The Celestial Chorus primarily studies the Patterns of Life to detect illness and injury. Their Disciples of Life learn to identify flaws in a lifeform's Pattern that indicate various diseases, injuries, poisons and parasitic infestations. The more points of success rolled, the more specific the information the mage receives. 1 point might reveal poison, 3 might reveal the poison is affecting the respiratory process, and 5 points of success might determine the poison to be cyanide.

Level 2: Alter Simple Patterns

The mage begins his manipulations of life's Patterns by working with the simplest Patterns of life. He can alter the Patterns of basic lifeforms, such as microscopic viruses and bacteria, all the way to creatures as complex as insects and shellfish (as a good rule of thumb, any invertebrate is considered a simple Life Pattern). Also, all plant life, from algae to sequoia trees, incarnates through Life Patterns simple enough for the mage to manipulate. Of course, he must still be able to sense whatever it is he manipulates.

The power to alter these Patterns gives the mage complete control over these lifeforms' physical existence. He can turn the creatures inside out, or kill them in countless other ways; conversely, he can heal imperfections in their Patterns, restoring them to health. Finer manipulations to Patterns require relatively long stretches of time during which the mage reweaves the filaments of the etheric Patterns. Destruction of a Pattern is a simple matter of ripping it apart, and can be accomplished very quickly.

Effects:

Little Good Death. The Euthanatos primarily study Life to learn how to end it. This effect is the first form of killing the Tradition's Disciples learn. With this effect the mage mentally grasps and shreds the etheric Pattern of any simple creature. The target suffers 1d-2 damage for each point of success the mage rolls. This damage bypasses the victim's DR (including Toughness), although it can be resisted with Will, as per p. 86. Other Traditions use similar effects, though less frequently.

Mold Tree. Verbena invented this effect, which allows a mage to reweave the Pattern of a tree, causing its branches or even its trunk to bend and twist into new shapes.

Heal Simple Creature. The mage can attempt to repair a lifeform's damaged Pattern. Virtually any affliction can be corrected by this means. Generally, 2 points of HT may be healed per point of success rolled. The GM must decide the number of points by which the roll must be made for other restorative effects such as regrowing limbs, curing paralysis, etc.

Each attempt at healing a Pattern assumes that the mage does as much restorative work as he is able. Repeating the effect will not heal more damage. At the GM's discretion, the mage may attempt to fix more Pattern damage after the creature's Pattern has had sufficient time to fluctuate around the first restoration the mage performed. Also, any new damage suffered by the subject can be treated by the mage. Some mages have been known to cure a little bit of damage, cause more and create a new Pattern, and then try again. Of course, these are the same mages who tend to critically fail at this effect and cause immense damage.

Certain types of wounds require special treatment when healed through magick. Aggravated wounds (see p. 137) can only be treated using vulgar magick. Aggravated wounds such as damage from Paradox Backlash or Pattern bleeding (see *Better Body*, below) cannot be treated even with Life magick and can only heal naturally with time.

Finally, two mages cannot successively heal a single subject. After one mage has cured a subject, another cannot try until the subject's Pattern has changed (the target has suffered more damage). Two or more mages may still act in concert to heal a subject.

Level 3: Alter Self/Create Simple Patterns

At this level, the mage has mastered simple Life Patterns. He now knows their structures well enough that he may copy them and weave similar Patterns himself. If the mage is also familiar with the Sphere of Prime, he can actually create simple lifeforms – biogenesis.

Unfortunately, any lifeform created using the Sphere of Life has no mind. It is an organic shell without sentience. However, for simple lifeforms, especially plants, this fault is virtually irrelevant. Even creatures such as crabs and insects can be imbued with some instinctive reflexes that serve for intelligence in the absence of a true mind.

Additionally, at this level the mage begins to experiment with the most complex Patterns of life. The mage inevitably begins his studies by manipulating the Pattern with which he is most familiar, his own. He is now able to manipulate the Pattern of his own body to heal it, improve it or change it in any way he desires.

Effects:

Ho Tien Chi. Chinese for "Breath of the Day after Birth," Ho Tien Chi is a breath control exercise mastered by the Akashic Brotherhood. Through this powerful effect, the mage can restore

damage done to his body. The results are the same as those of *Heal Simple Creature*, above. Other Traditions practice various methods of healing, from the Celestial Chorus's *Laying on of Hands* to the crazed theories the Sons of Ether espouse concerning electrical stimulation of the human body's healing faculties.

Better Body. By reweaving the Pattern of his own body, the mage can improve slightly on Mother Nature. Each point of success on the roll enables the mage to increase his ST, DX or HT by 1 point, or his Appearance by one level. The effect has a duration based on the number of points by which the roll succeeded, but cannot become permanent. After some time, the instability of the mage's new form will cause his Pattern to "leak" Quintessence, damaging him. Normally, this "Pattern bleeding" damage accumulates at the rate of 1 HT per day, but if the mage frequently exerts the capabilities of his improved body, this interval can decrease to minutes or hours. This HT loss cannot be corrected or healed until the mage allows his Pattern to revert to its natural weave (losing the points gained in Attributes), and then can only be regained via natural healing, not through magick.

The mages of the Akashic Brotherhood use a similar effect to create areas of dense bone in the parts of their body used for striking in martial combat. Euthanatos sometimes cause sharp bony spikes to extrude from their bodies. They use these protrusions as daggers or claws in their death combats. These claws give the mage the ability to do both swing/cutting and thrust/impaling damage.

Level 4: Alter Life

The mage is adept at reweaving the most complicated Patterns of life. Even the highly complex Patterns of another human body are subject to the mage's control.

Effects:

Mutate Form. The mage can alter the form of another living creature. He can cause deformities, paralysis or other physical impairments, or he can find beneficial uses for the magickal effect. With sufficient control, the mage could alter a subject's bone structure, allowing the subject to slip through prison bars. He could alter a human's respiratory system to allow him to extract oxygen from water. Mages also use these mutations as the ultimate form of disguise, altering body structure to adjust height, weight, build and facial features.

The number of points by which the magickal effect roll is made indicates the degree to which the mage can warp the subject's body. Mutations that last more than an hour may cause the traumatic Pattern leaking effect described above in *Better Body*.

Rip the Man-Body. The Euthanatos use the Sphere of Life to kill humans. With this effect, a mage can rend the Patterns of more complex lifeforms. As the mage lacks detailed knowledge of such complex Patterns, he is unable to unravel the Patterns quickly. The overall effect is similar to *Little Good Death*, but *Rip the Man-Body* can affect any lifeform. This damage manifests as lesions and internal hemorrhaging.

Physiological Emotion Control. Virtual Adepts still view human beings as innately biological creatures. They have found that the human mind can often be controlled by inducing certain reactions within the physical body. For example, the emotions of anger or fear can be induced by causing the body to release adrenaline. Similarly, tremendous pleasure can be induced by having the body release endorphins. Even depression often has biological causes.

Any Adept of Life can induce emotions in a subject by causing the person's body to release the correct hormones. The more points of success on the effect roll, the more intense the emotion.

Level 5: Create Life Patterns/

Transformations

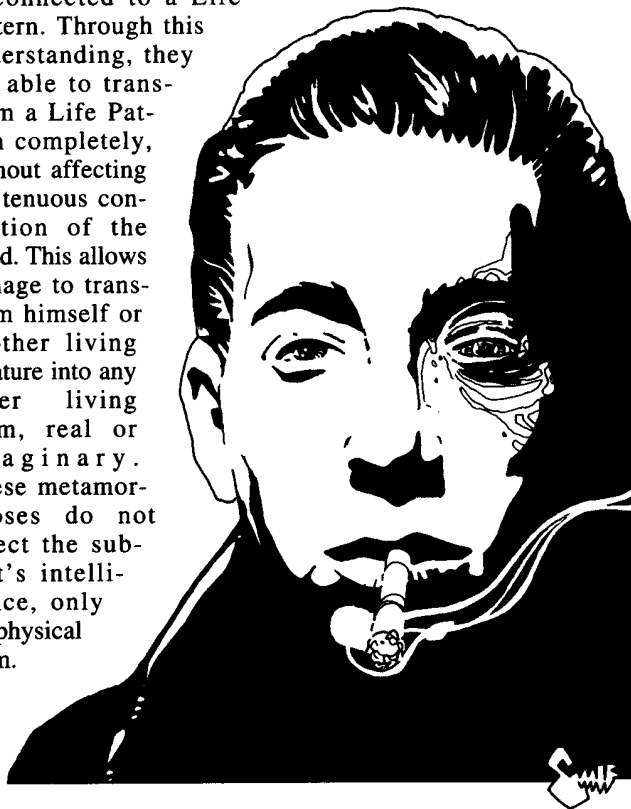
The Master of Life is able to create any lifeform, even a human body. Unfortunately, the lifeform created has no mind or soul. At first, such a huge deficiency might make this creative ability seem useless, but mages have found several functions for the complex lifeforms they create.

Some mages are content to create entirely new forms of life to study how various bone structures or organ placements might be used to improve their own or others' bodies. Often these lifeforms are imbued with sets of instinctive reactions that mimic instinctual intelligence. Some Euthanatos are said to create vile beasts whose instinctive drive is only to kill. These beasts are unleashed on their enemies.

Another major use mages have found for the mindless bodies they create is to use them as physical receptacles for spirits or other astral forms. Most spirits are able to manifest in an empty body (some can even possess occupied bodies), and can then interact with the physical world. Mages are often able to acquire services from spirits in return for the mage providing a soulless body.

Mages who have also mastered the Sphere of Mind can untether their minds and create new bodies for their own astral forms to fill. Such mages often leave a long trail of different identities behind them. Using this chameleonlike power, many mage Masters attain a degree of immortality by constantly projecting their consciousness into new, young bodies. When a mage switches bodies, he also leaves behind whatever Paradox or Quintessence was stored in the Life Pattern of his old body. While this is a convenient way for the Masters to avoid Paradox Flaws, they have found that Paradox spirits have no trouble tracking their minds to the new bodies, and these spirits often become even more potent to deal with the additional anomaly they are tracing.

Upon attaining Mastery, mages of Life also gain a deeper understanding of how the mind is connected to a Life Pattern. Through this understanding, they are able to transform a Life Pattern completely, without affecting the tenuous connection of the mind. This allows a mage to transform himself or another living creature into any other living form, real or imaginary. These metamorphoses do not affect the subject's intelligence, only its physical form.



Effects:

Animal Form. The Verbena Masters of Life can switch form at will, taking the body of whatever animal best suits their current needs or desires. The Verbena also use this effect on those who displease them, turning the offender into a lesser creature such as a frog or a fly.

The Order of Hermes uses a similar effect (*Metamorphosis*) to take the form of mythical creatures such as griffins and manticora.

The subject of the transformation receives all the benefits and penalties of the new form. The subject's senses are limited to those of the new form (e.g., a human transformed into a tree would not be able to see, smell or hear, but might gain new senses that allow him to "feel" sunlight, water and wind). The subject's sentience does not change, and mages may still make use of magick in any form. Like any other transformation, the new form is subject to Pattern bleeding.

Life Rotes

Imbue Flesh (Life 2, Spirit 2)

The mage Heiro (see *Flesh Toys*, below) eventually recovered from his extended Quiet and was shocked to find himself surrounded by hordes of loyal animals. No longer entertained with them, but unwilling to dispense with them, he summoned a number of spirits from the Umbra and gave them the physical forms they desired.

This effect has since been recognized as the simplest way for a mage to create a familiar. Different Traditions favor different types of familiars. These combinations are the best known: Verbena – black cats; Euthanatos – cockerels and goats; Sons of Ether – golems; Akashic Brotherhood – cranes, monkeys and praying mantises; and, although Virtual Adepts usually bring spirits into their Net rather than into the physical world, there are reports of young Adepts using mice as familiars.

[The mage must first have a suitable spirit at hand; the rote does not provide any summoning effect. On a successful roll, the rote temporarily gives the spirit the ability to Possess the physical form (which may be an inanimate object as well as an animal or mindless body). If the spirit already has the Possession charm, a successful roll by the mage counts as a successful Possession roll by the spirit, otherwise the spirit must make a Possession roll as normal. Additionally, every point of success rolled by the mage becomes a +1 bonus to the spirit's Possession attempt.]

Uther's Butchered Visage (Life 3, Mind 1)

By cutting himself with a sacred knife, a crazed mage named Uther literally carved himself into a new man. It was a messy, bloody business, but no price is too high for safety from the Technomancers. Uther survived a number of months masquerading as a retainer of a Progenitor, and managed to leak valuable information before being discovered.

[A mage must have an opportunity to study the Pattern of another living creature, eidetically memorize it, and then alter his own appearance to resemble the memorized Pattern. Five points of success allow the mage to alter his body completely, making it appear identical in every way to the lifeform he is copying. Fewer points of success result in some disguise defects, but even these are minor discrepancies. The "butchering" causes no damage to the mage (even in Uther's case).]

Flesh Toys (Life 3 or 5, Prime 2)

Heiro, a mage who perpetually lived in a deep state of Quiet, used this effect to create friends for himself. No one can say for certain why he did this or what he actually thought was going on, but Heiro soon had an entire entourage of frogs, insects, cats and dogs that kept him company in his turmoil.

Heiro created a Pattern for each lifeform and channeled Quintessence into it, thus creating the creature. It is rumored that certain Euthanatos copied this rote to create zombie-like lifeforms with limited intelligence and virtually no will, and that some Sons of Ether have created sentient lifeforms in their European castle laboratories.

[More complex creatures require more points of success, while creating multiple creatures at once imposes a penalty equal to the number of creatures beyond the first. The more points of success rolled for the effect, the healthier the creatures are, and the longer they will survive. Five points of success guarantees a normal lifespan for simple lifeforms. All lifeforms created are assumed to have only base instinctual reactions.

If the mage attempts to create a totally new form of life, one whose Pattern he has therefore never seen or studied, the required number of points of success will be higher (and level 5 in the sphere is required). Imagined lifeforms must be biologically viable to survive once created; for example, an insect without a nervous system will quickly die.]



Fluids of

Death (Life 4, Entropy 4)

An unknown mage, whose actions may well form the basis of some fairy tales, created what is now called an Elixir of Death by brewing a potion with a drop of her own blood in her cauldron. The concoction was then poured on the roots of a tree in a royal orchard. As the fruit of this tree ripened, the flesh of the fruit became tainted by the elixir. The juices of the fruit caused the available energy in the royal bodies to “decompose” into an unusable state. With nothing left to power them, the muscles in the victims’ bodies were unable to operate. In some cases the victims’ hearts failed or lungs stopped, killing them.

[The effect reduces an individual target’s ST by 1 for each 2 points of success on the effect roll. In addition to the damage, the victim will suffer a penalty to Physical skills and other physical actions because of the fatigue caused, equal to the points of success scored. Should the target’s ST reach 0, he will die.]

Matter

Have you heard the tale of the philosopher’s stone? It was sought by alchemists for hundreds of years as the means to turn base metals into gold. Had the Technomancers not made gold one of their periodic elements, the alchemists might have succeeded. Indeed, the science of the Sons of Ether may succeed yet.

In truth, there is no need for pestles and mortars or philosopher’s stones. Through the paradigm of physical reality Patterns, the enlightened mind can mold even the rigid Patterns of lifeless matter.

Having mastered this knowledge, it is difficult for me even to conceive of a world where one cannot control the forms and shapes of the environment. What a primitive and miserable existence, where one must shape matter with one’s hands!

Please, I do not mean to belittle your current state; I merely ruminate over the scope of all that I have learned. You too can accomplish great things with your mind.

I will begin your instruction; be warned, however, that in the coming years, I may leave you to continue my studies among the Oracles. Then you will need to find a new tutor.

The Sphere of Matter concerns itself with the Patterns of all things that are not alive. While its domain is often called the inorganic, this is a misnomer – even compounds of carbon are included in the domain of Matter as long as they are not part of a living form. For example, the flesh of a man is influenced by the Sphere of Life until he dies, but from that moment on (when his Pattern shifts from life to unlife and Quintessence no longer trickles into it) his corpse is controllable through the Sphere of Matter. For GMs who include undead beings such as vampires in their chronicle, the bodies of such creatures fall under the sway of Matter, not Life, should a mage attempt to alter the undead form.

The Patterns of Matter differ from those of Life or Forces in that they are much more rigid and enduring. They do not fluctuate nearly as much, and therefore they are not as easy to alter. However, they are much simpler to weave, and a mage with Level 2 in Prime can easily create new items of matter.

Masters of Matter do not show many outward signs of their ability. They do have a great disdain for possessions (they create them as needed), tempered by an increased appreciation for art, and look upon the entire world as something subject to their control. This viewpoint leads many Masters of Matter to become haughty, even by the standards of mages.

Level 1: Matter Perceptions

The Disciple of Matter begins by learning to recognize the various Patterns of matter, including the weaves that give objects their shapes and their physical properties. These perceptions of matter allow the Disciple to recognize many things concerning the reality around him, things hidden to normal senses. In addition to sensing the composition and properties of matter, the Disciple can see structures hidden within structures, because the forms of Matter are no longer a barrier to him senses.

Effects:

Fragments of Dream. The mage extends his senses beyond physical reality into Pattern. He no longer sees matter in the same way, e.g., instead of a brick wall, he sees its Pattern in his mind’s eye. This allows the mage to perceive things that would be unseen in physical reality. For example, the mage could

sense the contents of a room beyond a wall. He can also detect objects or structures that might otherwise be hidden, such as the false bottom of a suitcase.

The only limit to this effect is that the mage can only sense the Patterns of Matter (unless he is a Disciple of other Pattern magicks).

Analyze Substance. As a Disciple of Matter, the mage has begun to identify the Patterns of different substances. He can detect the exact composition of any substance, and may detect aspects such as the object's age or weight by examining the Pattern. The mage could distinguish diamonds from cubic zirconiums, detect poison in wine, or tell an antique chair from a modern imitation by studying the chair's Pattern to see signs of aging.

Level 2: Create Unified Patterns

The mage can now weave his own Patterns to create objects of unified material. He can create pockets of gas, pools of liquid, and solids of any shape. The mage can only create Patterns that are stable in the environment in which they are created (e.g., he could not create a pool of liquid nitrogen in a room-temperature environment; such would first require knowledge of Forces to cool the nitrogen).

Like any other creation effect using Pattern magick, the mage must also have knowledge in the Sphere of Prime (Level 2) in order to feed the created Pattern Quintessence and thereby cause it to materialize.



Level 3: Alter Matter/Pattern

Disassociation

At the third level in Matter, the mage can finally overpower the rigid Patterns of matter. By selectively altering different threads within a Pattern, he is now able to change the shape of any inanimate object. The mage can also alter specific Pattern threads and thereby change some properties of substances, such as their boiling or melting points, or their density.

The other major effect available to Level 3 Disciples is called *Pattern disassociation*. Through Pattern disassociation, a mage can alter the Pattern of an inanimate object, preventing it from interacting with some other reality Pattern the mage selects. The object will then become immaterial and nonexistent in regard to the other reality Pattern from which it was disassociated.

Effects:

Sculpture. Mages of the Cult of Ecstasy who practice the Sphere of Matter are usually fine artists. They use their magick to give themselves new mediums of art. Indeed, those who progress to the third level of Matter can use any solid object as their medium for artistic interpretation. The mage need only mentally resculpt the image of the matter and then modify its Pattern so that the object assumes the desired shape. The larger the object, the more points of success are needed to manipulate it.

Alter Weight. This effect is the first of many material property alterations the Sons of Ether perform. This effect allows the mage to alter an object's density, thus changing the weight but not the size of the object. For example, the mage could reduce the density of the iron in a crowbar, making it lighter but not changing its shape or size. For every point by which he makes the magickal effect roll, the mage can adjust the density of the object by one factor. With 0 or 1 points the mage can double or halve an object's density; 2-3 points of success enable the mage to quadruple or quarter an object's weight; and so on. Objects that are substantially reduced in density tend to become brittle and fragile; some even collapse.

Hollow Ones are fond of using a similar effect to cause fancy cars to collapse under their own weight, or to bring down the roofs on yuppie-infested buildings.

Alter State. By changing an object's boiling or freezing point, the mage can alter the state of matter between solid, liquid and gaseous. The mage does not change the temperature of the matter, merely its form. He might cause water to freeze into ice at room temperature, but the ice will remain at room temperature. It will not freeze because it becomes colder; rather, it will freeze because the mage alters the temperature at which the water will freeze.

The more points by which he makes the magickal effect roll, the more the mage can alter the temperature at which the matter will turn to a solid, liquid or gas. Without checking listings of melting and boiling points in a science book, the GM should just use common knowledge to decide what is possible at various levels of success. Zero or 1 point of success would cause water to freeze at room temperature, while 10 points could turn gasses in the air into solids, encapsulating other objects or people.

Matter Pattern Disassociation. The unwieldy name for this effect undoubtedly came from the labs of the Sons of Ether. It involves modifying the Patterns of two pieces of matter so that the two items become insubstantial with respect to one another. The items will not interact in any way. For example, doors slide through their hinges and fall, water cascades through the pipe

that was carrying it, a truck wheel drops through the rubber tire and grinds on the pavement, etc. The affected items are in no way changed except with regard to each other.

The more points by which the mage makes his roll, the more mass he is able to affect. The mage can simultaneously affect several similar items, such as all four wheels and all four tires on a truck at once, so long as they are formed of the same material.

Destroy Structures. The mage uses his knowledge of Matter Patterns to unweave the Patterns of structures, shredding them and thereby breaking down their physical incarnations. The effect is in some ways similar to *Sculpture*, except that the mage is unconcerned with the new form of the structure; he is simply breaking it down as quickly as possible. He can shred steel doors, cause wooden tables to fall apart, or cause concrete to crumble. The mage can disperse pools of gas or liquid as long as there is an open area into which the pool can dilute. For example, the mage could extinguish an oil fire burning on top of a river by causing the oil to disperse into the water.

The mage can only affect one type of material with each effect. The more points by which he succeeds on his roll for the effect, the larger or more intricate the structure the mage can destroy.

Level 4: Transmutation/Quilted Forms

The mage now begins to understand the means of breaking apart the Pattern of a material object without disrupting the object's structure. This ability allows the mage to change the composition of the object without changing its shape. It is the power of true transmutation.

Adepts of Matter can also create much more complex items through a Pattern magick effect called Quilted Forms. These forms are several Patterns of matter interwoven with one another into one structure. For example, the mage could now create a car, complete with all of the forms of plastic, metal, rubber and upholstery that make up a car.

Effects:

Transmutation. Adepts of Matter can remove the strands of an object's Pattern that determine an object's composition and replace them with newly created strands that impart a different composition. The end result is that the mage can transmute matter, changing its base material.

This transmutation effect is incredibly potent and versatile. The mage can entrap people by transmuting nitrogen in the air into iron; he can turn plaster walls into glass, or lead weights into gold. The more points of success rolled for the effect, the more mass the mage can transmute. The mage can only affect one type of material at a time.

Level 5: New Substances or Structures

Masters of Matter may create entirely new substances with properties beyond the scope of imagined material science. They have learned how to separate objects into component parts. They may now give any form of matter virtually any property they desire: density, rigidity, melting and boiling points, viscosity, surface tension, electromagnetic response, and transparency or opacity.

Masters build castles with paper-thin walls, and wear clothes of indestructible armor that feel softer than silk and weigh less than a feather. They cause pools of water to become heavier than lead, or cause copper to become an insulator instead of an electrical conductor.

There are still some limitations on the mage, for even a Master does not know all the intricacies of modifying Patterns. A Master could not, for example, change an object's density to that of a black hole, or create materials that are impervious to thermal conduction or electromagnetic effects. Mages who seek this type of knowledge pursue it among the Oracles of Matter.

A Master of Matter can also create complete structures no larger than molecules. These nanotechnology creations are capable of countless duties, and their self-replicating ability makes them awesome, yet dangerous, tools to use. It is rumored that the Oracles of Matter have taken the concept of nanotechnology a step further and created entire entities, new forms of pseudo-life, using only the inanimate.

Effects:

Tapping the Signal. Virtual Adepts use Mastery of Matter to turn any substance into a conductor capable of transmitting computer signals. They can send computer signals through brick walls or along the pavement of an interstate highway. They sometimes use this effect to eavesdrop by tapping into computer communications on "isolated" lines. The computer mage forms a conductive path to the private line through any matter that is in the way, be it walls, insulators, etc.

It is rumored that the Virtual Adepts have fine enough control of this effect to turn the ground itself into a network of computer lines. The mage need only plug his computer into the ground itself to create a channel that taps into the nearest preestablished line. The Tradition is said to have a network of lines that criss-cross the entire crust of the Earth. Even mages of the Virtual Adept Tradition who are not themselves Masters of Matter may know of secret locations across the surface of the Earth where such channels have been established.

Matter Rotes

Spontaneous Material Construction

(Matter 2, Prime 2)

A classic Sons of Ether rote, *Spontaneous Material Construction* allows a mage to conjure physical objects from thin air. An artist named Loralai developed this effect to create complex forms not easily duplicated by physical labor. She created "carvings" of exquisite detail, taking hundreds of days just to develop the pattern. The rote is used to demonstrate how such complicated material may be created, in order to prove how easy it is to create simple objects like a crowbar or even oxygen.

After Loralai increased her knowledge of Matter (to Level Four) she was able to create even more complex items, such as carvings formed from several materials.

[The more points of success rolled for this effect, the greater the amount of material the mage can create: 2 points of success = 2 pounds, 3 points of success = 10 pounds, 4 points = 20 pounds, 5 points = 100 pounds, and so on.]

Talisman Transmogrification (Matter 3, Prime 3)

Talismans are imbued with free Quintessence, and thus their physical structures are "locked" into reality, normally rendering them impossible to transform with Pattern magick. However, Loralai learned to reshape the form of any Talisman, altering its appearance or physical properties as she could any other object.

[The mage must win a Quick Contest between his magickal effect roll and the Talisman's highest Power+5 to alter the Talisman. The more points by which the Contest is won, the more dramatic the change can be.]



Transepheeration Ray Projector (Matter 3, Life 3)

The Projector shoots two beams of light. One targets a person; the other an object. The machine alters the person's life Pattern and that of the inanimate object, thereby disassociating the two Patterns. The subject's body and the selected object will no longer interact; they are immaterial to one another. A wooden baseball bat, or any other wooden object if wood is struck by the other beam, will swing right through the subject as if he were a ghost. The person can step through walls or reach into water without getting wet.

[The more points of success scored on the effect roll, the greater the mass of material from which the mage can disassociate. Mages of Level 4 in Matter can use a similar effect to disassociate from objects made of several kinds of matter, like a car made of metals, plastic and glass.]

The Incredible Shrunk Machine (Matter 5, Forces 3, Prime 2)

Though the Technomancers are pioneering the science of nanotechnology, the Sons of Ether are now using some of their foes' theories to create their own miniature machines. Nanotechnology already works a little differently for the Sons of Ether. The machine itself is actually constructed on a large scale, and then shrunk through a different effect. Once shrunk the machine will function normally. Such machines can be used to mark items, build programmed structures, produce radiation, or break down certain compounds. They can be designed for a specific mission and equipped to carry it out (e.g. repair a faulty heart valve in a human).

[The points of success on the roll determines how long the machine will function, as per the duration chart.]

Mind

Do not be startled, child. My voice is in your mind, not in your ear. Verbal communication is so limited. You will find that telepathy is purity.

I understand, child. You have held the erroneous belief that perhaps ESP was possible, but this pure telepathy is beyond your belief. Why did you think ESP was the limit of the human mind's capabilities? Because science has almost given it the stamp of approval? In truth, the powers of the human mind know no limit. Our mind shapes the very laws of reality. Our beliefs create reality.

Megalomaniac? Me? You are like Xenophanes of old, questioning man's anthropomorphic vision of the gods' true forms, saying that belief in gods in the shape of man was a conceit. Similarly then, I am guilty of cosmic conceit to believe the human mind responsible for shaping reality in the form of the mind's own beliefs. Yet it is true, as you shall see. Your belief should not come from understanding of reality; rather, reality should come from your understanding of belief.

For now, I will enlighten you to the true potential of the human mind. Choose to take this journey with me, and telepathy will be but one of many things over which you will gain mastery.

Mages have long delved into their own minds in search of power. The scope of knowledge derived from countless years of enlightened investigation has led to the development of the Sphere of Mind. The Sphere covers the manifold powers attributed to the human mind itself. It does not include the physiological processes of the organic brain; the Sphere transcends biology for the raw essence of intelligent thought.

Masters of Mind have opened their mental faculties far beyond the scope imagined by the unenlightened. Perception, communication, even control of thought processes are their domain. Their control extends from the glimmers of sentence exhibited by animals to the higher faculties of the human mind.

Masters of Mind occasionally reveal themselves through odd behavior patterns such as finishing other people's sentences, lightning-fast mathematical calculations, or already knowing trivia about complete strangers when they first meet. They also tend to be introspective and often talk to themselves.

Level 1: Empower Self

Before the mage attempts contact with the minds of others, it is necessary for him first to master his own. At this level, mages explore the powers of their minds. Many develop eidetic memory, amazing computational speed, a type of multi-tasking brain function, and mind-over-body control of their autonomic nervous systems (though many mages scorn such biological control as primitive study).

In game mechanic terms, this means disciples of Mind will usually have such mental advantages as Eidetic Memory, Lightning Calculator and Enhanced Time Sense. The mage must pay for these normally with starting or earned character points if he wishes to possess them permanently, but they may also gain them *temporarily* with a magickal effect roll.

Effects:

Mental Boost. The mage may acquire a Mental Advantage of his choice. This requires 1 point of success for every 10 character points that the advantage is worth (rounded up). For example, Eidetic Memory 1 costs 30 points, so at least 3 points of success are required for the mage to gain this ability. Not all

mental advantages are available in this manner; for instance, Strong Will, Empathy and psi powers cannot be acquired this way. The GM is the final authority on what can be gained.

Because the manipulation of one's own mind is so difficult, count the points of success for the basic effect and its duration *separately*, with a minimum of 1 point counted for duration at all times. *Example:* Medge the Mage wants Lightning Calculator. This costs 15 points, and thus requires 2 points of success. His skill is 15, and he rolls a 11, for 4 points of success. 2 points of this go towards gaining the advantage, while the other 2 are read on the duration chart on p. 86 for a result of 30 minutes.

Even if the duration chart indicates that the effect is permanent, the character may not take the advantage unless he has sufficient points to pay for it, or will dedicate all subsequently earned points towards the cost.

Multi-Tasking. The Virtual Adepts' affinity for computer processing reveals itself in how they approach the Mind magick they call *Multi-Tasking* (other Traditions label it and conceive of it differently).

This ability exceeds even Enhanced Time Sense (see p. 46) in augmenting the mage's mind. Each 2 points of success rolled (minimum 1) enables the mage to perform one additional task. The Virtual Adepts see this as setting up parallel processing in their minds. The additional task(s) may be equivalent to any that would normally occupy him mentally. Thus a mage who obtained 4 points of success on his magickal effect roll might speak on the telephone to a comrade, program a computer, and memorize a recording in the background. The real limit is the mage's physical ability to perform all of the tasks his mind is capable of processing.

Unfortunately, mages (other than the Oracles of Mind) have been unable to channel their wills through more than one thought avenue at once. Thus, the mage cannot simultaneously evoke multiple magickal effects.



Level 2: Mental Impulse

The mage now begins reaching out to other minds. The mage's ability is limited to subconscious impulses; he cannot yet achieve true conscious communication. He is able to detect another's feelings empathically, or transmit emotional impulses to influence another's behavior. The mage can also communicate indirectly with the consciousness of another by sending images or single words to the person's subconscious mind. Such subconscious suggestions are much more insidious, and can often be more advantageous, than direct conscious communication.

Effects:

Pathos. By mentally reaching out to any individual near him, the mage can gain insight into the subject's current feelings. The more points of success made on the effect roll, the more comprehensive the mage's understanding of the feelings and their origins. For example, 0 or 1 point and the mage senses anger, 2 points and the mage senses anger mixed with fear, 3 points and the mage senses that the subject in fact feels anger spawned from anguish over loss mixed with fear, and so on with more points of success. The mage must make a successful Will roll (The GM may assign a modifier to the roll based upon intensity of feelings) to resist being infected by the subject's emotions and experiencing them himself.

This empathic ability is commonly employed by the Akashic Brotherhood, Celestial Chorus, and Verbena. The Cult of Ecstasy uses empathy extensively to "ride" others' emotions, and the Sons of Ether clinically study emotions for their own branch of paradigm psychology.

Subliminal Impulse. The mage can broadcast a single image or word into a subject's subconscious. The more points by which the magickal effect roll is made, the more powerful the suggestion. The subconscious impulse will work its way into the conscious; more powerful impulses blaze straight into the subject's conscious mind. The subject's response depends upon both his Will (which is used to resist normally) and the compatibility of the impulse with his normal feelings and behavior.

Powerful impulses can cause dramatic changes in behavior, or trigger spontaneous reactions. For example, a mage may cause a waiter to drop a plate by sending his subconscious mind the word "hot" as the man picks up the plate. Truly powerful impulses can even cause psychotic or self-destructive acts. Such subliminal suggestions may linger in the subject's subconscious depending on the number of points by which the roll was made.

No-Mind. All mages who possess Level 2 in Mind are capable of scanning their surroundings for sentience. However, the mages of the Akashic Brotherhood have perfected the effect to a fine art. These mages enter a Zen-like trance state wherein their own thoughts are subdued and their minds become open to the impressions of other minds. Such a mage is able to sense the general location of any minds near himself, as well as other details such as the gender of the detected creature, i.e., male/female/neuter (some plants and spirits actually register to Mind magick); the type of creature (human, rat, redwood); and sometimes the general behavior of the creature (running, hiding, eating, etc.). Some Do masters have been known to blind themselves purposefully, forcing them to rely on the *No-Mind* effect. Such mages believe that the *No-Mind* state is a step toward Ascension and should be cultivated.

Level 3: Mental Link

The mage is able to establish clear links between his own consciousness and the minds of others. The mage can use this link for telepathic communication or for telepathic invasion of another's thoughts and memories.

Along with the ability to project thoughts and images into another's mind comes the ability to project false perceptions into the mind. At this level, the mage has full command of perceptual illusions.

At this level, mages of some Traditions are also taught means of projecting psychic disturbances into a subject's mind. These psychic assaults take many forms, but their end goal is to turn the victim into a mental vegetable.



Effects:

Telepathy. The mage establishes a communication link between his own mind and a number of minds equal to the number of points by which he succeeds on his magickal effect roll. The surface thoughts of everyone linked telepathically are automatically exchanged across the link, creating a collage of images and language. Those unaccustomed to telepathic communication invariably send more information than they had intended to share. Indeed, linking several untrained minds creates a tremendous volume of psychic "noise," as those untrained in telepathy do not know how to blank their minds to avoid constantly "talking" across the link.

Graphic Transmission. Virtual Adepts approach the power of illusion in their customary fashion, through computer technology. To create an illusion in a subject's mind, the mage executes a graphics routine on his computer and transmits it directly into the subject's consciousness. Whatever images the mage creates on his computer display are seen, heard and smelled by the subject as if they were real, because they exist in his mind.

The number of points by which the mage succeeds on the magick effect roll limits the complexity of the desired illusion. For example, an illusion of complete darkness would require 1 point of success, while a fully detailed person who walks and talks would require 6 points or more. The GM may grant victims of this effect an IQ roll to distinguish between reality and illusion (for Virtual Adept illusions, this means noticing that certain visions look digitized or made up of very fine pixels). Subjects of the illusory effect are still free to disregard the phantom sensory input, as long as they know what is illusion and what is real. Most subjects will still react reflexively to illusions, even if they believe them to be false. For example, a target will involuntarily duck a phantom ball thrown at his head.

Probe Thoughts. The mage attempts to invade the thoughts of another. The mage must choose the types of thoughts he wishes to scan: memories, surface thoughts, emotional ties, subconscious desires, sensory impulses, etc.

If the mage successfully evokes this effect (and it is not resisted), the subject may suddenly find himself a passive observer to his own thought processes, no longer in control of which thoughts sift through his conscious mind. He will experience the memories or emotions that the mage summons.

If the mage is simply scanning surface thoughts, the subject will feel only a vague intrusion; most Sleepers will immediately dismiss this sensation. The subject will retain control of his thoughts; in this case the mage is the passive observer.

The mage can maintain the scan for a number of minutes equal to the number of points by which he made his roll. The mage will be unable to probe the same subject again until the subject sleeps.

While the subject must be present for the mage to work the effect (unless the mage is also using Correspondence), the subject can travel anywhere once the mage has successfully established the probe. For example, the mage might establish a mental link allowing him to see whatever his subject sees. The subject can then go around a corner, out of sight, or even be transported away with other magick, and the mage's sensory link will remain for the effect's duration.

Level 4: Control Minds

Beyond simple communication or thought projection, a mage with this level of understanding is able to control the thoughts of another sentient being. The mage's own thoughts now take precedence over the original thoughts of the mage's puppet victim.

Once the mage has invaded the mind of another, he can work magick not only to control the victim, but to alter his mind. He can cure or induce insanity, change memories, or set up perceptual barriers similar to post-hypnotic suggestions. Every facet of the invaded mind is under the mage's control.

Effects:

Possession. This effect operates in a fashion similar to *Probe Thoughts*, in that the mage invades the mind of another. This invasion is much more dramatic than that of *Probe Thoughts*, and the victim will always make an attempt to resist. If the mage fails to possess the target, he cannot again attempt control until the victim sleeps.

If the mage takes control, he now commands the subject's body and thoughts. The mage has such total control that the subject's thought-patterns and mind are subsumed by those of the mage. This element of the control effect is critical. The mage does not have to command the subject's arm to lift; the mage instead operates the victim's body as if it were his own. The subject is oblivious to the fact that he is being controlled, and believes that he is the source of all his actions and thoughts.

Alternately, the mage may elect to control only part of the subject's capacities, such as emotions or motor control (if the mage only controls the motor responses, movements will be robotic). If the subject is only partially controlled, he will realize the mage is present and is controlling him.

During the period of control, the mage's own mental faculties are consumed with the efforts of maintaining control and thinking for the subject. The mage will often let the subject behave normally, stepping in to redirect the subject's thought-patterns as desired. Once control is established, the subject can go anywhere and the link will be maintained.

While the mage still has control, he may elect to utilize *Manipulate Memory* (see below) to delete the subject's memory of the moment when the mage fought for and took control. The subject will then believe that his thoughts and deeds for the past several hours were his own making. Many victims may begin to wonder if they are insane and developing split personalities.

Manipulate Memory. This effect is another invasive mental power similar to *Possession*. The mage must successfully invade and overpower his subject just as with *Possession*. If the mage succeeds, he may manipulate the subject's memories, blocking existing ones from surfacing (though the actual memories cannot be wiped away) and create new memories. The more points by which the magickal effect roll was made, the greater the amounts of memory the mage can control (based on the Duration chart).

The process is reversible. Another mage can undo the manipulations performed on a subject (although he must win a Quick Contest against the roll made by the original mage).

Level 5: Untether

When the mage achieves Mastery of Mind, he understands the mind's unique nature, apart from that of his body. He can untether his mind from his corporeal form and travel freely. This ability, often referred to as astral projection, is said to be the gateway to higher powers known only to the Oracles. The nature of astral existence, of pure mental form, is unknown to the Traditions.

Effects:

Untether. The mage is able to separate his mind from his body. Not to be confused with stepping sideways into the Umbra, in which the mind is still housed in a spirit body, Untether completely divorces the mind from all else. The mage becomes an embodiment of mental essence, commonly called an astral form.

The mage's consciousness can travel through physical reality at speeds greater than 500 mph. Without the sensory organs of his physical body, the mage's perceptions are limited to those of magickal nature. However, he is still able to sense other minds near his own, and can utilize their perceptions through the appropriate magick. The mage may also elect to take control of minds near him, or influence and communicate using any other powers he has mastered.

The mage's sentience is formless and massless, and as such is virtually impervious to harm. The mage can manifest in a ghostly gray form for 1 minute by making a Will roll. Other astral travelers, or astral beings such as ghosts, can directly interact with the mage at all times. For purposes of astral actions, the mage's IQ serves as his ST and DX, and his Will serves as HT.

If two astral beings engage in direct conflict, the purpose of the combat is normally to sever the opponent's silver cord. The silver cord is a thin filament that stretches through the astral Realm, connecting a living being's astral form with his physical body. In astral combat, damage is inflicted upon Will instead of HT, and when a combatant is reduced to 0 Will, the silver cord is snapped. (Lost Will returns at 1 point per hour.)

When a mage's silver cord is severed, the astral traveler is believed to be completely drawn into the astral world. Mages are uncertain of how such an astral world fits into the cosmology of the Tellurian, and those who have survived and returned from the loss of their silver cords report a journey mixed with emotional extremes, mental lucidity bordering on enlightenment, and total confusion. It is believed that the mages of the

Oracles of Mind venture to the astral Realm frequently, but lesser mages find the experience too disorienting to describe.

Finally, the mage is completely unaware of his physical body once he leaves its physical presence to journey astrally. However, Masters of Mind know enough about the link between the physical body and astral presence to be able to reconnect their silver cords to other bodies. This is especially important if the mage's physical body is destroyed or dies. The mage's astral presence is unaffected by the body's physical death (though some Masters of Mind who wished to achieve immortality by this means reported to their corporeal Disciples that they were being hounded by certain spirits that came from the Realms beyond Final Death). However, without the link to the physical Realm, the mage begins to slip into the astral. He must reconnect his cord to another body. If an empty magickal vessel is not available, the mage may attempt to control the mind of another sentient and thereby house his own intellect in the body. The mage essentially becomes a split personality within the body's original mind.

Mind Rotes

Serene Temple (Mind 1, Life 1)

This is a very simple lesson that often marks the beginning of training for the Awakened students of the famous Do instructor Ho Kazaoke. Through this rote, Ho shows how a mage can change the speed at which her body operates. Some uses of this effect are: accelerate the liver and kidney's removal of toxins, speed the natural healing process, control bleeding when badly injured, and endure extremes of temperature.

[The magick accelerates or decelerates the body's functions by a factor of 1 for each point of success made on the magick effect roll. For example, a player rolls 3 points of success and has his character slow down his cardiovascular system by a factor of four so he can survive four times as long trapped in an airtight safe.]

Sense the Echo of the Dragon (Mind 3, Time 2)

Ho Kazaoke taught his best students this technique. By relaxing prior to a fight and meditating on the style of the opponent, a student learned to predict the maneuvers the opponent would make only seconds later.

[The points of success on the magickal effect roll determines both the detail of the prediction and the length of time it covers. The mage should realize that precognitive abilities are never certain, and the subject could choose different maneuvers from those the mage predicted. In personal combat, the mage can add the points of success gained on the magickal effect roll to any Active Defense for the duration of the effect.]

The Blissful Discipline (Mind 4, Forces 3, Prime 2)

A heroic Akashic Brother named Kim Lee did her biological brother Kwang and the entire Brotherhood proud when she captured and held a number of Technomancers prisoner for several hours until her brother arrived to assist her. Kim invaded the minds of the Technomancers and associated a Pattern of electrical energy to the subjects' thoughts. Thereafter, whenever the Technomancers thought about a certain action (in this case, leaving the room or attacking Kim), the energy Pattern was released and the subject was shocked.

[The shocking effect is identical to *Discharge Static* (p. 106). To succeed in this effect, the mage must successfully overpower the subject's faculties in a manner similar to *Mind Control*. The points of success on the effect roll determine both the damage from the shock and the length of time electrical Pattern will activate to shock the victim before it fades out.]

Prime

Why have you bothered with these other so-called Spheres of magickal thought? The understanding of the quintessential nature is all you truly need. The rest is flotsam on the ocean of quintessential reality.

No! You contemptible fool! Quintessence is not merely the essence of magick, it is the essence of everything. All energy, all matter, space and time flow from Quintessence. Quintessence is itself neither energy nor matter; it is beyond such nomenclature. It is unity. It is the building block of all things. Have your previous masters taught you nothing?

The origin of the mind? Bah! That's an irrelevant question for the metaphysical theorists, who have nothing better to do than attack ideas. Don't interrupt me with such diversions.

If you wish to understand and thereby control Quintessence, then you may become my pupil. If you prove yourself worthy of such knowledge, you may progress to the control of what is and what is not.

Prime is the study of Quintessence, the fabric of reality. Pursuing the Sphere of Prime is a convoluted study of ill-understood metaphysics. More than for any other Sphere, the Masters of Quintessence struggle to find answers that completely define their field. As much as they hate to admit it, even the knowledge of the Masters is more concerned with techniques for manipulating Quintessence than with true comprehension of its underlying principles.

The Sphere of Prime attracts many Disciples, but very few pursue the Sphere to become Adepts or Masters. The Sphere offers a great deal of important effects to its Disciples, especially to mages who seek to master Pattern magicks, but the complexity of the Sphere's theories dissuades most mages from pursuing it further.

Because Masters of Prime are in short supply, the demand for them is tremendous. Every Chantry has need of a Disciple, if not an Adept or Master of Prime. Such mages are so essential to a Chantry's long-term viability that Masters of Prime often become targets in conflicts between Chantries. Prime mages are so important because they control free Quintessence, the currency of mages. Free Quintessence gives mages power over their Chantries' Domains. Quintessence is a currency of power, and Masters of Prime are its accountants.

Masters of Prime are detectable by the auras of power that seem to surround them. Their eyes glow with a fiery heat and people who accidentally run into them may be knocked down without budging the mage. Their power does not quantify itself as it does for mages of Forces. Rather, Prime mages are like explosives ready to detonate.

Level 1: Store Quintessence

Every mage who seeks to master magick had best study the basics of Prime. Without the first level of knowledge in Prime, the mage cannot store free Quintessence within his own body beyond the amount he receives from his Avatar. (That is, he may have no more Quintessence than he has levels in Avatar.)

The first level of Prime also provides the mage with basic perceptions of Quintessence, such as the ability to sense where it is stored and the magnitude of the reservoir.

Effects:

The Rush. Disciples of Prime are able to collect free Quintessence that is channeled into their Patterns. Normally Quintessence only flows through the Patterns of life; it does not

store itself in them as it does with inanimate matter and energy. However, a mage of Prime is able to coalesce Quintessence around his Pattern and store it. Each point of success rolled allows another point of Quintessence to be stored. The mage may make only one roll per source of Quintessence. Note that the mage cannot himself channel the Quintessence until he reaches Level 3 in Prime. This effect allows the mage to become a receptacle only.

The Cult of Ecstasy calls the act of receiving Quintessence "The Rush." The Cultist must be performing the vice he uses as a focus. The influx of Quintessence gives the cultist a mixed feeling of nausea and exhilaration.

Sense Quintessence. The mage is able to sense free Quintessence stored in the Patterns of reality near himself. The more points by which the mage makes his roll, the greater range and accuracy he has in his perceptions. This ability is generally a good way to discover if any mages are nearby, as mages store some free Quintessence within themselves by virtue of their Avatars or through the use of Prime.

Mages of the Order of Hermes use an engraving of the Seal of Solomon to reveal the presence of Quintessence. Different points of the star-shaped seal illuminate to indicate the direction of Quintessence, and the brightness with which the symbol glows reveals the amount of Quintessence present.



Level 2: Fuel Pattern

The mage realizes the existence of a seemingly infinite pool of Quintessence that exists throughout reality. This Quintessence is free, not bound into Patterns. If the mage is knowledgeable enough in one of the three Spheres of Pattern magick, he may divert a trickle from this great pool of Quintessence into a Pattern of his own creation. In the case of Patterns that create life, the mage sets up a stream of Quintessence to feed the created Pattern.

Effects:

Rubbing of the Bones. Disciples of Prime do not yet have the ability to cause a serious disruption of the flow of Quintessence into a Pattern of life, but they are able to tamper with that flow to some extent. Euthanatos call this effect the *Rubbing of the Bones*, because they briskly rub their bone foci when evoking the effect. The effect is that the steady flow of Quintessence into the target's lifeform begins to ripple, surging and ebbing in its flow. (The mage must roll enough points of success to affect the entire mass of the target.)

Any lifeform affected will be Physically Stunned and unable to function for the duration of the fluctuation (the GM may allow the victim to take a limited action with a successful Will roll). Its physical form will seem to fade in and out slightly, becoming ghostly and immaterial one second and massively heavy the next. A mage caught in this effect may choose to spend a point of stored Quintessence to smooth the flow and cancel the effect completely.

Level 3: Channel Quintessence

At this level, the mage understands how to draw the reservoirs of surplus or "free" Quintessence out of the Patterns in which they are stored. The mage becomes a conduit of Quintessence, storing it in his own being or channeling it into other Patterns, such as his Chantry's pocket Realm. To the lament of all Disciples of Prime, free Quintessence can only be funneled from one established Pattern into another Pattern. Even Masters of Prime are unable to tap into the "pool" of free Quintessence described under Prime Level 2.

Additionally, mages do not know how to draw extra Quintessence out of this large pool when they create new Patterns and fuel them with Quintessence. That is to say, when a mage creates an object, only enough Quintessence to make the object can be siphoned into it – there is no surplus Quintessence in anything a mage creates from scratch.

The special properties of free Quintessence that allow it to be transferred from Pattern to Pattern are beyond the understanding of the Masters of Prime. Even they are limited to the techniques of transferring it. If the members of the Oracles of Prime know more, they are saying nothing.

Effects:

Bond of Blood. The Verbena believe that there is power in blood. Blood symbolizes the power of life striving for Ascension. As such, blood is an important focus for the Sphere of Prime. To transfer free Quintessence between two different receptacles, the Verbena must smear both his palms in blood and touch both objects. The mage can then act as a conduit, pulling Quintessence from one object and channeling it into another (or into himself). Other Traditions have similar, if less messy, effects.

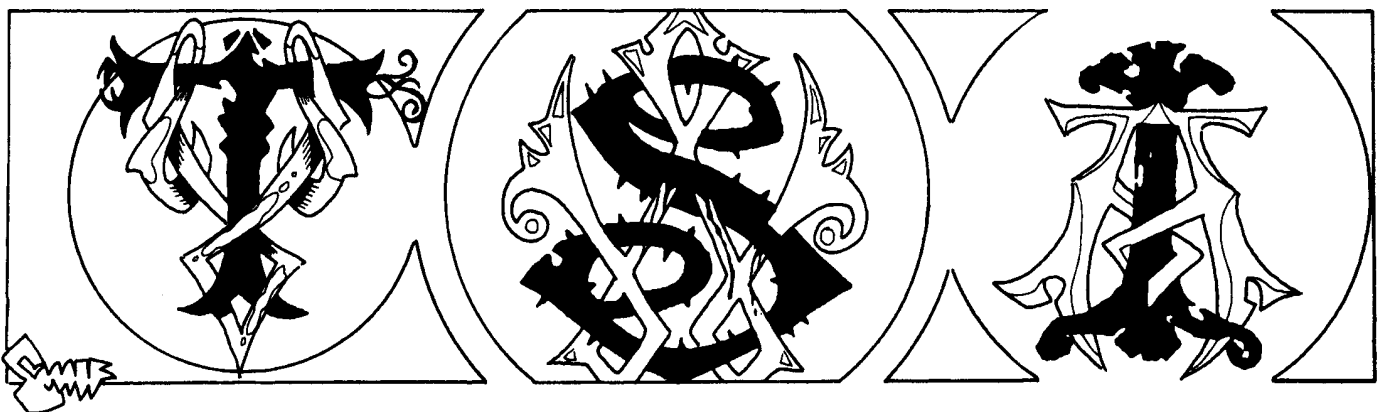
Each point by which the magickal effect roll succeeds (making the roll exactly counts as 1 point) allows the mage to transfer up to 5 points of Quintessence out of a Pattern and channel it into himself or into another Pattern. Obviously, the mage cannot take more Quintessence than the source object stores. The mage may use this effect to take Quintessence from another mage, but may not reduce the target's Quintessence below his Avatar rating.

Create Talisman. A mage must have Level 3 in Prime to create items that store free Quintessence and use it to power magickal effects. He must also have the Talisman Creation skill, or have a high enough skill in Prime to use it by default. Rules for creating Talismans are provided on p. 90.

Level 4: Expel Base Energy

While Disciples of Prime are largely limited to detecting and manipulating free Quintessence, Adepts of Prime begin to learn rudimentary methods for channeling raw Quintessence. They are able to pull Quintessence out of the Patterns of matter and energy, thereby affecting the Pattern's incarnation in reality. Each shard of inanimate matter and each spark of energy has Quintessence stored in its Pattern. Adepts can expel the Quintessence from these Patterns, recycling it into the cosmic pool of raw Quintessence. Without Quintessence in its Pattern, the matter or energy ceases to exist.

Adepts who are also knowledgeable enough in Matter or Forces can use conjunctional effects to alter the amount of Quintessence stored in various parts of these Patterns, thereby "dissolving" different aspects or properties of the energy or matter. The mage could make solids become insubstantial, cause a magnet to have only one pole, remove a chemical's ability to form nuclear bonds with other chemicals (this process would, for example, make an acid unable to corrode), or cause objects to have no mass and yet still be solid. While Pattern magicks themselves allow mages to alter or reduce these properties, the most direct way to erase select properties is by extracting the raw Quintessence that fuels the undesired portion of the substance's Pattern.



Effects:

Flames of Purification. Mages of the Celestial Chorus are not destructive by nature. Still, they have been known to wield the power of Prime to cleanse reality of things profane to them. By fanning his focus of flame over a chosen *inanimate* object, the mage can invoke this effect and cause the object to burst into mystical flames. The flames will shed no heat, yet they will quickly devour the object until it is dispelled from reality.

The mage is actually extracting all of the raw Quintessence from the object's Pattern. The object thus disappears from reality, eventually becoming nonexistent. The more points of success the mage scores, the greater the amount of mass the mage can affect. He can affect several similar Patterns simultaneously, such as all of the ice cubes in a glass.

Level 5: Alter Flow

Masters of Prime continue to delve into theories that give them greater control over raw Quintessence. They can now begin to alter established flows of raw Quintessence. This gives them great control over the Patterns of life.

Living beings interact with Quintessence in a unique manner. Their Quintessence is not stored in their Patterns; rather, a stream of Quintessence continuously flows through them. By damming the flow of Quintessence into a life Pattern, the mage extinguishes the spark of life within the creature.

In addition to stopping Quintessence flow, the mage can *increase* the flow of Quintessence through a Pattern. This is of little benefit to lifeforms without strong Avatars, but those with strong dynamic potential can instantly recharge their Avatars' Quintessence.

Also, some Masters of Prime report that they have found connections between Paradox and Quintessence analogous to those between negative and positive forces. These mages have found little use for this budding knowledge, but some have managed to channel free Quintessence in such a way that it cancels Paradox energies that are not coalesced inside a Pattern.

Effects:

Recharge Gift. Through meditation, mages of the Akashic Brotherhood are able to increase the flow of raw Quintessence through their Patterns. The mage is able to filter the additional Quintessence through his own Avatar and instantaneously recharge his personal store. For each point of success on the effect roll, the mage regains 1 point of Quintessence, up to his level in Avatar.

Quintessence Blast. Dreamspeakers have devised an effect to help them ward off the spirits of Paradox. The Master of Prime charges his crystal focus by spending a point of Quintessence. The Dreamspeaker then uses his magick to draw the Paradox spirit into the crystal focus. The essence of the spirit reacts with the Quintessence stored in the crystal. The reaction injures the spirit, dispels part of its essence, and causes the crystal to explode into dust (for dramatic effect only; no damage is thus caused).

Prime Rotes

Radiate Prime's Energy (Prime 3, Entropy 2)

Gregory the Hallowed, one of the greatest paladins of the Celestial Chorus, used this effect skillfully on a number of occasions. The most famous incident involved his conflict with a construction of Iteration X that operated from a storage of Quintessence. The heat of a single candle allowed Gregory to force the life-giving Quintessence from the construct's body.



[For each point by which the magickal effect roll was made, the mage can force 1 point of Quintessence from a victim. The Quintessence thus expelled is lost.]

Mark of the Beast

(Prime 3, Correspondence 3, Life 1)

Relatively early in his career as a paladin, the mage Gregory was intent on destroying all vampires. This only ended when he discovered that not all vampires were creatures of complete evil, and some even sought redemption. Before then, though, he would track the creatures to their lairs by marking the Quintessence within the blood of certain humans. After a vampire drank the "tagged" blood, Gregory could stalk the beast as it slept during the day.

[The number of points of success on the effect roll determines how long the Quintessence is traceable, based on the Duration table.]

Hymn of Beatific Harmony

(Prime 3, Correspondence 4)

When they discovered that Ezekiel had been captured by the Technomancers and was awaiting the monstrous pleasure of the New World Order, an entire congregation of Celestials gathered and joined in song. They acted in concert and channeled Ezekiel the Quintessence he needed to stage an escape.

[One point of Quintessence may be sent to any location on Earth for each point by which the roll was made.]

Spirit Pilgrimage (Prime 5, Life 3)

By stopping the flow of Quintessence into a portion of her Pattern, the mage Sarah Burnstone was able to become incorporeal amid the heart of a Paradox backlash that destroyed a Marauder. While incorporeal, Sarah found that without some degree of solidity, she could not move, so teachers of the rote sometimes suggest that students leave select parts of their bodies corporeal – for example, leaving their legs somewhat solid so that they can walk.

[The more points of success of the effect roll, the greater the body mass the mage can turn intangible. 6 points of success would render an entire human body incorporeal.]

Spirit

Uou have come to me because you like my paintings, yes? You see in them something beyond what my other admirers perceive. You sense that these wondrous places which I draw must actually exist, and yet you wonder where, and how, it can be so. Take, for instance, this painting of Alph, the sacred river of Xanadu. Where are these caverns "measureless to man" through which it runs?

I create my paintings for my own pleasure, but also to attract curious, vibrant minds such as yours. I will gladly show you these places. I will initiate you into the Invisible World where your spirit soars through universes in the blink of an eye. These are the measureless caverns which Coleridge saw.

In the Spirit, so much is possible. Pleasures and pains beyond the bounds of the fragile human body can be experienced, and this is why we exchange the physical body for one of spirit. You disbelieve me, but you are too curious to fear my apparent lunacy. Come, I will teach you to see these worlds within our own, these worlds where we shall travel.

The Sphere of Spirit is one of the most definitive and comprehensive of the Spheres. The theories, models and concepts used by the various Traditions to understand the Spirit Sphere encompass skills for traveling through the spirit plane of reality, dealing with the entities found therein, and surviving such alien environments as the Deep Umbra or the Dream Domains. Some mages choose to dabble in Spirit Discipleship, learning how to step sideways into the Umbra and function there. Some mages, especially those of Traditions such as the Dreamspeakers, pursue study of the Sphere to Mastery – indeed, almost to the exclusion of other Spheres.

Level 1: Spirit Sight/Spirit Sense

The mage is introduced to the spirit world as the intermediary phase of reality between conception (Quintessence and Pattern) and perception (static, physical reality). The mage gains the ability to sense the Near Umbra around him.

The mage also studies the ways that the Umbra and its personified entities influence physical reality. The mage can detect areas where the Gauntlet, the barrier between the physical and the spirit worlds, is weak or strong. He can also sense the proximity and nature of spirits manifested in the physical world, including those embodied in Garou fetishes. Finally, he can detect when someone else is peering through the Gauntlet – in either direction.

Effects:

Spirit Sight. The mage can shift his sight into the spirit world. He will become oblivious to the physical world around him, seeing only its spiritual form. The degree of success needed on the effect roll depends on the strength of the Gauntlet where the magick is being performed.

Area	Typical Gauntlet	Points of Success
Science Lab	18	7
Inner city	16	6
Most places	14	5
Rural countryside	12	4
Deep wilderness	10	3
Typical active node (Level 1)	8	2
Level 2 Node	7	0-1
Powerful (Level 3) node	6	0-1
Level 4 Node	5	0-1
The greatest nodes (level 5)	4	0-1

The strength of the Gauntlet in any one location depends on the subtle variations in the firmness of static reality at that spot. More populated areas, or areas with greater amounts of technology, create areas with stronger Gauntlets.

Level 2: Call Spirits/Plumb the Deep Umbra

At Level 2, the mage begins to learn about the myriad entities within the spirit world. Countless numbers of mythical beings have been created from the beliefs of human cultures throughout history. These spirits inhabit both the Umbra itself and its many Realms. Disciples of Spirit learn methods for contacting these spiritual entities, and begin to interact in the affairs of the spirits.

The mage is able to call upon and communicate with these spirits. Disciples are warned to build relationships with spirits gradually and carefully, for many of them wield powers far beyond those of even experienced mages, and not all of them behave according to human understanding or morality.

At this level, the mage also begins to explore what lies beyond the scope of Gaia's Realm, beyond the Near Umbra. The mage extends his perceptions into the Deep Umbra, peering into the void like a mystic astronomer. Through these probes into the Deep Umbra, the mage can contact denizens of other Realms and other things that occasionally wander the Deep Umbra itself.

Effects:

Call Spirit. While in the Umbra, the mage can call any spirit he knows by name in the hope that it will hear and come to him. Powerful spirits such as Lords and Preceptors rarely respond, but may send lesser spirits to the mage as messengers. The GM must decide how many points of success on the magickal effect roll are required to attract the spirit's attention, depending on the power of the spirit and its previous relations with the mage. There are no guarantees of the spirit's behavior once it arrives.

A mage in physical reality can call to spirits if the mage first shifts his perceptions into the Umbra through Spirit Sight. Spirits that respond may manifest into the physical world if they are able.

Level 3: Travel Spirit

The mage now learns to enter the Umbra. The act of entering the Umbra is commonly called "stepping sideways" and involves crossing a barrier called the Gauntlet, which separates the spirit world from physical reality. When the mage uses his knowledge to step sideways, he transforms his body into the stuff of spirit rather than the stuff of physical reality. The end result is that the mage's body disappears from physical reality and enters the spirit world.

The Disciple can travel anywhere within Gaia's Realm, including the Domains within the Near Umbra. Some Domains allow the mage to access other Realms. The true barrier to a Disciple of Spirit is the Horizon, which separates Gaia's Near Umbra from the Deep Umbra.

Effects:

Stepping Sideways. The mage can force his way through the Gauntlet and enter the spirit world of the Near Umbra. While in the Umbra, the mage can walk, run, talk, use magick, etc. as if he were in physical reality with few differences. When the mage repeats the *Stepping Sideways* effect to re-enter physical reality, he appears in the location corresponding to his final position in the spirit world.

In order to step sideways, the mage must win a Quick Contest between his magickal effect roll and the Gauntlet of the area, as shown on the table under *Spirit Sight*. If the mage rolls a critical failure on the magickal effect roll to step sideways, he becomes stuck in the Gauntlet, transfixed between the spirit and the physical worlds. The mage will be unable to move; even Correspondence magick will not help him. It is necessary for someone knowledgeable in Spirit, or an entity of the spirit world, to pull the mage out of the trap. To free the trapped mage, the would-be rescuer must successfully *Step Sideways* himself, or *Breach the Gauntlet* where the mage is imprisoned.



Level 4: Fabricate Spirit/Control Gauntlet

The Adept of Spirit can fabricate fields of spirit reality. This allows the mage to create spirit fields within items, making those items capable of housing spirit entities. Such items are called fetishes and they derive special powers from the spirits inside them. Only a few Traditions, such as the Dreamspeakers and Verbena, teach their initiates the methods of creating fetishes. It is rumored that these mages actually learned the craft from the Garou.

The Adept can also use this spirit field effect to create new Domains within the Near Umbra. This requires arduous effort, but through such effects, Chantries are able to establish their own pockets of reality within the Near Umbra. Creation of Domains requires copious amounts of Quintessence, the exercise of the Matter and Prime Spheres, and many other ingredients, but it is the spirit field around them that allows them to encapsulate a reality distinct from that of the surrounding Umbra.

Another effect learned at the Adept level is the ability to manipulate the integrity of the Gauntlet. This powerful ability

allows mages to trap spirits within the physical world – or to breach the Gauntlet and provide free access between the Umbra and the physical world.

Effects:

Breach the Gauntlet. This effect allows the mage to rupture the local Gauntlet completely, creating a window in the fabric of reality between the spirit and the physical worlds. This allows anyone, including Sleepers, free passage into or out of the Umbra. The effect is convenient when mages of various specialties have gathered to pool their strengths, and must all enter the spirit world.

The mage does not have any control over what passes through the breach once it is opened, though he may close it at any time. Some spirit entities are quickly attracted to breaches in the Gauntlet, and are not inclined to beg the mage's permission to use the opened portal.

Each point of success rolled for this effect lowers the local Gauntlet (see the table under *Spirit Sight*) by 2. If the mage reduces the Gauntlet difficulty to 0, he has fully breached the barrier.

Psychic Sterilization. The Sons of Ether prefer tightly controlled environments for conducting their paradigm experiments. To block out potential spiritual interference, the mages often reinforce the Gauntlet in the areas around their laboratories. By strengthening the Gauntlet, a mage can protect himself from intrusion or spiritual scrying. Each point of success on the roll for this effect raises the local Gauntlet by 2 (again, per the chart under *Spirit Sight*).

The Order of Hermes uses a similar effect to trap spirits in the physical world once they have manifested. If the mage can sufficiently strengthen the Gauntlet, the spirit will be unable to return to its home reality. Of course, the mage will still have to imprison the spirit's manifested form if he desires to hold it captive.

Gauntlet Prison. Mages have better methods of trapping spirits than simply hardening the Gauntlet and trapping them in the physical world. By radically fluctuating the strength of the Gauntlet while a being is stepping sideways, the mage is able to trap the being in the Gauntlet, just as if the being had critically failed on its roll. Daring mages will attempt to bind powerful spirits in this manner and then extort services from them. Ancient tales recount that certain Chantries used to ensnare Preceptor-level spirits in these Gauntlet prisons.

To trap a spirit traveler successfully, the mage must be within the vicinity and must win a Quick Contest between his magickal effect roll and the victim's roll to step sideways.

Victims imprisoned in the Gauntlet appear as ephemeral, ghostlike specters when viewed from physical reality or from the spirit world. Once a victim is trapped, the mage often reinforces the Gauntlet in the area (see *Psychic Sterilization*, above), thus preventing allies of the victim from successfully freeing the captive.

Treacherous mages have also been known to breach the Gauntlet, invite others to walk through, and collapse the Gauntlet into a prison while their victims journey.

Create Fetish. The Spirit Adept can fashion items that serve as receptacles for the essences of spirits. Virtually all fetishes are created through the cooperation of spirits, but some mages have been known to use their Spirit magick to imprison spirits into fetishes. Such objects are far more tricky to use, but they are often more powerful because of the potency of the spirit trapped inside. For guidelines on the creation of fetishes, see *GURPS Werewolf: The Apocalypse*.

Level 5: Outward Journeys

The mage can now break from the bounds of Gaia's orbit. He no longer must rely on the tenuous connections within Domains to travel to the Outer Realms. The mage is able to traverse the Deep Umbra, surviving its lifeless ether for short periods, while he speeds through it toward his chosen destination. Masters of Spirit are said to spend years at a time on their outward journeys, charting the Tellurian and studying the denizens of other Realms.

Masters may also place marks on the Avatars of others; the best known such marks are the sigils that brand a mage as a breaker of a Protocol (see p. 27).

Effects:

Break the Dreamshell. The Dreamshell is the Dreamspeaker term for the Horizon. In order for a mage to enter the Deep Umbra, he must break through the Dreamshell, just as he must break through the Gauntlet when stepping sideways.

The mage must make his magickal effect roll at a penalty of -5 in order to pierce Gaia's Dreamshell. Other Realms might have weaker or stronger Dreamshells. If the mage uses an Anchorhead, a special Domain set amid the Dreamshell, the passage through the Dreamshell becomes easier; the penalty is only -3.

Deep Umbra Travel. To survive the utterly barren spiritual environment of the Deep Umbra, the mage must wrap himself in a field of spiritual essence, which creates a sort of bubble around the mage to protect him from the ravages of the Deep Umbral environment. The mage must reach and enter another Near Umbra before the duration rolled for the field elapses, or he will die a cold death in the Deep Umbra.

The mage is able to fly through the Umbra at amazing speeds using only his Will. Still, the distances in the Deep Umbra are almost inconceivable. Close Realms such as Arcadia (the moon) take but a day to reach, while distant Realms such as Mars can only be reached after several days of travel.



Travel into the Deep Umbra is a highly dangerous affair, but many mages feel a manifest destiny to explore it and chart the Tellurian. Their sojourns into the Deep Umbra are much like those of the ancient Pacific Islanders who set sail into the Pacific Ocean to find a new island before they ran out of food. Sometimes the traveler turns back halfway in order to return safely on his depleted rations; sometimes he risks everything and crosses the point of no return.

Spirit Rotes

Drums of Elemental Fire

(Spirit 2, Forces 2, Matter 2)

The Dreamspeaker now remembered only as Red Blossom (largely because of her summonings of gigantic and exotic spirits of elemental fire) used this rote to summon elementals with her pounding drums.

[As long as the magickal effect roll is successful, an elemental will appear. The power of the elemental is determined by the points of success rolled. The elemental can take seconds, minutes or hours to arrive. Once present, it will not necessarily be cooperative or friendly with its summoner, but most will show interest in the alien being (the mage) who weaves the elemental's base energy and beckons for its company (roll a normal reaction for the elemental).]

Dream Locus (Spirit 2, Matter 3)

A problem frequently faced by Dreamspeakers, or other mages interested in moving into the Umbra under their own power, is the inability to take additional matter with them (except for a Dreamspeaker's unique feather, which is so attuned to the mage and his understanding of Spirit that it travels with him without additional complications). A Dreamspeaker named Gerry Halfmoon developed this rote to enable just such an effect.

[A successful roll allows the mage to bring additional mass into the Umbra with him. The exact amount is determined by the number of points by which the roll is made. Once this roll is made, the mage must then defeat the Gauntlet in a separate roll for his aggregate belongings.]

Leap Sideways (Spirit 3, Correspondence 3)

Dreamspeakers have a great need to move between spiritual and physical reality; thus, magickal effects like this rote have been performed for millennia. With this rote, a mage in physical space may instantly move himself to any place in the Near Umbra, and a mage in the Near Umbra may shift himself to any position on Earth.

[Use the Correspondence Range table to determine where in relation to Earth the character teleported. The character still needs to win a Quick Contest with the Gauntlet with this roll.]

Leap Beyond (Spirit 5, Mind 5)

The Dreamspeakers believe that the mage Teronymus was the first mage to assume astral form. All previous attempts by mages to explore the Deep Umbra eventually met with grave peril – often a Lord, Preceptor or other malign force intent on harming the mage. Teronymus was able to avoid this by sending just his mind to the Deep Umbra.

[The mage astrally projects himself into the Deep Umbra. The effect is identical to the Mind effect of *Untether*, except that the mage's mental essence travels the Umbra instead of the physical world.]

Time

When do we start your study?" you are asking me. We are starting now. We are finishing now. You are Disciple, Adept and Master now.

You are understanding that Chronos is not really as he is appearing in the minds of humanity. They are following Chronos down the straight path that he is desiring. They are not experiencing the then, only the now. They are not seeing the will, only the has. We are outside that narrow path; we are enlightened.

We are existing in the Now. There are no beginnings or endings; our Now is spreading all of time before us as a tapestry. In the Now, you are studying with me. In the Now, you are Disciple, Adept and Master – all three.

Time has long mystified and frustrated humanity. Just as humanity had finally begun to accept time as another defined parameter in the organized paradigm of Newtonian physics, Einstein came along and theorized that time was not constant but instead relative to each observer. Since then it has become ever more popular to ponder the possibilities of time travel and theory. Does time pass in quantum segments, like a very high-speed film? Is humanity's perception of time as a one-way linear phenomenon (a train moving from past to future) correct?

Mages who pursue the Sphere of Time gain understanding of time's true secrets. Different Traditions pursue the study by their own unique means, but gradually they develop a keen awareness of time, which allows them to exert their will over it.

When trying to sense or move through time, the number of points by which the magickal effect roll was made determines how far in Time the mage can reach.

Points of Success	Timespan
0-1	Immediate (generally a year)
2-3	Recent (a decade)
4-5	Lifetime
6	10 generations
7+	Millennia

Durations for other Time effects are determined normally.

Masters of Time are often surrounded by small effects of time dilation or acceleration. For example, male mages may grow full beards in one day, cups of coffee quickly cool off around them, taxi meters click slower than normal, etc. Masters also tend to speak using only one verb tense: past, present or future.

Level 1: Time Sense

The mage begins to develop a rudimentary awareness of Time's true nature. The mage develops a precise internal clock (Absolute Timing, which must be purchased separately), which is essential when performing more complex Time magick.

In addition, the mage becomes aware of certain time-based phenomena that periodically shift through reality. The mage can intuitively sense the approach of such disturbances and can "feel" where in dimensional space the phenomena will appear.

Effects:

Time Sense. Mages of Time have identified phenomena that exist in a special "sub-realm" of space-time. These phenomena periodically appear in physical reality, materializing somewhere for a set period of time and then vanishing again. Some mages theorize that these phenomena are similar to Halley's Comet, sweeping through the Tellurian and passing earth's reality every so often.

These time-phased phenomena cannot be seen by Sleepers; the unenlightened simply ignore them. Only mages who have studied the Sphere of Time can perceive the physical appearances of these phenomena. Larger phenomena send ripples as they approach the mage's own timeline, and if the mage is close to where a given phenomenon will appear, he will discern these ripples and thus sense where in space the phenomenon will cross into his own timeline. He can then seek it out if he desires. Some phenomena are so powerful that their foreshadowing ripples can be felt by mages across the globe.

Mages have identified hundreds of these time-based phenomena, from powerful Preceptors who appear every 12 years in the Andes Mountains, to the spectral Tower of Babel whose cycle has yet to be determined, to ghosts that wander down certain roads every night looking for the drivers who didn't give them a ride when they lived. . .

Internal Clock. Virtual Adepts cultivate amazingly accurate internal clocks in order to time events in virtual reality and test the processing speeds of their computers. This is ability beyond that provided by the Absolute Timing advantage – with a successful roll, the mage becomes a human stopwatch and can time events to fractions of a second. This internal clock runs according to the mage's perception of time. He can adjust it for temporal effects that he causes; however, visiting some spirit Realms where time operates differently, or being the victim of various time-based effects, can cause the mage to become disoriented.

Level 2: Past/Future Sight

The mage can now shift his perceptions forward or back in time. Postcognition tends to require more points of success to perform, but its results are certain. Precognition is less difficult, but its results tend to be uncertain, especially the farther into the future and/or the more specific the event the mage attempts to foresee. Mages who frequently use this power tend to experience spontaneous flashes of pre- or postcognition. These flashes range from feelings of *déjà vu* to vivid, dreamlike trances foretelling danger. (Mages with Time 2 may wish to purchase the Danger Sense advantage to make use of these "feelings.")

Effects:

Postcognition. The mage can extend his perceptions backward in time to witness what has previously transpired in the mage's current location. While the mage "rewinds" time in the location, he sees in his mind's eye what transpired there. The GM must relate to the player what the character sees.

The mage can shift the exact moment he currently watches. For example, he might begin by viewing the events of one day ago, then shift to one hour ago, then 10 years ago, etc. His only limitation is the "time range" he rolled, and his total viewing time cannot exceed the duration rolled for the effect.

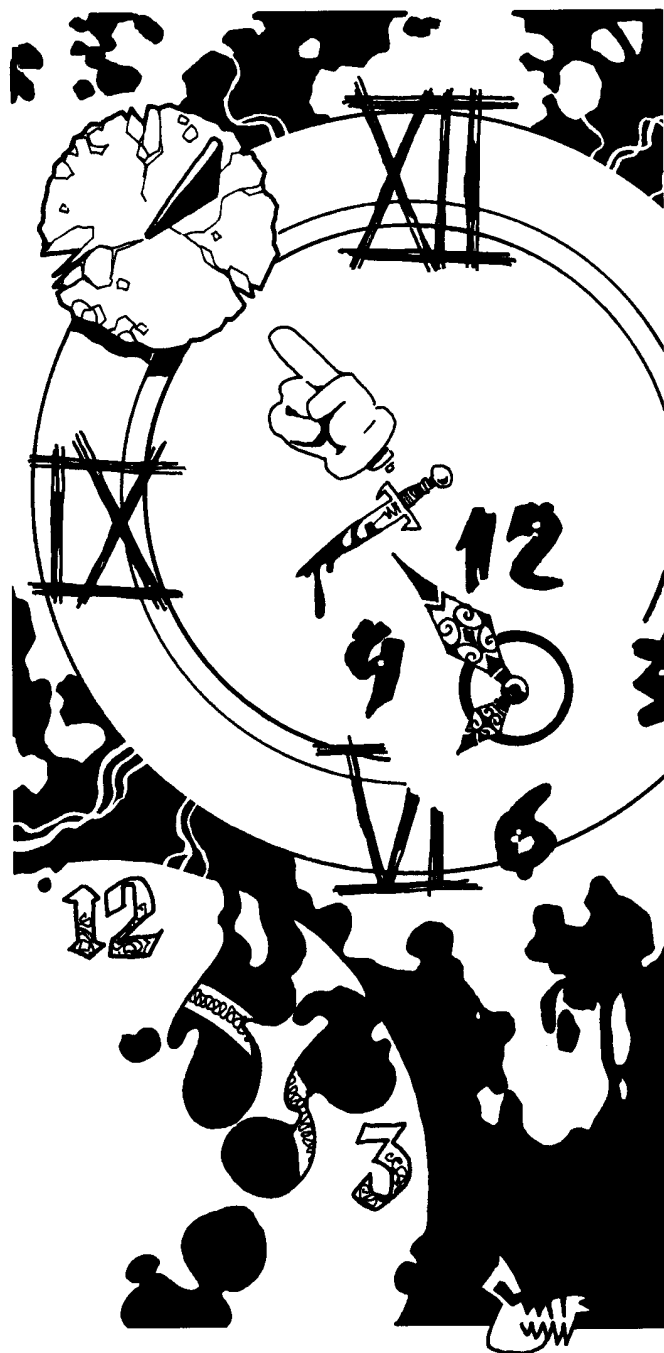
Songs of Future Days. This is a precognitive magickal effect developed by the Celestial Chorus. The mage begins singing as the focus for the magick, and lets his mind wander down the pathways of future time. The words of his song begin to take on a will of their own, describing in epic format the events that may come to pass.

Unlike postcognitive effects, which concentrate on a location, precognitive effects such as this can be centered on almost anything: a location, a person, an organization, etc. The farther the mage delves into the future with precognitive magick, the more disjointed, sketchy and unreliable the information gleaned.

Ultimately, the GM must decide what a character's precognitive vision includes, based at least partially on the number of points by which the roll was made. The player is free to suggest input, especially in the form of predicting his character's future actions.

Level 3: Time Contraction/Dilation

Now the mage begins to gain true control over time. He can exert his will over its passage, causing it to accelerate or slow as he desires. Mages often describe these effects as "contracting" or "dilating" time. Contracting time around a waterfall makes it appear to flow more slowly to an outside observer; near the waterfall, each moment does not last as long and less water flows. Conversely, by dilating each moment around the waterfall, more water flows during each segment of time. While the observer perceives these moments normally, he will see more water flow during the effect.



Effects:

Accelerate Time. By dilating the moments of time, the mage can create fields of space-time where things seem to move faster, like a film played at high speed. The magickal effect roll is made at a penalty of -2; each 2 full points of success on this roll speeds up time by a factor of one – 2 points of success doubles speed, 4 points triples speed, and so on. Persons under the effects of time acceleration receive an extra action each turn for every factor of speed with regard to those outside the effect. The volume affected may not be larger than a small room.

Slow Time. This effect is the opposite of *Accelerate Time*. Again, the roll is at a penalty of -2; each 2 full points of success rolled slows time by a factor of one. For example, a person operating under a time-dilation effect evoked by a mage who scored 2 points of success would receive one action every second turn.

Level 4: Time Determinism

The mage is now able to cause absolute shifts in time rather than simply adjusting the rate at which time passes. The mage can take a field of space-time and freeze it for a set period of time.

This is a powerful effect when used in conjunction with other magicks, as the mage can choose the moment in time when a magickal effect becomes operative, effectively storing magick for use later. Some long-dead Masters of Time have left the world a legacy of magickal effects that occur even after the mage's death. Such "hanging" spells are a type of time-based phenomenon that mages with *Time Sense* can detect.

Effects:

Programmed Event. The mage stops time in a localized field, and sets a time when it shall resume. For example, the mage lifts a cup from the table and drops it. By freezing time around the cup for 10 minutes, the mage causes the cup to hang in midair until the duration expires. At that time, the cup will fall and break. As with *Accelerate Time*, the field of stopped time cannot exceed the general space of a small room. Furthermore, when events in physical reality are frozen for extended periods, Paradox forces usually erode the magickal effect and prematurely free the events from stopped time. Similarly, in the cup and table example, if someone intervenes and snatches the cup while it hangs in midair, static reality would reassert itself over the cup and the magickal field would dissipate.

The mage can set any duration that he wants, but must roll enough points of success to achieve that time on the standard Duration chart.

Level 5: Future Travel/Time Immunity

At Master-level knowledge, the mage can do more than determine the timing of events; he can shift objects through time. The mage actually plucks a field of space-time completely out of the flow of time, and repositions the field at some other point in the flow. The new position could be seconds or centuries away from the field's original "place."

Such time travel is limited to future travel only; mages (other than, perhaps, the Oracles of Time) have not discovered a methodology to travel into the past without being torn apart by forces of Paradox. If the Oracles have found a way, they aren't sharing it.

Equally powerful is the ability of Masters to immunize themselves from time. Figuratively speaking, the Master simply

steps laterally out of the current flow of time. The Master can maintain his immunity only so long, but during his "time" outside of time, he perceives the world as a statuesque collection of still images that he may manipulate as he pleases.

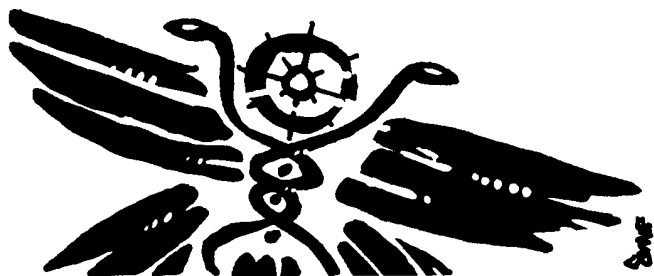
Effects:

Time Travel. The mage disappears from present reality and reappears in the same location at a future time of his choosing. The farther the mage wishes to travel, the more points by which he must make his magickal effect roll: 1 point means he jumps ahead to the next turn while 8 points will take him completely out of the current game session!

The mage's arrival in the future will be felt through *Time Sense* by the mages of that time. The longer the time jump the mage makes, the greater the time-phased phenomenon he becomes to those sensing his arrival. The mage may reappear to find several of his peers waiting for him, investigating the time phenomenon he caused by his jump.

No mage has successfully traveled into the past. Paradox inevitably destroys the mage attempting such a trip. Thus the mage who travels into the future is stuck there.

Sidestep Time. In some senses, this effect is the opposite of *Programmed Event*. The mage no longer determines time for other events; rather, he shifts himself completely out of time. The world suddenly halts all around the mage. He is still free to move and act among the frozen events around him, pushing or rearranging objects and people. Certain effects, however, are limited. He can turn a television to another channel, but the frozen image on the screen will not change, nor will cars operate, nor will powered machinery work. The mage can extend his temporal immunity to encompass other objects and people, but this limits the length of his stay out-of-time.



Use the standard Duration table to determine how long the mage can remain in a timeless state.

Time Rotes

Peeping Tom (Time 2, Correspondence 3)

Cultists have a tendency to annoyances that don't really upset other mages at first, but like any other annoyance that persists, it eventually becomes maddening. The classic example of this (and the reason why the Cult of Ecstasy teaches this rote) is the Cultist that even the Cult now calls Peeping Tom. From the safety and security of his own home, Tom had enjoyed not just watching what other mages did, but then pursuing the matter to see what his favorites did in the past. Word is that massive journals of notes documenting the lives of many famous mages like Ho Kazaoke are in the possession of the Cult.

[The effect is just like *Postcognition*, except the mage may see the past of any location no matter where he is currently.]

Sugar Magnolias (Time 4, Mind 2)

This effect, developed by the ill-fated Zak Trainer (see below), allowed Zak to scan another person's mind and re-

experience past events connected to the subject's memories. Zak shared the same sensations the subject had while experiencing the past events. In addition, he knew the subject's conscious thoughts at the time of the event. Zak found this rote to be a valuable way to get to know the mages that came to him for instruction; anyone who wished to learn from him had to submit to this technique or look elsewhere for tutelage. At the time there was no better person to whom one could go for information about the Sphere of Time.

The effect was different from simple mind probing, which only reveals what the subject remembers about incidents. Zak actually re-lived the actual experience from the perspective of the subject, but without the subject's prejudices. Severe emotions and physical injuries suffered by the subject during the past event did cause Zak to have painful reactions during his visions. One incident was so violent that Zak is said to have broken the connection after numerous wounds appeared on his flesh.

[The more points of success achieved on the effect roll, the more total viewing time the mage receives. If the mage is probing a subject suffering from amnesia, the effect requires many more points of success and the relived experience may be very sketchy. If the subject took damage in the remembered event, the mage must make a Will roll at a penalty equal to his points of success or suffer sympathetic pain; on a critical failure of this Will roll, the mage will actually take the same damage suffered by the subject!]

Tune in, Turn On, Drop Out (Time 4, Life 3)

By freezing time with respect to parts of her Life Pattern, the mage Xanadu placed herself in a death-like trance to fool witnesses after a major battle with a number of Superiors. She used her ability in time determinism to stop most of her major body functions. Xanadu suspected the fake death would have to last for several hours, and thus left some life functions unfrozen to give a more complete illusion of death. For example, her muscles spasmed with the onset of rigor mortis.

[For every hour the mage maintains the false death state, he suffers 1d of damage as his body proteins deteriorate. He may heal this damage using normal Pattern Magick healing once he awakens. Because his brain functions are shut down, the mage is oblivious to his surroundings while in the false death. Points of success on the magickal effect roll extend the maximum length of time the mage can remain in the fake death state.]

Zen and the Art of Panhandling (Time 5, Forces 2, Prime 4)

This effect is the closest thing a non-Oracle has ever achieved to going backward through time. It involves bringing the future back to the present. It was developed by the very knowledgeable Cultist Zak Trainer. After several months of work, Zak was able to contact himself in the future (he didn't know how far in the future) and transfer a quantity of Quintessence to his current self in the present. The problem he did not foresee is that he would someday become that future version of himself and be drained of a like amount of Quintessence. The Technocracy did not miss such a detail, and its minions were poised to strike at Zak at his very moment of weakness. He was slain.

[One point of Quintessence may be "borrowed" for each point by which the magickal effect roll is made (minimum 1). The GM *must* remember to inform the player that an equivalent amount of Quintessence is lost in the middle of some future adventure.]



Just one more system — leap through, toss the code bomb, twist, then through the comm port. Hurtle back along the signal, back into the home system, drop the carrier, drop the carrier!

Damn, Delos thought to himself, relieved to find himself back in his comfortable chair. What the hell were those things? The afterimages of his excursion through the Net danced on the backs of his eyes — spectral spider-things that glided along the lines of light that made up the world of the Net, moving like the predators that had never evolved there, moving like they owned the place. But he'd nailed them, even without knowing what they were, and better yet, he'd completed what he'd set out to do. He had the goods. The Technomancers would be gnashing their teeth, but the Adepts would be partying tonight, before getting down to business.

Delos.

"What the..." he half-shouted at the hollow voice over his shoulder, and spun the chair around.

Delos. It is time.

A spirit form loomed before him. Only partly manifested, it was translucent, wavering to transparency in places. In the darkness of the room, it was lit from within, and shed a light that cast no shadows. It wore the form of an elder dragon, although it was of a size to fit in the small chamber.

I am thy true self and thy true nature, Delos, it said, the "words" not quite words and yet echoing clearly in his head. Come with me and learn. It gestured with a foreclaw, and the young Virtual Adept found himself catapulted into the Umbra.

Chapter 5

PERMUTATIONS

The universe begins to look more and more like a great thought than a great machine.

— Dr. J.B. Rhine

Mage characters are much, much more than just numbers and powers – there are aspects to their being and their play that require further exploration. This chapter outlines rules and systems that are unique to the setting of *Mage*.

Magick and Skills

Coincidences are spiritual puns.

— G. K. Chesterton

A character may use his magickal abilities to help him succeed at a more mundane skill roll, Quick Contest or attribute test. Such magickal help will always be coincidental – the mage is, in effect, subtly “nudging” reality to help himself accomplish his goal.

The character must announce that he is using magick to boost his chances with a skill *before* he makes the skill roll. He must then make a magickal effect roll as described on p. 84; it *must* be coincidental magick, and as such, the character must define the specific coincidence that applies to the skill roll he is about to make. Some examples:

Climbing: A rope or ladder is nearby; the tree has a low limb; the wall has available hand- and footholds; there’s a fire escape on the side of the building.

Research: The library you use is a world-recognized repository for such information; someone was researching the same thing and left a stack of reference books piled on a desk; it’s a favorite topic of the bookstore owner so he happens to stock material about it.

Stealth: The guard falls asleep; the lights are dim; the shadows fall on the right places; an animal rustles elsewhere to lead the guard off your track; no one set the alarm.

Tracking: The ground is muddy so footprints are easy to see; all the doors are locked from the inside so he couldn’t have gone in any of them; several people saw where he went; the quarry stopped to rest.

If the proposed coincidence satisfies the GM, and if the character has the necessary Sphere(s) to enact the magick, the mage then rolls.

If the roll succeeds, the character gets a bonus to his effective skill *for the next roll only* of +1 for every two full points by which the roll was made (minimum +1). The mage can only make the magickal effect roll at the moment he is about to use the skill, and he *must* use the bonus; if he doesn’t, or fails to make the skill roll for some reason, the bonus is lost. A mage cannot “save up” a good roll for a later date, nor can the mage change his mind about what skill he’s about to use and “carry over” the bonus.

Coincidence in Combat

Of course, this process can be used in combat as well. The concentration required for the effect roll will usually keep it from being used in hand-to-hand fights, but any ranged combat (from gunfights all the way up to artillery barrages!) can benefit from coincidence. Of course, sometimes the bonus will be no better than if the character had carefully aimed, in which case *that* is the coincidence. . .

The character may choose to affect his roll to hit or the damage roll, but must make his decision before the attack roll is made. If the mage chooses to alter the damage done by his attack, the number of points by which the roll was made becomes a damage bonus added to whatever is rolled for the attack; if the attack fails, a magickal effect roll to modify damage is lost, even if it was a critical success!

The mage may reduce an opponent’s attack or damage rolls in the same manner.

A mage may also choose to modify his defenses – even Passive Defense – but this is more instinctive and cannot be

planned ahead of time. To defend with magick, the character rolls against the *unmodified* skill level of the Sphere best suited for the defense, instead of his normal Active or Passive Defense. *This requires no concentration beforehand!* If the defense roll is successful, the player must describe what coincidence took place to save him. Remember that repeated use of the same coincidence can reduce the mage’s effective skill level.

Innumerable coincidental effects can occur in combat; a few possibilities, both defensive and offensive, are listed below. These are not listed in any specific order; the likelihood or unlikelihood of any given coincidence is highly dependent upon the situation. However, the more points by which the effect roll was made, the greater the resulting coincidence should be.

Hand-to-Hand: He misses you and his weapon lodges in a door; you have a secret ankle sheath; his weapon gets snagged in its sheath as he draws it; your shot pinches a nerve; he falls on his funny bone; his old back pain (or war wound) flares up; he slips on something or loses his weapon; he has a glass jaw; blood runs into his eyes so he can’t see clearly.

Ranged Attacks: The bullet hit the whiskey flask in your pocket; the opponent’s gun jams; the opponent’s gun is not loaded; his shot happens to miss the lung by an inch; your shot is that inch closer; a bullet ricochets off several surfaces and hits the gunman; the rifle’s sight is off just enough to compensate for your bad shooting; the gun you picked up has a full clip or is specially modified to hold a larger clip; you trip and fall just as an assassin fires a bullet at you.

Damaging Your Opponent: He twists a leg (maybe it breaks); a car swerves off the road and hits him; his brakes fail; the fall knocks the breath out of him; a piece of Skylab hits him on the head; the blow doesn’t seem to do much, but induces internal hemorrhaging; your punch is just right and drives fragments of the nose into the brain; he misses you and breaks his hand against the wall; the fence is electrocuted; a gas main blows; there are sharks in the water; it’s not a tub of water – it’s sulfuric acid; the TV blows up and sprays glass across the room.





Vulgar Magick in Combat

If the fight is mage-to-mage and is unwitnessed by Sleepers, Vulgar Magick may be used to augment otherwise mundane attacks. The Akashic Brotherhood are perhaps the most adept at this, using high-level Correspondence effects to inflict multiple strikes with a single blow, or to attack hand-to-hand from a distance.

Each magickally-augmented attack requires a normal magickal effect roll. The GM may wish to assess a penalty to the effect roll based on how complex or unusual the desired attack is. Remember that if the desired degree of success is not achieved, no magickal effect occurs at all!

Whether the magickal effect roll is successful or not, the attack roll is also made; the unaugmented attack still has its normal chance of hitting. Exception: if Correspondence is being used to make a melee attack from a distance, the attack automatically fails if the effect roll fails. If the magickal effect is multiple blows from a single attack, a separate roll must be made for each blow; a critical failure on any of the blows indicates that *all* the blows missed, while a simple failure affects only the blow for which it was rolled.

All magickally-caused damage is cumulative with any hand-to-hand damage rolled; they should be added together and *then* applied to DR.

Ascension and Raising Arete

Where, except in the present, can the Eternal be met?

— C.S. Lewis

Once an apprentice becomes a mage, the quest for Ascension begins in earnest. A character's position on the way to Ascension is indicated by the level of Arete he possesses. Arete is the measure of a character's enlightenment and harmony with his inner Avatar. The character must continually strive to understand the cosmos and his place in the crusade for evolution. Even though gaining levels of Arete still requires earned character points, Ascension is the result of a character's actions, growth and development.

For purposes of game mechanics, each rise in Arete must be integrated with the flow of the game and involve a great deal of character development. Ascension is initiated by the mage's Avatar via direct communication — one of the few times the Avatar emerges as a separate entity in the character's life. The forms commonly assumed by Avatars of different Essences are detailed on pp. 39-40. During a significant moment (the character escapes a Paradox Realm, regains Quintessence, experiences Quiet, etc.), the Avatar contacts the character and begins (via dreams and other mystical means) to guide him toward Ascension. No one other than the mage and Masters of the Spirit Sphere can see or interact with his Avatar.

This manifestation of the Avatar is called an Epiphany and is spoken of with reverence by all mages. Epiphanies can be overpowering, emotionally incapacitating a character for hours or even days. Epiphanies should always be formative and pivotal events in a campaign. Visions often occur, and aspects of the self (such as Mental Advantages and Disadvantages) might change.

The GM has total control over when and how the Epiphany is reached. Sometimes it will occur to more than one mage at a time, and can even be designed into an adventure ahead of time.

The Seeking

The great end of learning is nothing else but to seek for the lost mind.

— Mencius, *Works*, Book VI, 1:11.4

Upon receiving an Epiphany, the mage must embark on what is called the Seeking. If the Seeking succeeds, the mage will gain a new level in Arete. Only at the conclusion of the Seeking need character points be spent. The actions a mage is required to perform during the Seeking usually correspond to the character's Essence.

The character is usually given a quest of some sort by his Avatar. The goal of this quest is often esoteric, and normally difficult to obtain. The object of the quest is expressed by the Avatar during the Epiphany, and the mage is led (or perhaps misled) over the entire Seeking by the Avatar. Such prolonged contact with oneself can be most frustrating and exhausting.

Seeking can take hours, days, months or even years, and the higher the Arete level to be attained, the more dangerous the journey. Some mages spend decades in the process; some never succeed. During the Seeking, the mage must undergo a grueling sequence of internal and external transformation.

The mage is usually led by his Avatar (often by a circuitous route) to a location or place where an action or series of actions must be taken. It is rare for the Avatar to express exactly what needs to be accomplished; the character must figure it

out. Sometimes the Seeking involves a return to some place from the character's past where wrongs must be righted. Sometimes it involves a journey into the Umbra where the mage must battle his own Avatar. Sometimes it is a traditional quest for wisdom, where mountains must be scaled and oracles consulted.

Following are descriptions of the Seeking as interpreted by each Essence:

Dynamic: The Seeking of a Dynamic mage typically involves enforcing change upon a person or society.

Pattern: The Seeking typically involves protecting and maintaining the status quo, or reinforcing the Patterns that connect and bind all things, including the self to the world.

Primordial: Most often, this Seeking involves a return to the character's past or inner self. The character must face and defeat his own inner demons.

Questing: Seeking for those of Questing Essence involves the headlong pursuit of a vision, or an exploration of the character's mind. This Seeking often requires extensive travel in both the physical and spiritual worlds.

As an example, a Seeking for a mage with a Pattern Essence could involve him traveling to a Realm in the Near Umbra where Marauders have taken over. The character will have to reestablish the area's religious hierarchy, which was overthrown by the Marauders. He must then deal with the upheaval caused by the Marauders and his own counterrevolution. If he succeeds he will raise his Arete and gain greater understanding of the universe's delicate balance. If he fails, he may well destroy an entire Realm.

Note that a Seeking need not be as strictly as described above. Facing inner demons may mean the mage must challenge their embodiment in combat, or he may find himself in a situation where failing to resist a vice or compulsion could have drastic consequences on the people and places around him. While the challenge will normally reflect the essence, the trappings of the challenge may be complex and misleading.



Changes to the Character

When a character succeeds in the Seeking, he may change more than simply his level of Arete. In those Seekings where the mage has to confront – and defeat – embodiments of his own mental disadvantages, success means that he no longer possesses those disadvantages. Successful Seekings may also result in the mage gaining a Reputation, Allies or other advantages. In all such cases, the GM has the option of simply raising the character's point total to its new level, or requiring the character to pay for the changes with subsequently earned points.

Paradox

A paradox can be paradoctored.

– Robert A. Heinlein

Whenever a mage produces a magickal effect, he creates a situation that cannot exist within reality. This is true even of static magick, even though its appearance is innocuous. When a mage overrules reality, he becomes infused with the energies of Paradox. If a mage's magick attempt fails, the failure indicates that the force of reality, or perhaps Paradox spirits themselves, prevent his success. This is important: the effect doesn't just fail – rather, it is stopped by reality. A mage's accumulated Paradox energy tends to coalesce within the Pattern of the mage's body in the same way that he stores Quintessence.

Accumulated Paradox is indicated on the mage's character sheet, specifically on the Quintessence/Paradox scale (see p. 50). In order for a character to rid himself of Paradox energy, the player may either “spend” the points on Paradox Flaws. If he doesn't, the mage will eventually suffer a Paradox Backlash.

Flaws are localized, usually temporary, distortions of reality caused by the “leakage” of Paradox energy from the character's Pattern. Backlashes are violent, devastating effects caused by Paradox energy exploding out of the character's Pattern. The effects of Backlashes range from physical and mental trauma to attracting the more insidious forms of Paradox.

Mages of the Traditions have found no way to control Paradox, and only a few means of working around it. Despite this, most mages believe that even Paradox can be understood and controlled. In particular, the Marauders seem to be immune to its effects.

Paradox Flaws

Even lawmakers are subject to the laws of physics.

– Stanley Schmidt

A player can choose to reduce a character's Paradox level by exchanging points for Paradox Flaws. Flaws range from minor (which expend a single point of Paradox) to severe (caused by 5 points). Sample effects are detailed below.

In game terms, the forces of Paradox are beyond the control of the mage character, but for game purposes, the player is allowed to determine how the forces of Paradox affect his character. Naturally, the GM is free to assign Flaws to a character, especially if a certain Flaw will later become crucial to a campaign's plot, or if a player seems to be abusing his power of selection.

Players can choose to select new Flaws at any time. While players may at first have no motivation to select Flaws, players will quickly realize that it is far better to select Paradox Flaws than to wait for the GM to roll for a Backlash. Besides, when properly played, Flaws can be exciting and humorous. Players can select Flaws from the numerous examples below, or better yet, create completely new Flaws. The GM can use the examples below as guidelines when assigning a Paradox point “cost” to new Flaws.

The exact die roll or attribute penalties a chosen Flaw causes are determined by the GM. The duration of an effect is also subjective and is decided by the GM. The natural flow of Quintessence into a character's Pattern will slowly correct most damage to the Pattern caused by Paradox; however, some Flaws scar the character's Pattern and are permanent.

The effects of Paradox cause mages to tread with some degree of fear through the Realms of magick, and the Flaws of Paradox energy must stay fresh and new to continue to be exciting elements of the game. For this reason, player groups are strongly encouraged to create their own Paradox Flaws to supplement those provided below. GMs may even reward players with extra character points at the end of a game session for creating especially imaginative or entertaining Flaws.

Often, elements in an adventure spontaneously create new ideas for Flaws, depending on what the characters have done to gain the Paradox energy. *Example:* In the process of using Life magick to grow hair and disguise himself as a heavily bearded man, Medgethe Mage acquires 2 of Paradox points. The player elects to spend the accumulated points on a Paradox Flaw associated with the magick that was used. The player decides that from now on, all hair on Medge's body will grow shorter each day until eventually he is completely bald, at which point the Flaw will disappear and Medge will again begin to grow hair normally.

Once a mage has accumulated large amounts of Paradox, he will find it very difficult to bleed it off in small amounts. Once the lid is off, Paradox tends to stream out of the mage. Therefore, whenever Paradox Flaws are purchased, a player must spend at least half of his character's current Paradox (round up). For example, if the mage has 5 points of Paradox, the minimum Flaw that may be purchased is a 3-point Flaw (5 divided by 2 and rounded up is 3). Of course, a 4- or 5-point Flaw may be selected as well. If the mage has more than 8 Paradox, 5-point Flaws are the only option.

One-Point Flaws

A minor Paradox effect occurs near the character. Most one-point Flaws are extremely short-lived. The majority of Paradox Flaws are one-point effects that happen as the mage performs the magick that caused him to acquire the Paradox point.

Minor Paradox Flaws include: watches running in reverse; milk curdling; a fire burning without its fuel being consumed; plastic rusting; flowers closing back into buds; glass disintegrating into sand; shadows falling toward a light source; the character sneezing so forcefully he suffers 1d damage and makes a sound like thunder; a reversal of the sense of taste, making sweets sour and tasty foods vile.

Two-Point Flaws

Two-point Flaws are more dramatic and can last for hours. Examples include: energy flowing backward (cars suddenly thrown in reverse, electrical currents reverse, fire burns cold, etc.); scars reopening into wounds; mirror images acting differently from the objects they reflect; right-handed people becoming left-handed; casual acquaintances forgetting each other completely; nearby sounds echoing indefinitely; 10 minutes passing in an eyblink; the next point of Quintessence the character gains becoming a point of Paradox instead; finger- and toenails growing extremely fast and twisting into unnatural shapes; streams running uphill.

Three-Point Flaws

Three-point Flaws are much more prominent and inhibit the character significantly. They also tend to have longer durations; some last days or weeks. The player may also choose one-point Flaws and make them permanent. Three-point Flaws include: things falling upward in the character's vicinity; specific memories radically changing; the character's face wrin-

ling as from old age; one finger becoming as flexible as a rubber hose; inversion of the character's sense of hearing – whispers are screams and shouts are barely audible; the character becoming unable to enter the Umbra; the force of friction completely disappearing in regard to anything the character contacts; nerve impulses to control one arm being delayed for a full second; nerve impulses to another arm happening one full second in time before the character would will it (trying to catch a thrown ball, the character's arm raises before the character even knows the ball is being thrown, and then drops a full second too early, so that the ball strikes the character).

One-point flaws which are made permanent should be noted as disadvantages; set their value at -5 to -10 points, depending on their severity.

Four-Point Flaws

Four-point Flaws become quite hazardous. They can last hours, days, or weeks depending on their severity. Examples include: the body's intestinal tract reversing direction of consumption and excretion; the character needing darkness instead of light to see; the character's body becoming a powerful magnet so that nearby metal objects hurtle toward him; the character being forced to speak in inverted word order (which means for the character to say "I am Jason", he must say "Jason am I"); the character's bones becoming as heavy as iron or as brittle as rotten wood.

Five-Point Flaws

These are major Paradox Flaws. These Flaws are often more damaging than lesser Flaws but do not necessarily last longer than three- or four-point Flaws. The GM must decide the exact consequences of each Flaw in terms of game statistics. The Flaws often involve a drastic and temporary or minor and permanent decrease in one or more attributes. Players may also choose a two-point Flaw and adopt it permanently. Again, note these as disadvantages, with values anywhere from -10 to -30 points, or more.

Examples of five-point Paradox Flaws include: sights coming into the right eye being seen with the left eye and vice versa; one of the character's knees or elbows only bending in the opposite direction; every piece of inanimate matter the character touches turning transparent.

Paradox Backlash

Every time you manage to close the door on Reality, it comes in through the window.

— Aimee Miracel

Whenever a critical failure is rolled for a vulgar magick effect, or whenever a GM feels it is appropriate, a Paradox roll is made to determine if the mage suffers from a Paradox Backlash. The GM rolls 3d against the character's Paradox (including any points gained from a critical failure). For each point by which the GM succeeds on the Paradox roll, the character loses one point of Paradox energy. That's the good news.

The bad news is that the character suffers from some form of Paradox Backlash as the released Paradox energy explodes out of the character's Pattern. The GM can select any of the Backlash effects below, or create new effects of his own. Generally, the more points by which the roll succeeded, the more Paradox energy is expelled, and the worse the effect will be. Spirits will be more powerful and traps will be more difficult and threatening.

Paradox Backlash can take any of several different forms:

Damage

The forces of Paradox directly assault the character, inflicting damage upon him. The character suffers 1d of damage for each point of success on the Paradox roll. This damage bypasses *all* DR except for Toughness, and is *Aggravated* (see p. 137). HT lost this way can only be recovered through natural healing; Life magick will not work.

This damage usually appears as wide, striated burns randomly scattered on the character's skin. These burn marks gradually fade as they heal. Paradox wounds are extremely painful and their visible marks are symbols of pride, shame or embarrassment, depending upon the character's Tradition. Many famous mages have died in this way.

Paradox Realm

The character, and anyone else nearby, is sucked into a Paradox Realm. Paradox Realms are phenomena that imprison those caught within them into a form of infinite loop. These traps often involve the Spheres of Correspondence, Time, Spirit or Mind, but can be related to other Spheres as well. Examples of Paradox Realms include:

Correspondence: The prisoners are caught in a field of warped space. The space may be the size of a room, a city block, a town or a nation. Whenever the prisoners attempt to leave the space, coincidental effects hinder them from leaving (to the point of injuring or killing them), or they simply appear on the opposite side of the space when they attempt to exit from the other side.

Entropy: The prisoners seem to have entered another dimension. Everything around them is normal except for its appalling lack of disorganization. People move like robots; traffic moves in orderly streams; events occur right on time; the landscape looks like something out of the film *Metropolis*; there is an absolute void of creative process anywhere.

Mind: The prisoner is trapped inside his own imagination. He might be plagued by his own personified neuroses, which appear as other sentients inside this virtual world. This effect can be similar to Quiet (see below). Other Paradox Realms of the mind cause insanity: for example, the prisoner assumes a new split personality each day, occasionally cycling back into his true personality for a while before switching again. (These only affect the character as long as he is trapped in the realm; if he is freed, he is restored to sanity and need not take additional disadvantages.)

Spirit: The prisoner's spirit becomes trapped inside a Paradox dimension where the laws of reality differ radically from those of physical reality. He might become trapped in a dream that endlessly repeats itself, or in a dream world based upon mindless clichés such as soap opera romance or gangster pulp. The physical body of the prisoner lapses into catatonia.

Time: The prisoner is doomed to repeat the same period of time endlessly. This period might be a week, a day, an hour, or even a mere minute. The movie *Groundhog Day* is one reference source for this kind of Paradox Realm.

GMs are encouraged to play characters' entrapment in and escape from these Realms as complete adventures. The methods of escape from Paradox Realms are many and varied, and most often involve creating a Paradox within the Realm itself. Other traps must simply run their courses before the characters are set free.

Paradox Spirits

On rare occasions, potent releases of Paradox energy will summon or create a Paradox spirit. (Examples of Paradox spirits are given on pp. 169-170.) How the spirit reacts to the mage who called it up can vary. Some spirits manifest and immediately attack the mage who "created" them. Others escape into the Umbra, where they weave elaborate, cunning plots to ruin the mage. Some even attempt to handle the Paradox with diplomacy and grace!

It is rumored that Marauders sometimes purposefully create paradoxes in order to summon Paradox spirits. They are said to possess methods that allow them to trap the spirits once they arrive. The spirits are then perverted into their servants.



Quiet

I have crossed and recrossed the line between sanity and madness so many times that I have all but rubbed it out.

— Anonymous

Mages are susceptible to a state of psychic regression known as Quiet. Mages are so adept at imposing their own reality on the world around them that they can get a little carried away. Sometimes the mage's perceptions cannot realign with reality for a period of time. Such an estrangement is known as an episode of *Quiet*.

Any mage with Paradox points can slip into Quiet at any time. When and how an episode of Quiet begins and ends is entirely up to the GM, though Quiet usually occurs if a character builds up Paradox without buying Paradox Flaws or suffering Paradox Backlash. Sometimes entire adventures will be aspects of a character's Quiet.

Quiet is usually viewed by mundane humans as insanity. Its symptoms, from an outsider's perspective, include manic activity and incomprehensible communications interspersed with severe withdrawal verging on catatonia. From the victim's perspective, Quiet is an assault of extraneous sensory data and changes to the world around him. During the mage's fight to realign his perceptions with reality, he is perceived as catatonic by outsiders.

Naturally, beliefs being what they are in the World of Darkness (especially a mage's beliefs), such insanity can have tangible effects. Sometimes mages may take people into their Quiets, to keep them company in the strange landscape or to help them find their way back. Sometimes an episode of Quiet is so strong that all the characters in a cabal are affected by it. GMs are free to create or evoke nearly anything during a episode of Quiet – it's all "illusion" anyway.

The worst part of Quiet is that the mage cannot be certain which elements are real and which are false. During a Quiet, the mage usually tries his best to ignore his delusions and act normally. Those who fail tend to end up in sanitariums, or at least with tarnished reputations in human society. Particularly strong elements cannot be ignored, for they are so solidly accepted by the mage that they affect him as if they are real.

GMing Quiet

The extent and variety of a mage's Quiet is determined by his current Paradox rating. The table indicates what changes might occur.

Paradox

Rating	Delusions
0	None
1	A few false inanimate elements (such as letters or paintings) appear intermittently but repeatedly.
2	A false environmental feature appears that is unique, but not harmful (a light drizzle, things seem much louder, etc.).
3	Illusory objects appear; these delusions don't confront the mage, but would react or respond if approached (petting a sleeping dog, talking to a peanut salesman, working a calculator).
4	The delusions become increasingly regular, and even more interactive. It becomes very difficult to tell reality from falsehood.
5	Things that demand the mage's reaction in some way, but are not dangerous (such as flies buzzing around the head, someone knocking on the door, etc.), begin to appear.

- 6 Some actual items disappear from the mage's reality (such as a favorite bookstore or a family member). If encountered directly, these things will not be remembered or will appear as something else.
- 7 Potentially harmful changes to the mage's surroundings appear (music loud enough to deafen, no sunlight in the daytime, broken glass on the ground, etc.).
- 8 The mage is confronted with potential dangers (such as a growling pit bull, a mugger, or a speeding bus).
- 9 The mage constantly encounters fantastical events (houses caught in tornadoes) and supernatural creatures (such as minotaurs and dragons).
- 10+ Reality is completely altered.

These guidelines are quite loose and open to GM interpretation. Some GMs may choose to invest the Quiet with symbols reflecting the nature of the character; others may use Quiet as a sort of "Tell-Tale Heart" motif, trying to prey on hidden guilt. Others may decide to make the elements of the Quiet completely arbitrary, to best reflect the situation at hand or promote strange roleplaying on the player's part. Nearly any literary device or motif will lend itself to portraying a Quiet.

Coping with False Elements

I have looked into the abyss, and the abyss has looked into me. Neither liked what we saw.

— Brother Theodore

It is up to the GM to present all the elements of the Quiet realistically and straightforwardly, unless they are too fantastical to fool anyone. During a character's Quiet, the GM acts as the mage's senses and must give false information as if it were true. Only by observing the reactions of other people, or by making a specific effort to determine the origin of something, can a mage realize the unreal nature of a Quiet element.

The mage can also try to disbelieve anything he sees during his Quiet by making an IQ roll at -3. (If he has the Intuition advantage, he suffers no penalty.) A failure results in ambiguous answers that neither confirm or deny the element's reality. A critical failure leaves the mage convinced that the illusory element is real (or that a real element is illusory). A failure on a roll to disbelieve a false element can lend that element a degree of reality; critical failures can make them manifest in the real world (see *Hobgoblins*, below). Elements may only be scrutinized once, and the results are believed thereafter.

Any direct confrontation arising in Quiet may also be "scrutinized" as above. These rolls, however, are more along the lines of banishment. If they fail, the target must be faced and fought as if it were real. If a mage knows he faces an illusory danger, he can attempt to work magick internally to dispel it. In effect, he withdraws into a catatonic state and deals with the problem within his mind. Vulgar magick may be used, and the effects will not affect the mundane world in any way, nor will the mage gain further Paradox.

Once a mage draws his foes into his mind in this way, he has committed to the struggle of the *mindscapes* (see below).

Hobgoblins

Should the mage critically fail an attempt to disbelieve an illusory element of his Quiet, that element may actually become real. Such illusions-made-real are called *hobgoblins*.

Hobgoblins can take virtually any form, from inanimate objects to "living" creatures, often acting with an intelligence of their own. While most hobgoblins are innocuous, or at worst annoying, some can be extremely dangerous. The Traditions generally hold their mages responsible for the actions of any hobgoblins birthed from a mage's Quiet.

Whenever a mage fails an attempt to disbelieve an illusory element, the GM can opt to have that element become a hobgoblin. When the mage emerges from his Quiet, the element enters the real world and can be seen and felt by everyone, not just the mage. Once manifest in the real world, a Hobgoblin cannot be dispelled, disbelieved or banished via a mindscape (see below). Hobgoblins are rare, however, and GMs may choose to employ them only in instances when a mage has critically failed his disbelief roll.

For complete details on how to handle Hobgoblins, see the Hobgoblin disadvantage entry on p. 47.

The Mindscape

If a mage's Quiet includes elements that actively taunt or attack the mage, the only way he may deal with them is to enter the stage of the Quiet known as the *mindscape*. The mage may also use the mindscape to banish any other persistent element from his Quiet, except for a manifested Hobgoblin.

To enter the mindscape, the mage must go into a near-catatonic trance state. This is achieved automatically, but the mage must then make a Will roll to determine the length of his catatonia. The number of points of success made on this roll is compared to the table below.

<i>Points of Success</i>	<i>Period of Catatonia</i>
0	years
1	months
2	weeks
3-5	days
6	hours
7	minutes
8+	seconds

In the mindscape stage, the mage's physical body remains catatonic – from whence the Quiet derives its name – while his mind battles its internal demons. In play, this dream is handled as a bit of wildly creative, often surreal, role-playing that ends only when the episode of Quiet ends.

A mage trapped in a mindscape for longer than a day may try to communicate with people in the real world every so often. A successful Will roll allows the mage to communicate. If the mage makes his roll by 3 or more points, he may communicate clearly; otherwise, he is partially unintelligible. The maximum length of each communication, in minutes, is one quarter of



the mage's IQ (round down). A mage may only attempt such communication once per period of time equal to the units of his incarceration. For example, a mage stuck in his mindscape for "weeks" may try to communicate once per week.

Injury and Death

Violence and injury enclose in their net all that do such things, and generally return to him who began.

– Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, Book V, l. 1152

While the human body's ability to repair itself is great, mages have other means of healing normal injuries. The Sphere of Life has a variety of magical effects that can accelerate the body's healing ability (see p. 109). Healing magick can even be performed as coincidental magick: the bullet only grazed a rib, or hit a lucky whiskey flask that the mage just happens to be carrying in his chest pocket (even though he never drinks, and that shirt didn't have a shirt pocket before . . .).

Aggravated Wounds

However, mages occasionally suffer wounds so terrible that even the usual healing magick will not suffice. These wounds are called aggravated wounds. A mage can only recover from aggravated wounds through natural healing (as outlined on p. B128), or by using vulgar magick and spending 1 point of Quintessence per 3 HT (or fraction thereof) healed (which risks Paradox). Common sources of aggravated wounds include certain Nephandi attacks, the claws of vampires, ghouls, fomori, werewolves and other supernatural beings, weapon Talismans, Paradox explosions and some of the nastier Paradox spirits.

Diseases

Mages can catch and even transmit human diseases, but generally do not die from them. HT or attribute points lost to disease are treated as normal wounds, and can be healed with magick appropriately. Some very severe diseases (AIDS, certain cancers "the GM has final say) are considered equivalent to aggravated wounds, requiring either normal healing (not usually effective) or vulgar magick to alleviate them.



Do ~ The Martial Arts Style

This is our path; to fight or die. That's what we're paid for, so let's do it with some style!

— Dr. Who, "Battlefield"

For those GMs who own a copy of *GURPS Martial Arts*, the Do of the Akashic Brotherhood is outlined below as a full martial arts style.

Do 15 points/20 points (+ Magickal Abilities)

The Do of the Akashic Brotherhood is a style with an even mix of offensive and defensive moves, all of which can be augmented through the judicious use of magick. Such special attacks as "Striking the Gong" and "The Kick of the Four Winds" (p. 100) which employ the Correspondence Sphere, are good examples of otherwise ordinary maneuvers enhanced beyond what is possible to the Unawakened.

The prices above reflect, as is normal, both Realistic and Cinematic costs, but Do as practiced in the World of Darkness is always Cinematic. The prices also do not reflect the cost of the Brother's various Spheres.

A practitioner of Do as outlined below will always have at least one melee weapon skill. A possible choice could be Whip or Kusari to turn the Brother's sash (suitably modified) into a weapon.

Primary Skills: Breath Control, Judo, Karate, Meditation (the version found on p. 47, not that from *Martial Arts*), Philosophy (Do).

Secondary Skills: Acrobatics, Jumping, any Melee Weapon (not just stereotypical Oriental weapons), Throwing.

Optional Skills: Bow, a second Melee Weapon.

Maneuvers: Aggressive Parry, Back Kick, Disarming, Drop Kick, Ear Clap, Elbow Strike, Hit Location, Jump Kick, Spin Kick, Sweeping Kick.

Cinematic Skills: Throwing Art, Zen Archery.

Cinematic Maneuvers: Dual-Weapon Attack, Flying Jump Kick, Roll with the Blow.

The Prelude

It's not destiny until it's happened.

— Michael R. Singer

Our past defines us most clearly, for it best indicates what we might become. The purpose of the prelude is to give each character a past so the future might be told. It is a form of one-on-one roleplaying in which the history of a character's life thus far is created. It is quite similar to normal play, except that many years are compressed into a series of rapid-fire decisions.

A vital part of a character's background is the creation of a personal history, which is one of the things the prelude does best. It creates a sense of where a character grew up and what his life was like. The personal biography a player creates in the prelude will be relevant throughout the campaign, and the GM may refer to it frequently.

Prelude Technique

Each player undergoes the prelude alone. It is one-on-one unless two or more characters were friends and spent a lot of time together before they were mages.

During the prelude the GM will need to direct the player much more than usual. Give the player lots of decisions to make, but rush everything – don't give him much time to think. The GM needs to play through things quickly, unless he is willing and able to spend more time (which can enable the creation of very detailed characters). Combat almost never appears during a prelude. If it does, the GM simply describes the results (the character can't die before the game even begins!).

There are many ways to progress through a character's life; any way that helps mold a complete character is fine. The GM should use the prelude to explore and explain the full background of the character, including the origin of his Talisman(s) and the identity of his original Mentor, as well as any other significant NPCs, such as Contacts, Allies and Ally Groups, if any. At the same time, the player should gain a firm idea of his abilities as a mage.

The GM should play through one or more typical scenes from the character's life to give the player a sense of how the character lived. The GM can give the player a sense of the character's life as a mage by counterpointing it with the bland tedium of his previous mundane existence.

Example: "Your flight back to San Francisco has taken a lot out of you and you are anxious to make it back to your apartment. Unfortunately, you landed in the middle of rush hour, so you jockey through traffic all the way home only to find your elevator is down again. You climb the five floors to your apartment but are only greeted by a door with an eviction notice. Didn't the landlord get your rent payment? You pushed it through the slot before you left 10 days ago! You try your key anyway, but the locks have been changed. There's got to be more to life than this!"

The GM can also include details that provoke the player into feeling the emotions of his character – "Your father is in a coma in the hospital." Once the character joins a Chantry to become a mage, he can't freely visit the hospital any more. His father could awaken or die, but the character may never see him again. The player needs to feel a profound and overwhelming sense of loss in order for the true power of the prelude to come across.

As the GM describes things, the player can interrupt with his own ideas and details concerning what is going on. The prelude is more of a collaboration than the usual flow of roleplay, so the GM should treat the player more like a partner.

Questions to Answer

Below are some questions that should be addressed during the prelude. If there is no time for a full prelude, the GM and player should at least make an effort to answer these questions. Whether or not a full prelude has been performed, it often helps to write out the answers.



Each question lists what sorts of things the player should ask himself, as well as some advice to the GM on how to run the prelude in relationship to the question.

How old are you?

How old are you now? How old do you actually look? How many years has it been since you finished your basic training in magick?

While it is easier to give dates to the things that occur in the prelude once it is finished, it is also useful to determine some important dates in the character's life during the prelude. It should begin at one of these important dates; a pivotal an event in his

youth is often the best. One main purpose of the prelude is to put the character's life in perspective, so setting early dates and establishing character age are very useful.

When did you first realize that you were different from most people?

Have you always been able to do things that other people didn't understand? Were you punished for being different? When did you realize that you were more than human? What did you do that helped you decide?

At some point in his life, the character may have realized that he could do things others couldn't. How he dealt with this knowledge is instrumental in describing the kind of person he became. Did he hide it, or was it impossible? His "difference" from others may have been noticed, or sensed unconsciously, by those around him. How did they react? How did they treat him? A child whose strange abilities are tolerated will become a vastly different mage from one who is beaten "to drive the devil out of him" when he manifests odd powers.

The character's childhood is always important because it's possible to create many adventure hooks. Maybe you can create similarities among the childhoods of all the characters of the campaign. Maybe they were all helped at some time or other by the same mysterious stranger.

When did you first encounter magick?

When did you first realize that other people were special like you? Did you see someone else do strange things before you realized that you could? Did the magickal person or event become important to you in other ways, or was it dismissed as unexplainable? Were you afraid of magick? Did seeing magick make you even more curious to find out why you were different?

A character's first encounter with magick "and his and others' reactions to it" will have a significant impact on his adult self. If the first experience was negative "a Paradox spirit, or a destructive or disturbing magickal effect" he may grow with warped attitudes about magick, perhaps with a fear of magick that is too powerful or vulgar. Conversely, a joyful or wondrous first experience could lead to an adult who sees magick as a goal in and of itself, or perhaps the ultimate cure-all for the world's ills.

The player knows what he is seeing, but the first time the character encounters magick in the game should be a memorable experience. Develop the mystery and strangeness of the situation for maximum effect.

Who was your Mentor?

Did you seek out a Mentor, or were you approached by a Mentor who had noted your potential? Was your Mentor kind? Stubborn? Wise? Do you still know your Mentor?

The influence of his Mentor on a mage cannot be overestimated. A character's Mentor may have been responsible for much more than simply helping the character gain an understanding of magick. Beliefs, styles, attitudes and prejudices can

all be transmitted from teacher to student, or can prompt the student to be as different from his Mentor as possible. A character's Mentor should have a huge impact on him, for good or ill.

The GM will need to create the Mentor if he is still a part of the character's life or if the character has taken the Patron (Mentor) advantage. Carefully develop the relationship between the Mentor and character.

How do you feel about other people?

Are you better than other people because of your magick, or are you burdened by your knowledge and wish for anonymity among Sleepers? Are Sleepers important to you, or are they just cattle to be used as your magick demands? What do you think of mages who help or hurt Sleepers?

A character's attitude toward normal humans and other mages will contribute heavily to the focus of the campaign. Power-driven characters will not respond to Sleepers in danger, but adventures could be designed to show characters the error of their ways by involving Sleepers in crucial ways. More compassionate characters may find themselves hip-deep in trouble, playing rescuer and super-hero!

A mage could be considered a superior human, for he knows more about the world and has the power to change the world. The truest test of a person, though, is how such power is used. Such a disregard for Sleepers is why the Technomancers are so despised. Would the character join those ranks?

When did you meet your companions?

How do you get along with the other characters? How long have you known them? Did you meet in a Chantry or another way? Do you share the same goals?

It's important, but in the end not necessary, that characters be compatible. Many good adventures can be based around mages' rivalries; in fact, such adventures could be microcosms of how mages have mishandled the development of mankind for centuries.

However, endless arguments between player characters do not make for good gaming. More adventures, and more entertaining adventures, are possible if the characters cooperate. It's thus important to establish meaningful connections between characters, such as a shared Tradition or Mentor. These links have to be more than just elements of the campaign. They have to mean something to the characters, and the best time to establish this kind of depth and history is in the prelude.

Where do you live now?

Do you live in a Chantry? A Node? Have you founded your own Chantry with the other characters? Do people know where to find you?

Many adventures can be based around the characters' home or events that take place nearby. It's thus important to establish this residence. If the character lives in a Chantry or Node, where is it located?

Do you continue to lead a mundane life?

Are you a full-time mage? Or do you still interact with people you knew before you began your magickal training? Do any mundane friends know that you are a mage? Do other mages know about your moonlighting in mundane life?

Details of a character's mundane life "if he has one" can be very important to the campaign. A mage might be married to a Sleeper, or have Sleeper dependents who could become vulnerable targets for other mages. Countless adventures can be based on events in the character's day-to-day life, like the



problems created by trying to live in both mage and Sleeper society simultaneously. If the mage is trying to keep his two lives separate and secret from one another, things could get difficult.

Have you run afoul of the Technocracy?

Are there Technomancers who know too much about you and your family? Did you think about joining the Technocracy? What have you done to rouse the ire of Technomancers?

The Technocracy seems determined to destroy any mages capable of altering the reality they are working so hard to erect. If a player's character has run into the Technocracy, he may already be marked for elimination. The New World Order may have Men in Black on his heels. The degree to which the Technocracy is aware of and hunting the character is very important to the tone and pacing of the campaign.

What drives you?

What guides your life as a mage? Do you seek vengeance? Enlightenment? Adventure? Do you wish to leave your life as a mage behind and return to your simple mundane life?

Being a mage means hard work and great responsibility. Not everyone, even those capable of practicing magick, are cut out for the task. Those who do remain must have a good reason, a serious motivation for not letting up or giving in. On the other hand, a "drop-out" mage "one who has abdicated his role as a shaper of reality" will have other drives, especially if dragged back into the Ascension War against his will. These motivations provide life and direction to a character.

A real, complete character has definite goals. Goals give a player a sense of where his character is going. They are also important to the GM, as they give him an idea of how the character is going to get there. A character's Essence and Nature should play a large part in determining goals.

How did you achieve enlightenment?

What was your first enlightening experience? How did it change your life? If your Arete is greater than 1, how was the additional enlightenment achieved?

Seeking Arete is a major goal of the game, and is certainly the preeminent requisite of achieving Ascension. The means by which a character first overcame his Sleeper world-view and perceived true reality are extremely important. Other occasions of such insight are very noteworthy as well.

The Cabal

There are also some questions that should be answered by all players, after all characters have completed their preludes. Get everyone together and tackle these:

Where is the cabal based?

In what city or country is the cabal located (San Francisco, London, Delhi, Bali, Mongolia, the Great Barrier Reef)? Do all the members have their own homes and libraries, or do they live together at one location?

Does the cabal have a Node? Where is it located?

How many Nodes does the cabal possess (determined during character creation, by choosing Node as an advantage)? Are they all in the same place, or are they scattered over a wide area? In what sort of locations are the Nodes located (cellars, museums, bookstores, occult temples, churches, steam tunnels)?



Who are your Acolytes?

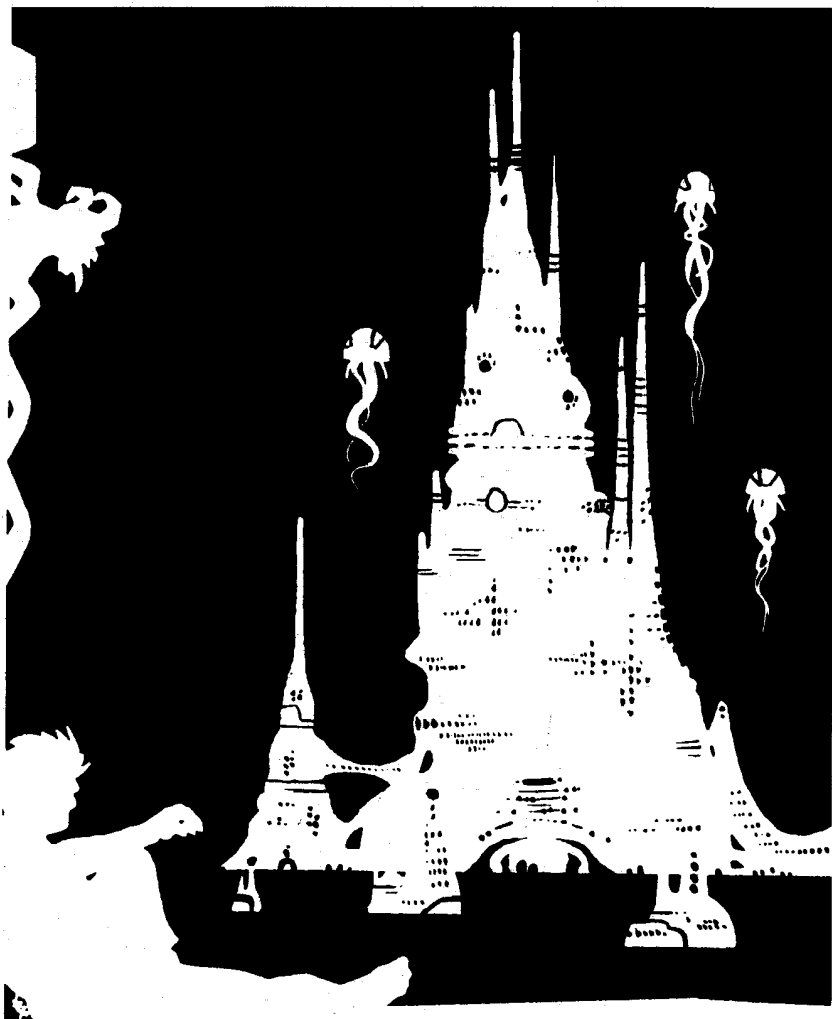
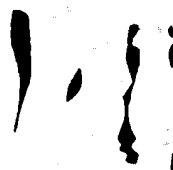
What mundanes, if any, does the cabal keep as retainers and assistants? Acolytes are acquired through the purchase of the Ally or Ally Group advantages. How does the cabal treat these mundane aides?

What are the cabal's goals?

What are the goals for which the characters strive, and what central motivation unites them (survival, escape, Ascension, create a Chantry, attack the Technocracy, destroy an enemy)?

Who are the cabal's enemies?

Who opposes the characters, and what are their enemies' strengths and weaknesses (Technomancers, another cabal, a resentful mage, human cultists, werewolves, vampires)?



Delavan hovered in the not-space of the spirit world, and looked about himself. The Horizon glittered evilly in his othersight, but it was not his goal this day. With one hand he stroked the medallion that hung on a silvery chain from his neck, and concentrated. There was some resistance, so he fed Quintessence into the Talisman, reinforcing its supremacy in power and reality.

He let the view before him fade from his eyes as he opened his perceptions to the medallion. Scene after scene in the Umbra flickered before him as he let the Talisman guide his Correspondence vision. Then, he saw it — the Gateway. It took but a moment's thought as he spun the Universe around the Correspondence Point, and then Delavan was there.

He floated in the midst of the Gateway. Construct or creature, only the Oracles might know. But that mattered not to him. With a slight motion, he sent himself into a slow rotation, watching as each glowing doorway slipped past him, revealing through its white-hot light some shard of the destination that lay on its other side. The Gateway's Guardian Spirit waited patiently for him to make his choice or leave.

Delavan consulted his Talisman once more, then made his choice. He gestured at the doorway he wanted, and the Guardian Spirit drifted to him to make the necessary challenge.

Chapter 6

INTO THE UMBRA

The universe is not hostile, nor yet is it friendly. It is simply indifferent.

— John Haynes Holmes

The World of Darkness is more than a simple mood or a texture. The supernatural is native to this setting — ghosts haunt opera houses, vampires roam the night streets, faerie changelings seek a return to Arcadia, and a race of shamanistic werewolves protects the few remaining wildernesses. Each competes to shape the world for its own ends, and in its own image. Yet this struggle for dominance takes place outside the perceptions of the average person. The supernatural forces war with one another behind a veil.

Not only is humanity blind to the supernatural elements of their world, which control them like marionettes on strings, they are also blind to any real conception of the universe. The Technocracy has rewritten the history and astronomy books to teach humanity a false version of the world. There is far more to reality than the physical world called Earth.

The Near Umbra

There is a fifth dimension beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears, and the summit of his knowledge. This is the dimension of imagination. It is an area which we call. . . The Twilight Zone.

— Rod Serling

The physical world as humanity knows it is not the only facet of existence. There is an entirely different world, a spirit world that mirrors Earth, yet remains unseen by all but a few Awakened beings such as mages. This spirit world is called the Near Umbra. It is a world in its own right, existing parallel to the physical world and covering the same space simultaneously.

In some ways, the Near Umbra looks much like the mundane world, because physical reality reflects the spirit. However, the environment of the spirit world is more revealing than the physical world of earth. In the Near Umbra, the effects of the Technocracy's control can more clearly be seen. Cities in the Near Umbra are barren, lifeless voids covered with the webs of spidery spirits that serve the forces of order. The vitality of these places has been choked dry. Only in the more remote locations of the world does the vibrancy of the Umbra become evident. In these rural areas, still free from technology's influence, colors are brighter than in the physical world and everything seems more "real." This is the true world of spirit, which the Technocracy is slowly diluting and defining out of existence.

While the "geography" of Earth and the Umbra are similar, not everything appears in both worlds, and some things are bizarrely different. For example, a mage steps from a busy city street into a nearby back alley. She puts her magickal knowledge to work and shifts into the Near Umbra. Here the skyscraper to her left is gone. In its place is an apartment building demolished two years ago. The old building was a home, and its spirit or memory is still here – the planet still dreams of it. The building on her right is gone entirely; only an empty foundation shows that it exists at all.

Though the environment of the Near Umbra does not always match that of the physical world, reality itself is not so different. When mages cross into the spirit world, their bodies are transformed into spiritual essence. They may move and talk just as if they were in physical reality.

The Tellurian

Mages do not describe reality as "the universe." They instead refer to reality as "the Tellurian." The Tellurian represents the entirety of reality – everything that exists, including the spiritual worlds that mirror the physical. The various groups of mages constantly debate about the true nature of the Tellurian. Much is speculated, but little is known for certain. Most of the Tellurian remains uncharted by human mages, but some of its wonders are known.



The Gauntlet

In days of old, the ties between the mundane and the spirit worlds were much stronger, but as other Realms broke away from Gaia and the humans inexorably spread across the wild places, the division between the two worlds has deepened. Now, almost every place on Gaia has a distinct boundary between Realm and Umbra, making spiritual travel difficult. This boundary is called the "Gauntlet." While the Gauntlet is ultimately natural in origin, the Technocracy has made a policy of reinforcing it, until now the places where the Umbra is still close are few and far between, and are jealously guarded.

Every area has its own Gauntlet, rated as a number from 4 to 18. Areas with a Gauntlet of 18 are almost spiritually null, and travel between the realms is virtually impossible there. Areas with a Gauntlet of 4 (and there are almost none of these places left in the world) allow virtually unhindered access, provided one knows the correct procedures for travel. The Gauntlet rating is used in a Quick Contest against a mage's magical effect roll (or a Garou's Gnosis) to determine if the character can enter the Umbra at that spot.

The Gauntlet normally corresponds to the location's remaining "natural" aspect: the stronger the influence of the Technomancers on the locale, the higher its Gauntlet. This results in a corresponding change in the availability of Gaia mana for Mortal Thaumaturgy, and in the presence of nodes. Areas of pure technological or scientific pursuit tend to be completely lacking in mana and are rated with the highest, most difficult Gauntlet.

Area	Typical Gauntlet	Mana Level
Science Lab	18	No Mana
Inner city	16	
Most places	14	Low Mana
Rural countryside	12	
Deep wilderness	10	Normal Mana
Typical active node (Level 1)	8	
Level 2 Node	7	
Powerful node (Level 3)	6	High Mana
Level 4 Node	5	
The greatest nodes (Level 5)	4	Very High Mana

The GM should not feel constrained to these values; these are only guidelines. Few sites, though, will have a Gauntlet more than 1 point away from the "usual" rating. However, unusual Gauntlet ratings may make for intriguing adventure hooks. For instance, suppose the cabal were to find a laboratory with a Gauntlet of 10; what goes on in that lab? Or what has happened to raise the Gauntlet at the cabal's node to 13, while leaving all its other functions untouched?

Realms

Infinite variety . . . and more!

— Anonymous

The Tellurian (see sidebar p. 145) contains a multitude of Realms, of which Earth is but one example. Earth is, in fact, the Realm at the center of the Tellurian; many supernatural beings refer to it as Gaia, the Earth Mother. Other Realms exist; each has its own laws of reality, which can be wildly different from the reality of Earth. Many of these Realms possess both a physical and spiritual reality, just like Earth. For example, most mages believe that the other planets in the solar system have their own Near Umbrae. It is unknown whether the surfaces of these planets are truly as lifeless as the Technocracy would have humanity believe. Most mages at least agree that Earth's moon, known as Arcadia, exists in the Tellurian outside Gaia's Near Umbra. It is believed that the faeries inhabit the world of Arcadia and are ruled by a powerful spirit known as Luna.

Gaia is at the center of the universe, and is the lodestone around which all other Realms orbit. Though Prime is the only true source of souls, Earth is home and birthplace to the vast majority of known souls. This has made the human race instrumental in forging the nature and structure of the Tellurian — indeed, human mythology has created many of the spirits and phenomena known to populate the Tellurian. It seems that humanity's collective unconscious can actually shape the world of spirit. Thus, the gods and monstrosities of ancient legend are said still to dwell in the Realms of the Tellurian.

Realms are pockets of reality. Some, like Gaia, are very large, while others, like dreams, are merely small bubbles that drift in and out of existence. Mages have categorized several Realms, including Horizon Realms, Shade Realms, Shard Realms, Paradox Realms and Dream Realms.

Horizon Realms

The Horizon is Gaia's spiritual equivalent of the ozone layer. It shields and contains Gaia's Near Umbra from the void beyond. Horizon Realms are small pockets of reality resting on the rim of Gaia's Near Umbra. Horizon Realms are usually created by mages or other spiritual powers to serve as havens against



alien realities. Mages commonly create Horizon Realms to house their Chantries (see pp. 25-28). These Realms are ideal locations for magickal study, as they do not suffer the effects of Paradox that plague earthbound mages.

Horizon Realms are rare, because it requires a concerted effort of several powerful mages to fashion such a Realm. Vast resources must be expended, but the result is a Realm wherein a mage is creator and god.

Another factor contributing to these Realms' rarity is the fact that they must be linked to one or more Nodes on the Earth's surface. Nodes are sources of Quintessence, which is required to sustain the existence of the Horizon Realm. Such a connection also makes it easier for mages to create Portals allowing travel from Earth's physical reality to the Horizon Realm.

Shard Realms

There are only nine of these primary Realms in the Tellurian. Shard Realms are so named because most mages believe that they used to be part of Earth until the rise of the Technomancers. The Shard Realms are now flung throughout the Tellurian and correspond both with the nine Spheres of magick and with the celestial bodies of Earth's solar system. These Realms are very large and are imposing destinations for exploration. The average mage knows very little about the Shard Realms.

Shade Realms

Mages who pursue the Sphere of Spirit frequently explore the Umbra. Many of these mages claim that eight "Shade Realms" exist somewhere along the Horizon at the edge of Gaia's Near Umbra. These Shade Realms connect Gaia's Near Umbra to the Shard Realms. These insubstantial lands have characteristics of both the earthly and the Shard Realms. Shade Realms are said to be the safest conduits to the Shard Realms.

Dream Realms

Dream Realms are created from the dreams of humanity. Each dream exists for a brief moment in the Umbra as the dreamer unfurls his story landscape, and then is severed from its source as the dreamer wakes up or switches to a new dream. Dream Realms are weird and wonderful places that manifest the subconscious of the dreamer in a very real way. Mages and other Umbral creatures occasionally enter dreams by stepping into a Dream Realm while it exists in the Umbra. The Nephandi are infamous for entering the nightmares of their foes and weaving them to their own ends.

Powerful spirits of the Umbra have been known to weave their own semi-permanent Realms out of dreams. A pantheon of spirits calling itself the Oneira, or Dream Lords, collects the severed wisps of dead dreams and resuscitates them, weaving them into a distorted, phantasmagoric wonderland of linked Realms known as the Chimerae or the Dream Worlds. The masters of the Chimerae often patrol this country of living dreams, and have on rare occasions interacted with dreamers. Some Oneira are even powerful enough to control humans via dreams.

Paradox Realms

The final variety of Realm is a kind wherein no mage desires to find himself. When the forces of Paradox strike out against an offending mage, they sometimes find the easiest means of defending reality to be the removal of the anomaly and all its effects to another place entirely. Thus is a Paradox Realm created. The mage, and the region in which he changed reality, will be moved to a place outside Gaia's Near Umbra. Then, Paradox will smooth reality back to its original form.



Spirit Combat

Physical beings who manifest in the Umbra conduct combat as normal. Any weapons brought into the Umbra will act normally, as well, even high-tech weaponry. Technological weapons (that is, any non-muscle-powered weapon of TL4 or later) do *double* damage to spirits of nature and chaos.

Spirits and other beings native to the Umbra may enter physical combat, if they so desire. All predatory spirits (Banes, Demons, etc.) will have Brawling at DX (if not better); animate spirits who don't normally attack others fight at DX-4. Inanimate spirits do not fight at all.

Other Realms

In addition to the realms described in the main text, the werewolves know of others, mostly parts of the Near Umbra, which they call *domains*. Some of these are unknown to most mages. The GM may wish to surprise characters in the Umbra with an unfamiliar or strange zone which none have ever encountered before.

Blight: Slums, housing projects and the like project Blights into the Umbra. The ground there is asphyxiated under the buildings, parched and lifeless. The only buildings that can be seen are those that focus magick or other energies, such as the foul vibrations of a crack house or a brothel.

Glen: An unspoiled natural area in Earth's reality often has a Glen domain at that point. A Glen is often a purer reflection of the real-world area: a veritable Eden, often inhabited by talking animals and sentient trees.

Hellhole: Corresponding to the vile areas on the earth where radiation experiments and waste dumps lie, Hellholes are fiery deserts of sulfurous air and toxic fluids, inhabited by malevolent spirits called Banes.

Trod: At the end of the Mythic Age, the surviving magical creatures and essences flowed away into the Umbra to form a Realm of their own. This Realm is known by many names among humans, but it is most often referred to as Arcadia, the realm of faeries. Many beings believed to be mythological among mortals dwell here, and may still pass through to Gaia at certain times of the year. When the Faeries enter Gaia they leave behind portals of their passage (menhirs, faerie circles) and these cause the formation of Trod Domains in the Near Umbra, where it is easier to travel to Arcadia. There are often echoes of the Fey's last visit to Gaia at these places.

Web. The Web domains correspond to large areas of cities in the real world. They appear as technological constructs covered in webs and inhabited by spider-like spirits.

Wylding: Wyldings are constantly shifting zones where nothing is stable or permanent, and where magic permeates the air (treat them as Very High mana zones for Mortal Thaumaturges and as Level 5 Nodes for mages). Wyldings are usually found near the Deep Umbra, where the Wyldings – chaos spirits – still congregate.

Other domains include luns (areas of madness) and epiphs (mini-realms comprised of ideas). The GM is also encouraged to create as many domains and realms, with as many weird properties, as he wants.



The Deep Umbra

Our bodily eye findeth never an end, but is vanquished by the immensity of space.

– Giordano Bruno, *On the Infinite Universe and Worlds*

Between the Realms, like the vacuum of space separating one planet and its atmosphere from another, lies a vast spiritual void called the Deep Umbra. There is only one Deep Umbra, and its mysteries extend into the infinite reaches of the Tellurian.

The Deep Umbra is accessible to many mages, but this does not mean they understand it. All varieties of strange creatures and forces wander this area. Horrors like the tentacled abominations of H. P. Lovecraft and the Black Lodge of David Lynch's "Twin Peaks" can be found in this bizarre region. Most dangerous of all are the Nephandi, who make their homes here.

The Deep Umbra is inhospitable to travel. Like the void of outer space that it mirrors, the Deep Umbra does not sustain life, at least not life as humanity knows it.

Some Realms, such as Shade Realms, often contain bridges linking them to other locations. Such connections, known as Portals, allows congress between Realms without traversing the inhospitable Deep Umbra that lies between. Some of these connections are difficult to use. Some have never been used and await only the required ceremonies to be opened. Unfortunately, some of these ceremonies require elements from the destination itself. Acquisition of such elements involves a difficult journey and negates the benefit of the connection, at least for the first traveler.

The Barriers

*Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out.*

— Robert Frost, *Mending Wall*

The Technocracy has actively pursued an isolationist agenda with regard to the rest of the universe. It has fortified the natural barriers that exist between Earth and different segments of the Tellurian. The Technocracy fears many of the strange and bizarre elements of outer reality, and its members seek to segregate Earth from the alien and unknown forces of the spirit world.

The Gauntlet

Earth is separated from its Near Umbra by a mystic barrier called the Gauntlet (see sidebar, p. 146). The Gauntlet is a wall created by the energies of Earth and reinforced on an ongoing basis through the efforts of the Technomancers. Designed to protect Earth from the chaos of the spirit world, it prevents easy ingress and egress and reduces the contact between Umbral reality and physical reality. Because they maintain the Gauntlet and bar the Marauders from Earth, the Technomancers believe themselves heroes and guardians of peace and security.

The Horizon

In addition to overseeing the Gauntlet, the Technomancers also maintain the Horizon, which separates Gaia's Near Umbra from the void of the Deep Umbra. The Horizon serves as a barrier to the Nephandi, who mainly exist outside Gaia's bounds and constantly seek entrance to Earth.

Both the Gauntlet and the Horizon present hurdles to those who attempt to enter the Tellurian from Gaia. While the Tradition mages don't discourage the Technomancers from keeping the Marauders and Nephandi at bay, they recognize that the Technocracy's motives are purely xenophobic and self-serving. Much of the life and vitality of spiritual reality is no longer mirrored on Earth. In the long run, this is a worse fate than even the Nephandi might pose.

Exploring the Near Umbra

To the visitor, the spirit world resembles the "real world" in many respects, but there are some important differences. The Near Umbra is even more mutable than the physical world, often changing form to match its travelers' expectations.

The spirit world is a vibrant place permeated with the essence of life. It bears a close resemblance to the mundane world because spirits often take the form of their material counterparts. However, things look and seem more alive and colorful. Everything, from the color of the sky to the smell of a flower, is more vivid.

The geography of the Near Umbra usually resembles that of the real world. General landmarks remain relatively constant. However, such features as buildings, trees and cars appear as vague blurs in the spirit world unless their spirits have been Awakened. This Awakening generally occurs when the object is the subject of extreme emotions. Objects whose spirits have not been Awakened are all but invisible and may be replaced by other, stronger spiritual images. For example, a house in the real world might appear as an Indian burial ground in the Near Umbra.

Travel and Interaction

Movement through the Near Umbra is identical to movement in the material world. Characters walk, run, skip, jump or ride just as they normally would. Except for the rules concerning magick use in the Near Umbra (p. 145), game play is handled the same way in the Near Umbra as in physical reality. If an object has a form in the spirit world, it can be lifted, thrown or broken.

The GM should make the Near Umbra whatever he wants and needs it to be. Treat it as a dreamscape in which anything and everything is possible . . . an environment in which GMs can create any style and shape of adventure.



People and Spirits in the Umbra

People

Within the Umbra, people look like they normally do in the mundane world, but their features are usually affected by their inner being. For instance, a handsome human who is perhaps not too trustworthy may appear weasel-like, with sharp, rodent-like (although still handsome!) features. In short, intelligent beings will bear the mark of their true natures in the Umbra.

Spirits

Spirits have widely varying appearances, though it is always readily apparent what their element is. Water spirits will always be surrounded by a fine mist, and are usually composed of water. Likewise, other spirits resemble their mundane counterparts in some way. The exceptions to this are malevolent spirits, who are able to cloak themselves in deceptive guises (as are certain Garou and some mages) to fool the unwary.



Dwellers in the Outer Darkness

Malcolm had never been greatly inclined to metaphysical or religious speculation, but he had hoped that if there was a supreme being or divine agency, it would at least show the elements of logic and common sense in its conduct. Seemingly, not so. On the other hand, the revelation that the destiny of the world had been shaped by a bunch of verbose idiots went some way towards explaining the problems of human existence.

— Tom Holt, Expecting Someone Taller

The Umbra is not an empty space, but a place as vital and living as the Earth was in its youth. Beings of all kinds and descriptions call the Umbra – and the farther reaches of the Tellurian – their homes. Some are friends, some are not, and some are simply mysterious.

Umbrood

A great many spirits roam the Umbra. Collectively, the mages call them the Umbrood.

Those spirits known as Lords are very powerful entities who often carve out worlds of their own, or who appoint themselves spiritual protectors of various ideas, locations or peoples of the earth. Slightly weaker entities known as Preceptors serve and advise the Lords, and are more easily contacted than those remote rulers. Below the Preceptors are more prolific spirits collectively called Minions. Among the Minions are elementals and a host of miscellaneous entities fitting no known pattern of hierarchy.

Spirits cannot manifest in the physical world without first acquiring physical bodies, or being summoned by mages or others who desire to harness their powers. Some mages claim that the race of Garou, the werewolves who now live on Earth, are actually a race of spirits who have taken physical form, and who sometimes temporarily return to their spirit home.

Mages are uncertain how spirits are created, but many believe it has something to do with the collective unconscious of humanity. Many spirits have assumed the appearances and personalities of gods from ancient myths, elementals of the real world, and sometimes even figures out of popular culture. Humanity somehow personifies its own beliefs into spirits, which themselves take on lives of their own within the Umbra.

More details on the Umbrood, and sample Umbrood spirits, can be found in Chapter 8.

Marauders

Embracing chaos and freedom to the point that they have lost all connection to their former humanity, these mages seek to turn the world into a seething maelstrom of wild magic, where the laws of physical reality are mutable and uncertain. They haunt the Umbra, sometimes frequenting the Wylding domains (see sidebar) where dwell the last surviving creatures of Earth's long-past Mythic Age. However, they occasionally breach the Gauntlet to spread destruction and chaos on the earth in the hope of disrupting the Technocracy's control over reality. They try to shock Sleepers into some semblance of Awakenedness, often with the appearance of a mythic creature such as a gryphon or manticora in the midst of a city.

Marauder Characters

Design Marauders as ordinary mages, for the most part. They will always have Spirit among their Spheres at no less than level 3, and Area Knowledge (Umbra) and Survival (Umbra) among their skills. Marauders *must* take the Unusual Background: Marauder advantage.

They will frequently be insane – or will seem so to normal humans – possessing Obsessions, Compulsions and Phobias that might seem crippling on earth. Megalomania is very common. They may have Allies in individual mythic creatures, or Ally Groups in the form of Wyldling spirits.

In interacting with other characters, Marauders – if they do not attack outright – will be difficult or impossible to communicate with. They will often be completely incomprehensible, speaking no known human tongue, or babbling in apparent madness. Some may speak archaic or ancient languages long forgotten by humanity. Magick may provide means of communication in some cases, but there is no guarantee that it will always work.



The Nephandi

Perhaps the most enigmatic and deadly of all the dwellers in the Umbra are the entities known as the Nephandi. The nature of the Nephandi is a mystery – many seem to be mages corrupted by pacts with foul extradimensional beings, while other Nephandi seem to be altogether alien to our reality. One thing is clear: the Nephandi seek neither to dominate reality as do the Technomancers, nor to warp it beyond recognition as do the Marauders. The Nephandi seek to destroy reality outright.

In this task the Nephandi appear to be allied with/controlled by a malign otherworldly force. The Nephandi speak of this force by many names, but most mages use the word given to it by its ancient foes, the Garou, who call it the Wyrn.

The worst of the Nephandi and their allies are held at bay outside the Horizon, but those Nephandi mages who exist in the Near Umbra constantly seek to subvert and breach the Horizon to let loose the demon hordes upon earth.

Nephandi Characters

Nephandi mages are also built along the same lines as normal mages. They, too, must have Spirit among their Spheres at no less than level 3 (and usually at level 5!), and Area Knowledge (Umbra) and Survival (Umbra) among their skills. Nephandi usually also possess Diplomacy, Fast-Talk and Savoir-Faire. They will frequently have a Patron in a particularly powerful Demon or Bane.

Unlike the Marauders, Nephandi mages have not lost contact with their humanity; they have simply supplanted it. While some are insane and twisted, others can be charming and genteel, in the best tradition of the tempting devil.

Nephandi need not be solely military opposition; it would be completely in character for them to operate in disguise through subterfuge in human society. An “undercover” Nephandus might be on a mission of temptation and subversion, gaining converts for his cause and securing future bodies for demons and banes to possess.

Converting Spirits

A number of spirits are described in *GURPS Werewolf: The Apocalypse*. It is a simple matter to convert these creatures into Umbrood for mages to encounter. If you play both games, or are using them together in one campaign, use the statistics that are presented for the creatures or convert them to the system you prefer.

Spirits in *GURPS Werewolf* are described by ST/Rage, DX/Will, IQ/Gnosis and HT/Power. While no numbers will actually change, Rage and Power are not used in defining spirits that interact with mages, primarily because those attributes are only for dealing with the Werewolves who operate on those terms. DX and Will remain equal. However, a *Werewolf* spirit's Gnosis divided by 2 (round up) becomes its Arete, and is no longer linked to IQ. Power becomes hit points only; a spirit's split HT is retained.

Spheres are a little more complicated to translate. The idea is to assign an Umbrood Spheres that make sense for its spiritual origin. The total levels in all the Umbrood's Spheres cannot exceed the spirit's Power divided by 10 (so that Nexus Crawler with Power 60 may have a total of 6 levels in Spheres). A fire elemental (Power 30) would therefore have Forces 3. Its Forces powers could then be some of the exact ones listed in *Werewolf* – Create Fire (Forces 3) and Blast Fire (Forces 2 to control the fire it creates). The Forces 1 power could allow the elemental to sense fire and thus find its way to large sources of fire on Earth.

To translate an Umbrood into *Werewolf* terms, reverse the process. The Umbrood's ST becomes ST/Rage. Use the higher of DX and Will for the spirit's DX/Will attribute. Use the better of IQ or twice its Arete level for its Gnosis. The spirit's hit points become its Power when it is not Materialized.

The common powers of Umbrood (see p. 167) are the same as the common charms of spirits listed on p. WTA176; charge the Umbrood the same Power costs when they use their charms. Sphere powers should be simply listed, and charged a Power cost equal to their Sphere level. To use our example fire elemental above, Create Fire would cost 3 Power, Blast Fire 2 Power, and the ability to locate fires would cost 1.



SMIF

Unit 778 Bravo Foxtrot Delta moved ahead purposefully. Its mission was carefully delineated, with all possible contingencies and alternatives detailed and outlined in the wide-fanning branches of a decision tree. Nodes where individual initiative were required were annotated with red telltales; its programming required that all predetermined response patterns for any given situation be exhausted before moving on to autonomous decision-making. Unit 778 Bravo Foxtrot Delta had never had to trip a telltale; its hardcoded programming had always sufficed for its missions. If it could be said to be proud of anything, it was proud of this.

It paused for a bare moment in its progress. Its optical sensors scanned the scene before it in twelve different spectra. Patterns were identified, extracted and compared to its target profile. No match. It continued onwards.

Time was not a concern to Unit 778 Bravo Foxtrot Delta, except as a measure of effort expended and operational efficiency. The second scale still reported a rating of "very efficient" for the mission when the unit's identification subsystems returned a priority flag; a 99% pattern match against the target profile had been achieved.

Its programming slid down a branch in the decision tree as Unit 778 Bravo Foxtrot Delta initiated systems deployment in preparation for target termination. Panels opened in its dermal surface as its chain gun and other external systems emerged, destroying the illusion of the beautiful brunette woman it had, up to now, maintained perfectly.

Without a sound, it drew a bead on its target and fired.

Chapter 7

THE TECHNOCRACY

*The light is buried under chains and noises
in impudent challenge of rootless science.*

*– Federico Garcia Lorca, **The Dawn** (La Aurora)*

One of the direst threats to true Ascension is the Technocracy, a legion of mages who follow the banner of science. Once, the Technocracy's goal was to protect humanity on its path to Ascension, to defend humans from the dangers posed by the other inhabitants of the universe. To achieve this goal, the Technocracy created barriers between the worlds of spirit and matter, making matter itself a safe haven of physical "reality" wherein humanity could pursue its path to Ascension.

In the Technomancers' utopia, no more would humans be plagued by spirits and Banes or faeries and dragons. The world of spirit would be a world apart, separated by the Hadrian's Wall of the Gauntlet. Traffic between these worlds would be closed to humanity as a whole, and the dangerous creatures on the other side of the veil would be kept out. The Technomancers even swore to protect humanity from magick itself.

This goal, however, became an obsession, perverting the Technomancers' thought. They ignored the negative effects of this cosmic schism, the severing of humanity from spirit. They are now desperately xenophobic. Anything on the far side of the wall is "other" and thus to be feared: *They are different from us. They want what is ours. They want to stop us.*

The Traditions want to raise humanity, to guide it toward the lofty ideal of Ascension. The Technomancers, however, want to pare humanity down to the lowest common denominator, to set everyone at a low standard. When all are equal, either in misery or comfort, then the Technocracy's Ascension will arrive.

Toward this end, the Technocracy promotes the value of materialism, of placing importance in one's property rather than oneself. Everyone can thus be equal, with no individual different from the masses. The mass-mind is all-important; it is through the collective state that Ascension will come. By promoting physical matter over intangible ideas or spirit, the Technocracy enforces the protective Gauntlet that keeps out the "bad influences."

Only the laws of science are allowed to dictate the path to Ascension. All things must conform to established fact. Spurious thoughts and whimsical feelings are dangerous to the delicate weave of reality; even dreams are considered to be invasions from outside the Gauntlet. If the Technomancers could banish dreams from the mind of humanity, they would. In fact, Freudian psychology was the Technomancers' attempt to reduce dreams to mere physical urges, but this failed when Jungian psychology responded by stressing the importance of myths upon the human psyche. Unable to influence humanity's dreams, the Technomancers instead attempt to influence their own, using technological devices to regulate their dreaming and prevent themselves from entering R.E.M.-stage sleep. This has had terrible psychological effects upon them, making them cold, cruel and unimaginative beings.

Make no mistake, science has a legitimate place among the means to achieving Ascension; the Sons of Ether and the Virtual Adepts prove this point. But the results of science, the toys of technology, have become a distraction to an end. The Technomancers have turned science into a terrible dogma.

Rise of the Technocracy

For not all true things are the truth . . . [and] not all true things are to be said to all men.

— Bishop Clement of Alexandria

Long ago, the first Technomancers (though they were known by a different name then) began to engineer reality into the image they desired. They were the first to devise the metaphysical separation of mind and body, spirit and matter. The result of this separation was the Gauntlet, the barrier between the spirit world and the physical world.

Originally, the Gauntlet was weak, and many spiritual beings and fanciful creatures breached it to tread the earth. As the Technomancers' powers grew, however, the Gauntlet thickened. When the Technomancers finally usurped the Earth in the late Middle Ages, it became impossible for most beings to pierce the membrane between worlds.

The Pogrom

The Technomancers are the primary opponents for mages on Earth, as they grip reality ever more tightly and completely reject the quest for individual spiritual Ascension. Conflict with them can arise in so many different ways that only brief mention can be made of the most important. Fundamentally, this conflict is expressed by the Pogrom: the systematic destruction of the cabals, Chantries, and Nodes of the Traditions by the Technomancers. They desire total dominance over earth's reality, and seek to eliminate all disruptions and interruptions in their control – in short, to eliminate the chaos they believe is created by the activities of both the Traditions and Marauders. Each and every time the characters do anything to disrupt this control they risk punishment and death. They can never drop their guard, and must conceal their activities carefully. The Technocracy is not an institution to be trifled with.

The Pogrom has claimed the Avatars and lives of innumerable mages. Some younger mages, understanding this, have decided to fight back. They have sensed weaknesses in the position of the Technocracy. They have also decided to uncover these weaknesses and then exploit them. The increasingly shaky convictions of the Void Engineers have fueled these mages' hope and determination. While some mages try to persuade or cajole the Technocracy into changing its theories and approach, others wage open warfare with its members, and most simply try to hide from their witch-hunts.



The Technocratic Agenda

To secure its dominance over the physical world, the Technocracy strives for a completely static, unchanging reality. It vies with the Traditions for total control over this world. Groups of Technomancer mages patrol the boundaries between this world and the Umbra, and seek to keep the outsiders out. Any gateway opened reduces the overall stability of the world, threatening the master scientists.

Specific Goals

- Bring stasis and order to the universe. Predictability brings safety. Once all is discovered and all is known, the Ascension shall be won.
- Convince the masses of the benevolence of science, commerce and politics, and of the power of rationality. Conflict and suffering will be eliminated in our utopia.
- Preserve the Gauntlet and Horizon. Chaotic individuals who open gateways with impunity threaten the stability of our world. Uncontrolled Portals also allow outside forces such as the Nephandi access to our world. This must never happen.
- Define the nature of the universe. Knowledge must be absolute or chaos will envelop all. The elemental forces of the universe must not be left to the caprices of the unknown.
- Destroy the Traditions. Their recklessness threatens our security and our progress toward Ascension. Their Quintessence must be captured lest it fall into the hands of the Marauders or Nephandi.

The Middle Ages, known to mages as the Mythic Age, ended with the Technomancers' victory over the other Traditions and conquest of physical reality. The Mythic Age had regressed into a fractious period of wars between the mages who supported a magickal reality and those who sought a religious reality. As these mages argued among themselves, the followers of science made their move.

So well orchestrated was the Technocracy's maneuvering for power that all the other Traditions were caught unawares. The mythic wizards and religious saints worked toward Ascension through personal power. The mythic wizards would raise humanity by choosing a select few to apprentice, thus spreading enlightenment and power through individuals. The religious saints provided examples of their own lives for others to emulate, believing that those who mimicked their enlightened acts would achieve Ascension themselves.

The Technomancers instead appealed to humanity as a whole, through the objective, repeatable magick of science. Inventions such as the Guttenberg printing press brought power into the hands of many. Here was knowledge to be possessed not just by a few who could afford laboriously drawn illuminated manuscripts, but by any who could buy one of the much cheaper printed Bibles. While the lower class, illiterate and poor, still did not reap the benefits, the middle class – a whole segment of European humanity – rose a significant step toward enlightenment and thus Ascension. Step by step, the Technomancers' power waxed, while the collective mind of humanity was enamored and moved as never before.

The religious community moved to suppress this dangerous threat to its own plans, but no matter how many scientists its members censured, they could not stop the mind of humanity. The thrill and glory of science had infected the masses, and there was no going back. It was full steam ahead for humankind, with the clarion call of science and reason leading the way.

Perhaps if the other mages, both mythic and religious, had not been so slow to commence their own plans for the whole of humanity, things would have been different. As it was, the mages of the Traditions had too long paid attention to their own personal gains, while the masses lagged behind. Finally, here was science to free the masses – one man's scientific discovery could be shared by all of humankind. No waiting period, no long and arduous apprenticeship. Instant empowerment.

Copernicus was a Technomancer who fought hard against the previous paradigms that had ruled reality. With the release of his paper "De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium" in 1453, he placed the sun at the center of the universe, and thus placed reason over the physical earth. His heliocentric innovation freed humanity from the medieval bonds of ignorance and fear. Reason promised to solve all of humankind's problems. Many Tradition mages revile Copernicus' name to this day, blaming him for the current state of the world. But it is not his fault that reason went too far, choking the soul.

The instant empowerment offered



by the Technomancers quickly led to arrogance. Drunk with its own power, the Technocracy began to dictate just how humankind would proceed. The Technomancers made the same mistake all other mages had before them: enslaving humanity to their own personal vision. The hand of science had spread to monopolize and reshape the physical world, squeezing out any shadow-truths that did not fit into its beliefs of objective reality.

The Technomancers' magick became "normal" and expected in human society. The magick of technology was supported by the human race, while other forms of magick became scorned and disbelieved. Mundane observation began to trigger the forces of Paradox when "miracles" happened without the trappings of science to explain them. Tradition mages became dissidents within an established reality rather than co-navigators with equal access to reality. Much like Benjamin Franklin's statement that the last act of any democracy would be to elect a dictatorship, the last act of human belief since the fall of the Mythic Age may well have been the creation of the Rational Age.

The Traditions believe that the Technocracy gravely imperils Ascension. If nothing can be done to right this wrong, the Tellurian is doomed. The Technocracy is dangerously close to the completion of its plans. If the Technocracy can effectively shut out the lingering vestiges of magick from Earth, the Tellurian and all of reality will be forever pinned beneath the Technocracy's boots.

Grip of the Technocracy

In science, the few must dictate opinion to the many . . .

*— Edward Bulwer-Lytton, **Caxtonia**, Readers and Writers*

Magick, true magick of the sort practiced by the Traditions, has become an intruder on the turf of science and is downplayed in importance by humanity itself. The mages of science have implemented their views to such a degree that almost every display of magick that appears to be technological will be accepted by modern humans. Technology is itself magick; it is just a kind of magick that people have learned to accept.

The Technomancers have overseen humanity's progress in leaps and bounds from the Middle Ages, to the Renaissance, to the Industrial Revolution, to the Space Age, to the Information Age and beyond. At some point along the way this heady mix of power and complexity grew to fascinate the Technomancers in its own right.

The Technomancers seized upon their technology and their detailed "truths" about the machinery of the Earth Realm. In the process they convinced themselves of humanity's insignificance and their right to ignore social imperatives in pursuit of the intellectual imperatives of science. Science became the be-all and end-all of the Technomancer mages. They mistook the form for the function, and now strangle humanity with the very device they wanted to use as a stepping stone to Ascension.

Thanks to the secret control of the Technomancers, the world is made smaller every day by technology. People become isolated from one another

The Technocracy's Technology

Like the Traditions' Virtual Adepts and Sons of Ether, the Conventions of the Technocracy operate at a much higher level of technology than the general public. Equipment of TL9 is very common, and TL10 (or higher!) equipment is occasionally found. GMs are referred to **GURPS Ultra-Tech** for details on futuristic technologies.

Each Convention has its own specialty or specialties among the different ultra-technologies available to the Technocracy:

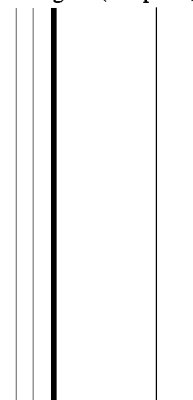
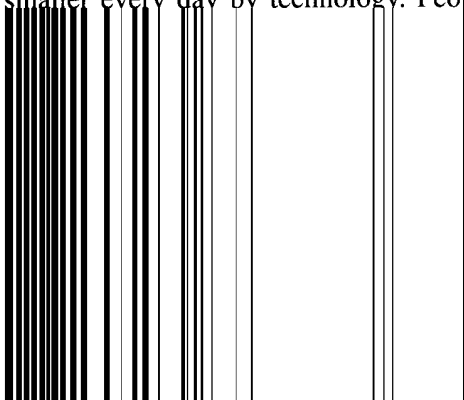
Iteration X

This Convention specializes in cybernetics and bionics. Their computer systems are always at least TL9, with a rare TL10 breakthrough, but they do not have a consistent handle on the problem of Artificial Intelligence. If they were of a mind to deal with spirits, they certainly could "implant" one in a suitable mainframe or megacomp, but their antispirit paranoia leads them to strive for completely synthetic minds for their computers.

In addition to processing equipment, Iteration X has the monopoly on bionics and implants. Unlike standard **GURPS** bionics, as described on pp. UT44-47, these replacement systems usually provide superhuman abilities, as well as concealment for many additional augmentations not unlike those found in **GURPS Cyberpunk**. The GM is referred to those volumes for details if he wishes to fully flesh out Iteration X agents; however, simply giving them superhuman physical attributes and extraordinarily well-hidden but powerful weapons (TL9 and higher) will more than adequately quantify them as opponents.

For an example of one of the most fearsome of this Convention's agents, see the descriptions of the HIT Mark in the sidebar on p. 160, and also on p. 172.

Another of this Convention's innovations, which it has shared with other factions of the Technocracy, is a special alloy that can act as magickal shielding. Anything covered with this substance over at least 50% of its surface area may roll for Countermagick (see p. 87) against a 10





The Technocracy's Technology (Continued)

New World Order

The New World Order also specializes in computer technology, but where Iteration X focuses on raw computing power, this Convention is concerned with distributed data acquisition and retrieval. Its equipment is no less sophisticated than that of Iteration X, but its focus is on information-gathering. Remote wireless sensor suites, roving drones, links to conventional security systems, taps on (or complete control of) credit agency computers, all these and more are available to this Convention.

They are also masters of biochemical and psychological torture and conditioning techniques, using drugs and methods no lower than TL9 in their sophistication. New World Order agents always have Interrogation at a high skill level.

Progenitors

The masters of biological manipulation, the Progenitors have full access to cloning and braintaping technologies, as well as bioscanners, pheromone sprays and any other technology that uses or interacts with biological systems. This includes medical science; the Progenitors are the foremost doctors on Earth, with an arsenal that includes Panimmunity, suspended animation and all TL9 wonder drugs. However, their proficiency with clones and braintapes far exceeds all else; these technologies are effectively TL10.

Progenitor mages are routinely braintaped and tissue-sampled at regular intervals, sometimes as often as daily for particularly important members of the Convention. As soon as a Progenitor dies, it is known, thanks to judicious use of the Mind and Correspondence Spheres, and his clone is immediately decanted and awakened, with the mage's Avatar intact.

Continued on next page . . .

The Technomancers have thus systematically implemented a mystical rigor mortis that impedes all who seek Ascension. When imagination is finally removed from humanity as a whole, the Technomancers will be safe from their enemies, and the mass can Ascend – by crushing its members down to a common level.

The Conventions

Among scientists are collectors, classifiers, and compulsive tidiers-up; many are detectives by temperament and many are explorers; some are artists and others artisans. There are poet-scientists and philosopher scientists and even a few mystics.

*– Sir Peter Brian Medawar, **The Art of the Soluble***

Today, the Technocracy is divided into several Traditions of its own, which the Technomancers call “Conventions.” Unlike the Traditions of mages who have assembled against the Technocracy, these Conventions are almost homogeneous in their goals and means. This is not to say that they are identical, but simply that they know not to buck a good thing.

Each Convention specializes in a field of technology, and possesses this technology at a level far more advanced than that of the world at large. This technology is the medium of power for the Conventions, and they guard it zealously until such time as they decide to release it to the world through the guise of a “new discovery.” With their technological devices, the Technomancers are able to reproduce many of the magical feats performed by the mages of the Traditions with their Sphere magick. Furthermore, each Convention has a few tricks of its own.

Iteration X

We are the Borg. You will be assimilated. Resistance is futile.

*– from **Star Trek: The Next Generation***

Iteration X exploits mechanical and cybernetic technology in order to make a better human. Some biological functions suit its needs, but Iteration X feels the path to Ascension will be achieved by merging biological intelligence with artificial intelligence. Rumors abound of the artificial mind that directs the Convention – a mind that achieved intelligence at the Xth iteration of a sentience-expanding algorithm (the Convention is unwilling to reveal the exact number of the iteration where the intelligence evolved – perhaps it thinks that would be like revealing a “true” name). Some members of the Convention certainly have visions of a society where all wants and needs are seen to by automatons, but these well-wishers feel that all individuality and choice must be removed from humanity before this can occur.

Mages of Iteration X are rarely seen by other mages. There have been only a few confrontations that directly involved mages of the Convention. More commonly, Iteration X uses servant creations to enforce the Pogrom. Some of these murderous automatons – the fearsome HIT Marks (see sidebar, p. 160, and p. 172) – are known all too well by the Traditions. Iteration X prefers to enforce the Pogrom in only one way – extermination. Any alien element, especially a mage, that the Convention discovers on Earth is immediately targeted and servants are dispatched to kill it.

New World Order

Whatever crushes individuality is despotism, by whatever name it may be called.

— John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*

Referred to as “Big Brother” by the mages of the Traditions, this Convention exemplifies all that is bad about computer technology. More than any other Convention, the New World Order is responsible for streamlining Earth’s reality. When mages speak of the Technocracy, they often mean the New World Order. This Convention has a vision of the earth as a giant honeycomb of steel corridors, constantly monitored by swiveling cameras. It pursues invasive, information-based technology.

The New World Order exploits and damages wherever possible. It views people as machines to be used as its members see fit. Members of the Convention are themselves depressed and paranoid, living as they do in constant fear of superiors who do not balk at taking credit for something an underling accomplished. If the world could be black-and-white instead of color, the New World Order would see to it. Think of the movies *Metropolis* and *Kafka* and you have an idea of the nature of this Convention. An old rumor says that Queen Victoria herself was the founder of this Convention; some mages say that she is still alive today and she is not amused.

The New World Order enforces the Pogrom through techniques of abduction and brainwashing. Mages who are taken away by the servants of the New World Order are unfortunately seen again years later – after they have been transformed into servants of the Convention, biological robots living out an existence programmed into them by the New World Order. It is not easy to break the will and mind of a mage, but no one who has been abducted by the New World Order has survived the brainwashing ordeal with his personality intact. The New World Order takes great pride in its ability to erode a human being’s creativity and personality, especially another mage’s. It guards its methods fervently.

The Progenitors

This [double helix] structure has novel features which are of considerable biological interest. . . . It has not escaped our notice that the specific pairing we have postulated immediately suggests a possible copying mechanism for the genetic material.

— Watson and Crick, *Molecular Structure of Nucleic Acids*

The science of genetics is on the verge of making several mind-blowing breakthroughs. For the Progenitors, these breakthroughs are old news. A very careful Convention, the Progenitors have been setting the stage for people to believe that virtually anything is possible through genetic engineering. Of all the Conventions, the Progenitors are the most aware of the intricacies of the power they wield. Very soon, the Progenitors plan to make their move and change the face of humanity.

The science of cloning is one of the Progenitors’ most powerful weapons. Tradition mages have slain Progenitor mages, at great cost to their own ranks, only to find the same Technomancers later appearing to face the Traditions again. Progenitor mages seem to have endless supplies of cloned bodies for themselves, making them frustrating and nearly unkillable opponents. The Traditions nickname the Progenitors the “Hydras” after the mythical beast which would grow more heads when one was hacked off.

The Technocracy’s Technology (Continued)

The Syndicate

The Syndicate focuses on the financial end of high technology, rather than the use of the technology itself. They thus hold a unique position among the Technocracy as being the only “end user” Convention, making use primarily of the computing power of Iteration X’s designs, and the information-gathering ability of New World Order’s networking.

Void Engineers

The Void Engineers are possibly the least advanced of the Conventions; they are firmly entrenched in late TL8, with only the barest advances into early TL9. This is partly in punishment for the moon landing debacle, which backfired badly on the Technocracy. They do have access to the computing power of the other Conventions, but as the “poor cousins” of the Technocracy, such access is grudgingly given and often insufficient for the Engineers’ needs.

Autochthonia

The Umbral “machine Realm” of Autochthonia is a source of power for Iteration X, and gives the Convention a staging ground from which to impose its reality upon earth and neighboring Umbral Realms. Autochthonia originated from a theory of Kepler that positioned a machine Realm near the sun in the center of the solar system. Through humanity’s temporary belief in such a theory, the founders of Iteration X were easily able to construct a Realm within the Deep Umbra, a Realm of pure machine.

As a whole, Iteration X conducts most of its research in Autochthonia. There it perfects its theories and lets ideas trickle out into society a little at a time. Already there was a scare about the effects of future shock, so the Technomancers are playing it safer now. Although most of the cutting-edge technology found in this Realm is at least a century away from mundane revelation, the Traditions fear that with each new technological advance on earth, Iteration X gets more powerful. Rumors say that UFO sightings are the Convention’s way of preparing people for the next great leaps.

HIT Marks

The most feared agents of Iteration X are the Hyper Intelligence Tech Mark Vs, or HIT Marks. These are cyborgs programmed to seek out and destroy the enemies of the Technocracy – Tradition mages, Marauders or Nephandi. Half living flesh, half mechanical construct, these killing machines look relatively human – on the outside. They are designed to look like normal humans (as long as they wear trenchcoats and other concealing clothes), enabling them to walk among Sleepers and carry out their missions of extermination. When HIT Marks enter combat mode, however, their weaponry is unconcealable: chain guns pop from their arm cavities, laser sights slide down over their eyes, and razor-sharp tungsten talons unsheath from their fingers.

Despite the name, these cyborgs are usually of only human-level intelligence. They all have internal computers, however, which can add greatly to their database of information or perform combat calculations (range and angle calibrations for gunfire) that make them deadly hunters and killers. They do require energy to maintain full power; otherwise they become mere humans with body parts too heavy to lift with their meager muscle power.

Most models are designed to be anthropomorphic, the better to hide in human society. Occasionally, though, other forms are designed. Cybernetic dogs are often unleashed to prowling the alleyways surrounding Technomancer factories. These “animals” are as intelligent as any other HIT Mark.



Furthermore, the Progenitors have found an even more nefarious use of cloning, which they use to disseminate paranoia among the ranks of their foes. So good are the Progenitors at duplicating other beings through cloning that many of their enemies, and even their allies in the Technocracy, never know when they are addressing a real person or a Progenitor clone. These doppelgangers are not perfect (Joe now has a second cup of coffee in the morning, which causes his office mates to wonder), but they are good enough to cause fear among those aware of this Convention, and fear is a powerful weapon indeed.

The Progenitors prefer to implement the Pogrom through the use of their clones. By replacing a mage with a clone, the Progenitors do far more than merely remove an opponent. Through their planted clone, they can proceed to spy on their enemies, sabotage enemy plans, and breed distrust among the ranks of the allied Traditions.

The movie *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (especially the remake) captures the feel of this Convention very well, as do any of the “red scare” films of the ’50s. The fear and paranoia of “commies” in our homes is similar to the worry this Convention engenders in all.

The Syndicate

We are out to get America by the pocketbook – the whole Syndicate.

– Abe Reles, a.k.a. “Kid Twist” (Murder, Inc.)

Money and power have become words freely associated with access to and control over technology. This is because of the Technomancer Convention known as the Syndicate. The members of the Syndicate are sometimes called the “robber barons” because their mindset and ambitions first came to the forefront during the mid- to late 19th century, when men such as Rockefeller and Carnegie made a killing by convincing people to embrace the wonders of technology. The Syndicate seeks to entrap people in the snares of loans and credit. To this day, the Syndicate remains more interested in technology’s ability to generate money and maintain power than anything else.

Of all the Conventions of the Technocracy, the Syndicate is the one most concerned with weaving technology into the static, mundane reality of Earth. The Syndicate controls much of the world financial market; it is the Syndicate who decides the rules of engagement for the economic wars of nations. It also pulls the strings of many crime organizations the world over, from the Mafia to the Yakuza. You mess with the Syndicate, you may wind up on the bottom of the river in concrete shoes.

Without the Syndicate, the Virtual Adepts would have never gotten computers into the hands of so many people. The Syndicate constantly fumes over this mistake and now tries to rectify its error by merging the major computer companies, thus controlling the variety of programs to which common users have access. Hackers really annoy the Syndicate, and the ignorance and fear most nations have of computers and those who use them is because of this Convention. The Syndicate wants fiat to lock up any hacker it pleases.

The scariest thing about this Convention is that it is essentially faceless. It obviously exists beyond its gangster puppets and captains of industry, yet no one leader has emerged. The real movers and shakers of this Convention are unknown. No Tradition mage has yet been able to ascribe a name or face to the leader(s) of this Convention. Who runs it? Where does he (she or they) reside? Why has no one ever seen him (her, it)? Even the Technomancers’ Symposiums have been visited only by representatives of this group. What is the Syndicate’s real secret?



The Men in Black

The dread foot soldiers of the New World Order are the mysterious Men in Black. These dark-suited agents in sunglasses, bearing black briefcases and riding black Cadillacs, seem to be omnipresent whenever an affair that threatens the New World Order arises. Rumors say that the MiBs can somehow follow Paradox spirits, arriving on the scene and attempting to stop any Tradition mage from performing magick. Men in Black rarely speak and their exact motives are always secret, but all Tradition mages know that a black Cadillac in the rear-view mirror is bad news.

See p. 173 for a full description of the Men in Black.

Symposiums

Once every month, the Technocracy holds a Symposium – a meeting where nothing less than the future of reality is determined. The Symposium is held in a different Node each time. It is the greatest social and political event of the Technocracy.

Each of the Conventions details its plans and progress, speaking in its own complex lingo of statistics and scientific jargon to shape the lives of others in a way that suits the Technocracy. Through complicated negotiations, the separate Conventions all agree upon what unified steps must be taken to ensure the Technocracy's reign never ends.

These meetings were once held without incident, but in the last few years they have been beset with attacks by younger members of the Traditions. Not much harm has been inflicted, but considerable status has been accorded the victorious raiders. Regardless of these seeming successes, some mages feel the Symposium is nothing but a farce to lure other mages out of hiding.

The Syndicate is mainly responsible for enforcing the Pogrom against earthbound mages of lesser power. The Syndicate seems to take great delight in systematically destroying every aspect of a mage's life. First it will ruin the mage financially, impugning credit, making bank accounts disappear, etc. Then it will proceed to frame the mage, destroying his reputation among all he holds dear. Finally, the killing begins, starting with the mage's most distant friends, then relatives, then the mage himself. The Syndicate delights in destroying a person even before it ends his life.

Void Engineers

My God, it's full of stars.

— from 2001: A Space Odyssey

This, the smallest Convention of the Technocracy, is very vocal and very persuasive. Its members are concerned mainly with the exploration and consequent exploitation of the Deep Umbra – or “outer space” in the paradigm the Technocracy has rooted into reality so well. By conquering the last physical frontier, the Void Engineers can shut the final gate on the Umbra.





The Technocracy and Paradox Spirits

The Technocracy has recently attempted to make active use of Paradox spirits. Apparently, it wasn't enough for them to gain this ally by default (as the reality protected by Paradox is that of the Technomancers). Technomancers often purposefully create paradoxes in order to summon a Paradox spirit. Other kinds of Paradox energies attack the offending Technomancers at times, but through trial and error these mages have evidently found ways to improve the odds of generating a Paradox spirit.

The Paradox spirits so created are bound by the Technomancers and sent to hunt down and punish the enemies of the Technocracy. The normal means of using them is to attune them to a certain person or place, like a human under the protection of the Technocracy. If the target is manipulated (i.e., magick is used on that person or place), the Paradox spirit attacks whether or not the mage actually generated Paradox.

The Void Engineers seek to convince humankind that outer space is an empty void and the planets are lifeless orbs. By doing so, the celestial beings associated with the planets will become mere physical entities, not cosmic powers that control humankind's destiny through their positions. All the spiritual inhabitants of the Deep Umbra will become mere alien races. The Void Engineers have already convinced most of humanity to fear the existence of these beings; many people fearfully imagine invasion fleets of aliens bent on conquest of the Earth and enslavement of humanity. It is actually the other way around: the Void Engineers want to exploit the beings and places of space.

Unfortunately, the Void Engineers are overly impetuous, and the Technocracy has often had to rein them in. The 1969 lunar landing is the best example of this. When Neil Armstrong first set foot upon the moon, millions were finally shown evidence that the moon was a barren, lifeless place, not the realm of mystery it was believed to be (although many still say the moon landing was filmed in a TV studio). Still, this landing, rather than strengthening the Technomancers' hold on the Gauntlet, only opened a gateway to Arcadia, the land of the faeries. The magic of the fey infected Earth, and the idea of space exploration quickly took the form of a sublime experience for human consciousness. Rapt with the wonder of Faerie, many humans believed that space was the answer to all of humanity's problems. "Out there," wars would not exist, new worlds could be colonized and peace would reign in the galaxy.

This idea was exactly what the other Technomancers did not want. The Void Engineers, unwilling to postpone their plans for space travel, were punished with the fall of Skylab, and later the Challenger explosion. The space program was set back and people began to fear space travel.

Other punishments were also levied as warnings: the abandoned MIR Soviet space station and the flawed Hubble telescope. The current financial problems threatening the US space station are the Syndicate's warning to the Void Engineers: shape up or lose your proposed station.

No one is certain what the long-range plans of the Void Engineers are, but rumors say the Convention as a whole has been infected with the magic of the fey. Some mages believe the Void Engineers have accepted the utopian beliefs of what space exploration can hold for humanity and Ascension, and that they can even be lured to the Traditions. Other say that this is exactly what the Technocracy wants others to believe. Regardless, the Traditions view the Void Engineers as the least of the Technocracy's evils, as they do not directly contribute to enforcing the Pogrom.

Techno Tangents: Sons of Ether and the Virtual Adepts

Any technology distinguishable from magic is insufficiently advanced.

— Anonymous

The science of the Technocracy has sprouted many divergences and false branches throughout the years. However, only two or three of those branches have evolved any degree of independent authority.

One such tangent of science is practiced by the Sons of Ether (see pp. 67-68). The Sons came to power in the 19th century, espousing the belief that science as it stands is just one path to a unity of self-expression. They eschewed more rigid and sophisticated aesthetics to pursue a sort of "weird science" that was ugly, unwieldy and utterly inspired.

The Sons broke from the Technocracy in the early 1900s when a Technomancer Symposium voted, and thus "proved," that there is no ether in space, a postulate against which the Sons obviously fought. Factions within the

Technocracy wanted to establish the theory that light was a particle, and ether had to go if this was to be. Faced with the loss of nearly all their beloved theories, the Sons of Ether retreated to the fold of the Traditions.

But the Sons were not completely beaten. Indeed, they have recently managed to insinuate quantum theory, that fly-in-the-ointment for Technomancers, into modern science. Quantum physics has brought the study of mysticism into the corridors of science. Its wild success has ruined many of the Technomancers' plans, and thus the Technocracy seeks the heads of the Sons of Ether.

A second important tangent is that of the Virtual Adepts (see pp. 70-71). The seed of the Adepts' existence was the computer, Babbage's very first prototypical analytical machine. The Adepts have waited patiently for the blossom they knew would later sprout. In the 1980s, when a sufficient number of computers began to find their ways into the homes of Sleepers, the Virtual Adepts made their move.

Well in advance of virtual reality's appearance in the timeline of reality as planned by the Technomancers, the Adepts developed their virtual environment. Such a move without the mandate of the Technocracy caused the Adepts to be heavily censured. The Virtual Adepts responded by defecting from the halls of power. Their audacity and exuberance for the possibilities inherent to computers gained the Adepts acceptance among the Traditions – though some Tradition mages feel the whole computer issue was staged by the Technocracy in order to plant the Adepts among them.

Fiction of the cyberpunk genre was an important step in conveying the Adepts' vision of science. In cyberpunk fiction, people are as cold as technology, and paradoxically, technology is as wet and natural as humanity. Using cyberpunk as a foundation, the Adepts have managed to build a Realm right on earth, within the heart of Technomancer territory – a virtual reality world existing only as information flowing through computer minds.

The Virtual Adepts, under the Technomancers' very noses – and they refuse to recognize it even today – have implemented a dynamic change as great as Copernicus' heliocentric theory.

Not that the Technocracy is willing to let the Adepts be. The Technocracy fears the Virtual Adepts' defection, for the Adepts knew many of the access codes and passwords of the Technocracy's own computers. As soon as the Adepts were declared rogues by the other Technomancers, a purge of the Technocracy's computers was performed, and all the passwords were changed. Still, the Conventions fear that they may not have fully succeeded, and that the Adepts have left many "backdoors" in the system, allowing them access to the secret plans of all the Conventions.

In response, the Technocracy has stepped up its Pogrom against the Traditions, which has in turn caused many Traditions to blame the Virtual Adepts for their new troubles.





Siona's first clue that there was trouble came from the local spirits, who flocked around her in umbral agitation. As soon as she'd quizzed the ones capable of coherent speech, she wasted no time; she translated herself to the spot with Correspondence.

The spirits' reports were fragmentary and confused, but there was no mistaking that this was what they had described . . . it was almost as though a quantum black hole floated some yards away from her; even from this distance she could feel its tug on her very reality. A smear of black, roiling and surging like boiling crude oil but infinitely darker and deeper, surrounded by flailing whiplike tentacles and limbs that seemed to have no actual connection to it. Behind it, the landscape seemed to run, almost like a watercolor in the rain.

Siona didn't know what it was, but it scared the hell out of her.

Suddenly, Siona sensed that it had somehow noticed her. It . . . rotated (she wasn't sure how she knew), and slowly began to advance on her. In a panic, she drew upon Forces and sent a pulse of energy lancing toward it. It paused only a moment, flinching slightly as it sucked the destructive energy down into its heart of darkness.

Impossible! Siona thought. That bolt would have fried anything living. What is this thing? She took a few backward steps, then began a full-fledged retreat as she flung another bolt at it, ineffectually.

The creature doubled its pace as it began to pursue her in earnest.

Chapter 8

BESTIARY

*Through midnight blackness
Creatures of the dark do fly,
Seeking day's demise.*

— Anonymous

Beyond the Sleepers and the other mages, there are beings of many kinds and many origins with whom the Traditions interact, and sometimes do battle.

Spirits and Umbral Denizens

Umbrood

The Umbra has as varied and complex an ecosphere as the physical world, with an almost infinite variety of spirit inhabitants. Mages refer to the native beings of the Umbra as the Umbrood.

Certain of the Umbrood wield staggering power, especially when confronted on their home ground, where they are not subject to the laws of Earth. Mages call these almost godlike beings Lords. Below the Lords are lesser powers called Preceptors. They, too, possess great power, but mages can at least comprehend these beings, as many of them have been personified by humans. Among the ranks of the Preceptors can be found such mythical creatures as dragons and unicorns. For more detail on such beings, see *Creatures of the Mythic Age*, p. 175.

Minions are the weakest of the Umbrood. These beings are often anthropomorphic and possess human or lower intelligence. However, they are more powerful than normal humans and can be very dangerous.

The Umbrood may or may not be the same as those beings known to the Werewolves as Celestines, Incarna, Jagglings and Gafflings; no one knows for sure. Given the capricious nature of some spirits, it is entirely possible that some, at least, play both roles, but it is by no means certain.

Umbrood Powers

Umbrood have a variety of powers. The more puissant ones, especially Lords, are mightier than the greatest mages. However, it is important to create a distinction between different types of Umbrood. Umbrood are either considered intelligent beings subject to the same basic rules as mages, or they are considered creatures that use slightly different rules. Lords and most Preceptors are of the former variety, while Minions are generally of the latter.

Lords and Preceptors should be treated exactly as mages. When in the Umbra, these beings are very powerful because their powers may operate uninhibited. On Earth, though, they are subject to the same laws of reality that hinder mages, so the Umbrood can gain Paradox, spend Quintessence and create magickal effects just like mages.

Minions, on the other hand, do not generally store Quintessence or Paradox and their powers are not as expansive. Instead of having complete command over a Sphere, Minions (and a few Preceptors) only gain one specific power at each level of a Sphere. An Umbrood with Entropy 4, for example, possesses a list of just four powers that it can use.

A Minion's powers are used in a fashion identical to vulgar magick, so its Arete limits the effective skill level it may have. The creature can also gain Paradox; each point of Paradox gained inflicts 1d damage upon it. This damage is considered aggravated damage that cannot be healed with Life magick (or Matter if the Umbrood would "heal" itself in that way).

In addition to any specific Sphere powers, almost all Umbrood have a natural ability to use aspects of the Spirit Sphere. Unless the creature is given an actual rating in Spirit, assume that its abilities are limited to those listed here.

These are common powers that most Umbrood spirits possess:

Airt Sense: Most spirits have a natural sense of the airts (directions) of the spirit world and are able to travel without

much difficulty. Airt Sense is an innate ability that functions much like the Seeker spell (p. B163) without the need for a die roll.

Materialize: The spirit can materialize within and affect the physical world. The Gauntlet of the area limits whether certain Umbrood can move directly into it. Minions may only manifest in areas with a Gauntlet of 8 or less, Preceptors can enter Gauntlets of 12 or less, and Lords may materialize directly into any area below a Gauntlet of 18.

Reform: This ability allows an Umbrood to dissipate itself and reform somewhere else in the Umbra, usually far away from its enemies. There is no range limit.

Lord Killavaro, Umbrood Lord

ST: 16	Move/Dodge: 8/9	Size: 1
DX: 16	PD/DR: 0/0	
IQ: 18	Damage: 1d+1/2d+2	
HT: 16/70	Reach: C	
Quintessence: 14		
Paradox: 4		

Advantages: Alertness +5, Animal Empathy, Arcane/3, Arete/6, Awareness/2, Charisma +4, Combat Reflexes, Common Sense, Intuition, Spirit Empathy, Strong Will +5.

Disadvantages: Obsession: Search for . . . whatever . . .

Skills: Acting-16, Area Knowledge (Umbra)-18, Brawling-16, Broadsword-16, Diplomacy-16, Enigmas-16, Fast-Talk-16, Intimidation-17, Occultism-18, Psychology-15, Survival (Umbra)-18.



Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 4, Forces 6 (allows huge "natural" disasters like earthquakes or volcanic eruptions), Life 3, Matter 3, Mind 3, Spirit 5, Time 3, all at skill level 15.

Killavaro is an amazingly powerful Umbrood who freely wanders the Umbra. He eternally wanders in search of something – something he alternately claims does not exist, he doesn't remember, or he really doesn't seek at all. He has a brooding nature and an evil intelligence that would be classified as at least sociopathic by humans.

Killavaro appears as a man of medium height and slim build. His skin and hair coloration is an unnatural mixture of blacks and deep purples, and his eyes blaze with a fierce white energy of unknown origin.

His endless quest has taken him to Earth many times in the past; the planet seems to be the focus of his search. Mages have attributed certain ancient cataclysms to him, but at the moment Killavaro appears to use only coincidental magick while among humans. The only exception to this is his periodic use of various Talismans.

The Talisman he was last known to carry is a glove of thick, unearthly leather studded with small gems of alien origin. When the fingers of the glove are pressed together a victim suffers a magickal effect called Anchor (Correspondence 4, Life 4); this effect attaches a human Life Pattern to a single spot within three-dimensional space and does not allow the Pattern to move from that spot. Anchor effectively chains a living being in one place. No other powers of the glove have been witnessed.



Lady of Feathers, Umbrood Preceptor

ST: 10 **Move/Dodge:** 7/7 **Size:** 1
DX: 16 **PD/DR:** 0/0
IQ: 16 **Damage:** 1d-2/1d
HT: 14/50 **Reach:** C
Quintessence: 3
Paradox: 0

Advantages: Appearance: Beautiful, Arete/3, Charisma +3, Common Sense, Dream/2.

Disadvantages: Honesty, Truthfulness.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Umbra)-15, Bard-16, Poetry-16, Survival (Umbra)-14, Writing-16.

Spheres: Life 4, Prime 2, all others 1; all Spheres are at skill 13.

A beautiful, guileless and seemingly naive Preceptor, the Lady of Feathers has been connected to many ancient myths describing bird goddesses. She dresses in an ornate cloak of yellow and red feathers, and atop her head is an elaborately decorated crown of white gold with a number of glorious purple feathers highlighting its edges.

The Lady almost never leaves her Deep Umbral home, a luxurious manse in a Domain of Air; when she does, though, she can often be found near the Horizon. She deals truthfully with all she meets and apparently thinks it impossible for anyone else to do otherwise. This has caused her to be treated cruelly by Umbrood and some humans whose motives are worldly.

Vincula, Umbrood Minions

ST: 10 **Move/Dodge:** 32/8 **Size:** 1
DX: 16 **PD/DR:** 0/0
IQ: 3 **Damage:** 1d-2/1d
HT: 10 **Reach:** C

Powers: Exchange Thoughts (Correspondence 4, Mind 4), Steal Thoughts (Mind 4), Memorize Pattern (Mind 1)

This race of Minions can be found almost anywhere in the Umbra, but do frequent the Umbra near Earth. They look like long, luminescent yellow snakes that seem to "swim" in the Umbra in slow, sinuous motions. However, their lazy movements are a deception that can lull potential targets into complacency. When they choose to strike, they can move with incredible speed.

Vincula (singular Vinculum) bond with their victims. When a vinculum bonds to a target it begins siphoning thoughts from the victim, effectively causing the victim to forget that thought. The first thought targeted is that which would allow the victim to realize that the vinculum is a threat. It "feeds" upon these thoughts to survive. For every hour that a vinculum feeds on a person, the victim suffers a cumulative -1 to IQ and mental skills. These accumulate until the victim reaches IQ 4, at which time he is unable to generate a coherent thought; the vinculum then detaches from the victim, who will then begin to regain IQ at 1 point per hour.

While vincula usually bond with only one victim (via its bite), sometimes a vinculum bonds two individual targets, one at each end of its length. In such a case, the vinculum begins to transfer thoughts between the victims. Love for a wife in one person may be traded with a passion for composing music in another. In this way the vinculum upholds its dynamic essence, which calls for it to create new thoughts and ways of living. The bond last only for as long as the two victims remain within 1 hex of each other; one pair of thoughts can be exchanged per minute or fraction thereof.

A vinculum may also memorize a victim's memories and thoughts, allowing it to access that victim more easily in the future. This gives the vinculum a +2 to any magickal effects against that victim in the future.

A vinculum attacks with Brawling-14; it has Combat Reflexes and in the Umbra has Stealth-12.

Guardian Spirits

The Nodes of the world are frequently home to spirits of varying types, who feed on their residual Quintessence. They fiercely protect their domains, generally attempting to drive off or destroy intruders. However, many of these spirits have been subjugated and bound by both mages and werewolves. Other spirits are compelled to obey certain inscrutable cosmic mandates, forcing them to allow access to beings who defeat them in a contest (such as a riddle game or mystic duel). These spirits are collectively known as guardian spirits, despite the differing motivations (or compulsions) behind their "guard duty."

Paradox Spirits

When Paradox attacks those who create anomalies in the structure of the universe it sometimes manifests as the beings known as Paradox spirits.

The appearance and powers of a Paradox spirit are determined by the Sphere of magick whose use summoned the spirit. In general, Paradox spirits are manifestations of the universe's sense of "poetic justice." Thus, if a mage tampers with reality's laws using the Sphere of Matter, the Paradox spirit invoked manifests as a being of Matter (perhaps a stone or metal golem). The power of the spirit is also proportional to the power of the effect; a Level 3 effect generates a Level 3 Paradox spirit. If the magickal effect is conjunctional, then the Sphere with the highest level involved is the one that manifests.

Paradox spirits often physically manifest to attack. Any damage they inflict is aggravated. Paradox spirits may also utilize Sphere magick, but they can only have levels in the Sphere from which they come.

Paradox spirits can be banished in one of three ways: by being physically destroyed (those who have physically manifested); by being disrupted by magick; or by their targets surviving their assault.

For the purposes of generating their own magickal effects, Paradox spirits have a base effect roll equal to $(10 + (\text{Sphere Level} \times 2))$. For instance, Farandwee (see below) is a Paradox Spirit of Correspondence 4. His magickal effect roll for his teleportation and duplication powers is $10 + (2 \times 4)$, or 18. Paradox Spirits who manifest on Earth do not use magick for anything other than their special powers, although those in the Umbra may, at the GM's option, use any effect available to their Sphere and Level. Paradox spirits do not possess Quintessence, and thus cannot spend it to augment their magickal effects. Likewise, Paradox spirits do *not* accumulate Paradox because of their magick!

To provide some ideas of the kinds and powers of Paradox spirits, several are described below, one from each Sphere. A wide range of power levels are provided, to give the GM an idea of the possible abilities.

These sample spirits can be used either as ones that attack mages as part of a Paradox Backlash, or as ones that have been tied to people or places by Technomancers (see sidebar, p. 162). The spirits' names are those provided by mages.

Farandwee (Correspondence 4)

ST: 10	Move/Dodge: 5.75/6	Size: 1
DX: 13	PD/DR: 0/0	
IQ: 14	Damage: N/A	
HT: 10	Reach: C	

The spirit known as Farandwee resembles a clown whose form seems to shift and bulge beneath his baggy costume and greasepaint. His attack (made using his magickal effect roll) is to trap the mage in a maze of funhouse mirrors that are, in fact, unbreakable magickal reflectors; a mage who runs into a mirror finds himself turned around and reflected back into the maze. Farandwee then appears in the maze, trying to grapple his prey and then teleport him to some extremely dangerous spot. In addition, Farandwee may create a twisted duplicate of himself every 5 seconds; these duplicates may team up to grapple and teleport a mage.

To defeat Farandwee, a mage must either kill all of his physical manifestations (this becomes increasingly difficult as he multiplies) or escape the mirror-maze using Correspondence magick.

Farandwee has Combat Reflexes, Weak Will-1, and Brawling-13.

Hex (Entropy 1)

Hex manifests as a symbol of bad luck, such as a broken mirror, black cat, inverted horseshoe or the like. Hex dogs the mage until the next potentially dangerous situation (such as combat, travel by car, or other risky circumstance). Then it strikes, using Entropy magick as a jinx. Suddenly the opponent hits when he should have missed, or the vehicle's brakes fail . . . The only way to banish Hex is to survive its attempt upon the character's life; it cannot be banished by destroying the form it has taken.

If Hex manifests in an animate form, such as a black cat, use the physical attributes for that form; if it takes the form of an inanimate object, the only attributes it has are DR and Hit Points (see p. B125). When GMing Hex, do not indicate that the form it has taken is anything out of the ordinary. Nor should the GM suggest that inanimate forms are moving under their own power; suggest – until the character makes the effort to take a good look – that he has encountered a *series* of broken mirrors or inverted horseshoes. If the mage makes a point of paying attention, he will notice that they are all the same item, and perhaps will be warned . . .

Igtukra the Unbridled (Forces 5)

Igtukra manifests in the physical world as a quantum black hole, appearing in the same place as the mage who summoned it. Igtukra then begins to increase its mass each round. The mage feels as though he is growing heavier; soon he begins to take damage, as he is torn apart by Igtukra's growing gravitational pull. Eventually, the mage is compressed to infinity. The only way to banish Igtukra is through countermagick.

Igtukra has no actual characteristics except a Will of 15, and an effective Arete of 5. It does 1d on the first turn of its presence, 2d on the second, 3d on the third, and so on; this damage bypasses all DR save for Toughness.

Prokaryote (Life 1)

As a weak Paradox spirit, Prokaryote uses itself as a weapon. It manifests as an otherwise mundane virus inside the mage. Each week of "infection," the mage loses 1d HT as the virus attacks his body. This damage may not be restored until Prokaryote is banished. A physician can locate Prokaryote and destroy the virus with a successful Physician skill roll at a penalty of -4; one such attempt may be made each week. Life magick and countermagick also work.

Prokaryote has no attributes or characteristics.



Terra Firma (Matter 4)

ST: 18 **Move/Dodge:** 6/6 **Size:** 2
DX: 8 **PD/DR:** 0/0
IQ: 14 **Damage:** 1d+2/3d
HT: 18/90 **Reach:** 1

Blunt like the earth from which it is formed, Terra Firma manifests as a 7-foot golem-like creature of sand and dirt. It attacks the offending mage by bludgeoning and suffocation (by forcing earth down its victim's throat). It attacks with Brawling-18, despite its low DX.

Dementia Paradox (Mind 3)

ST: 8 **Move/Dodge:** 4/5 **Size:** 1
DX: 10 **PD/DR:** 0/0
IQ: 13 **Damage:** varies
HT: 8 **Reach:** C

Dementia Paradox attacks the mage that summoned it with Mind magick, intending to drive the mage insane. Typical tactics include illusions of the mage's phobias and temporary losses of IQ, mental advantages, or Will. The spirit's goal is to render the mage incapable of further magick use rather than killing him outright. It has an effective Will of 15, and if forced into physical combat in the Umbra, it has Combat Reflexes and a Brawling skill of 10. It cannot manifest in the physical world.

Dorobo (Prime 2)

Dorobo is a thief of Quintessence. It drains the mage of his surplus power and fluctuates the flow of his Quintessence, stunning him during crucial moments. The Mage must win a Quick Contest of his HT and Dorobo's magickal effect roll or else lose 1 Quintessence for every point by which he lost the Contest; if he has no Quintessence left, he will be Physically Stunned.

Mages with Prime 1 can sense Dorobo only as a disturbance in the Prime. Dorobo has no physical attributes and never manifests; it has a Will of 10.

Rune-Fetter (Spirit 3)

ST: 8 **Move/Dodge:** 6/6 **Size:** 2
DX: 16 **PD/DR:** 1d-2/1d
IQ: 13 **Damage:** varies
HT: 10 **Reach:** 2

Rune-fetter appears as a spider-like creature in the Umbra, where it dwells and operates; it never manifests physically. It attacks by capturing the mage's Avatar in its web, thus rendering the mage unable to use some of his powers. When this happens, all magickal effect rolls suffer a penalty of -3 and the mage no longer regains Quintessence. To restore himself, a mage must enter the spirit realm in his weakened state, find Rune-fetter's lair, and attempt to release its hold on his Avatar. It has an effective Stealth skill of 18.

Wrinkle (Time 5+)

ST: 10 **Move/Dodge:** 5/5 **Size:** 1
DX: 10 **PD/DR:** 0/0
IQ: 15 **Damage:** 1d-2/1d
HT: 10 **Reach:** C

Wrinkle is one of the most powerful Paradox spirits of Time. It takes the form as an ancient man dressed in a wrinkled and creased white tuxedo. Wrinkle approaches the mage quite openly, explains his mission, and asks, if he could, would the mage change the event that caused the last offending paradox. A refusal dooms the mage; Wrinkle simply goes back in time and makes sure that the mage was never born, or ensures his death as a youngster. An affirmative answer takes the mage back in time to just before he caused the paradox, where he may now try to handle the situation differently.

Wrinkle has an effective Will of 18.



Allies of the Nephandi

The vile Nephandi have gained the assistance of an array of malevolent entities.

Pure Form

ST: 16# **Move/Dodge:** 7/7 **Size:** varies
DX: 10 **PD/DR:** 0/0
IQ: ? **Damage:** varies
HT: 18/90 **Reach:** 2

The Nephandi seed the various Realms with Pure Forms to oppose mages in their quest for Ascension. The statistics above and the following description describes a Pure Form as it might appear on Earth.

A Pure Form appears as a vague, shifting patch of pure blackness orbited by innumerable tentacles, spines and mandibles. All around it, the air shimmers as from heat on a highway, sound waves distort with a Doppler effect and reality runs like a Dali painting. If a Pure Form remains in one place too long, a temporary "afterimage" burns itself onto the structure of reality, causing a major Paradox. The destruction caused by a Pure Form Birth is different from that caused by the Sphere of Entropy; matter does not just break down, but utterly vanishes. If a Pure Form were to hover in a sealed room, the air would disappear and reality would distort. Then it would tear through the Spirit Realm and finally damage Prime itself.

Pure Forms seem to be made of antimatter; all that one touches simply ceases to exist. Attackers lose limbs, weapons disappear, and no structure can hold it for long. Luckily, attacks do seem to damage the entity first. Magick can affect a Pure Form, but the magickal effects, too, are destroyed.

A Pure Form can attack anyone and everyone within two hexes of itself, using a multitude of limbs (one attack per opponent). Physical attacks damage it, but the weapons are destroyed thereafter (bare-handed strikes result in the attacker automatically taking 3d Cutting damage to the striking limb). Damage inflicted to inanimate objects, although based on the Pure Form's ST, is *disintegration*; as described in *GURPS Supers*, this damage permanently destroys DR first, then the hit points of a substance. When all DR and hit points have been destroyed, about 1 cubic foot of the object has been completely disintegrated.

A Pure Form gets stronger the more it is fought; its Strength increases by 5 points each turn after the first, to a maximum of 31 points on the fifth turn.

The Zigg'raugglurr

These utterly mysterious and unknown alien beings live beyond the Horizon, which is the only barrier preventing them from regular congress with the Earth. Even the Oracles do not understand them. They are fourth-dimensional entities with a vast understanding of the "map" of time and space. They are malevolent and enigmatic in the extreme. They are allied in some mysterious way with the Nephandi, perhaps in a bargain to break through the outer gates together.

Zigg'raugglurr resemble giant, segmented gorillas with nothing but empty air between their segments – there seems to be nothing holding their various floating body parts together, yet they function as if they were whole beings. In fact, they exist four-dimensionally, perceiving time as humans perceive space; they likely possess a geometry of time similar to humans' Euclidean geometry of space. This also explains the creatures' strange appearance: they do not wholly exist in three-

dimensional reality, and thus only portions of them (the segmented bodies) can be perceived.

The first encounter the Traditions had with the Zigg'raugglurr was a near defeat for the Traditions. The creatures materialized into space and assaulted a cabal. They seemed to know a lot about the cabal's powers and tactics, and almost won the engagement. The cabal survived, but subsequent investigations revealed nothing about the mages' foes. Then, three years after the attack, the cabal again encountered the beings. This time the creatures were weak and ignorant of the cabal's tactics, even though one of the cabal mages swore the creatures were the identical entities whom they had previously fought. The creatures escaped from this second encounter, leaving the Tradition mages perplexed.

The ensuing debate was only quelled when an Oracle of Time came forth with an analysis of the creatures' true nature. It became obvious that the second encounter with them had in fact been the Zigg'raugglurrs' first. Their failure there caused them to step back in time to defeat the cabal before they had even attacked – thus the first encounter.

The Traditions realized that the Spheres of Time and Correspondence would be required simply to perceive these beings. Magickal scrying by the Oracles was performed, at great danger, and some of their secrets were finally revealed.

One of the questions asked the Oracles was: how do the creatures survive without Quintessence from Earth? Where were they getting it? The terrifying answer was that they have already manifested within Earth's space/time continuum – in the past, before the Gauntlet and Horizon were erected. They take what Quintessence they can on these expeditions before they are forced to return by extraordinarily powerful Paradox spirits who hunt the past for anomalies to the present. These spirits alone prevent the Zigg'raugglurr from wreaking havoc in Earth's past.

Now the question on the minds of all the Tradition mages is: how do they stop a menace they can barely understand, let alone perceive?

Demons

The creatures of the Inferno are distinct from the Banes that serve the Wyrms. Banes are creatures of elemental corruption, spirits of essential evil that comes from one's basic nature. Demons are different in that they are spirits of *temptation* – which is to say, creatures of evil that *chooses* to be evil. Banes operate on an instinctive level – they act evilly because they are to their cores corrupt and evil. Demons operate on an intellectual level; they are creatures that decide to be evil because of its benefits.

If a demon is to be encountered, the guidelines found on p. B154, p. M103 or pp. GR82-83 should be used for its creation, with the following exception: demons of the Inferno have a minimum IQ 10 when generated randomly; in general they should be at least as intelligent as human beings, with many more so. The more powerful demons may also have Spheres like mages, in addition to any abilities given to them by the generation tables.



Creatures of the Realm

Fomori

ST: 13-18 **Move/Dodge:** varies **Size:** 1
DX: 10-16 **PD/DR:** 0/0
IQ: 6+# **Damage:** varies
HT: 13-18 **Reach:** 1

A fomor (plural fomori) is a human being who has been touched or possessed by a spirit. In the process, they gain great power, but are usually marked or deformed in some way. Many fomori are mindless deformed cannibals who lurk in the woods and near landfills, but a few retain their sentience and appearance; these are able to infiltrate human society.

All fomori have one or more special abilities. Most have three abilities; some have less, and some have many more.

Several suggested powers are listed below, but GMs may wish to consult *GURPS Supers* for even more "gifts." Magical knacks (as described on p. M86) are also appropriate.

Fomori Powers

Claws and barbs: The fomor has either talons, or sharp, blade-like protrusions of bone at its joints that function in the same manner. The damage they do is aggravated. These allow the fomor to do Swing+2 Cutting/Thrust+2 Impaling damage hand-to-hand.

Exoskeleton: The fomor has a hard carapace covering its body, with a texture like bone and with many ridges, vein-like tubes and odd shapes upon it. The coloration ranges from rusted through dark brown to oily black. The exoskeleton provides PD 3 and DR 15, and the fomor frequently has up to +5 to both ST and HT.

Extra Limbs: Fomori often have a number of extra limbs, usually in the form of tentacles or masses of tendrils. Those fomori with extra arms and legs often possess them in awkward places, such as an extra arm on one of their thighs. Most of the time this will not allow them to make extra attacks in combat, but some fomori will also have the Full Coordination necessary to make one strike with each reasonably functional limb.

Eyes of Damnation: The fomor's eyes are weird and can dilate to reveal images of horror to one opponent, who must make a Fright Check at -7. The fomor may do nothing else in the round in which it uses this ability.

Fungal Parasite: The inside of the fomor's body has been replaced by a foul-smelling fungoid substance. The fomor can infect others with this fungus by touch (requiring a successful roll to hit in combat). The victim must make a HT-3 roll or be infected; those Immune to Disease are not affected. Those who fail the roll begin to lose 1 point each of HT, DX and ST and 1 level of Appearance per day until one of his Attributes reaches 0, at which time he dies. The fungus may only be cured by use of healing magic.

The fomor may also cause the fungoid mucus to coat the outside of his body, causing those who engage it in close combat to suffer a -2 to all attack rolls due to the revolting stench.

Gaseous Form: The fomor is able turn its body into a gas, which can stay cohesive even in a strong wind. It takes the fomor 3 seconds and costs 1 Fatigue to make the transition from one form to the other. The fomor cannot directly affect physical objects, and usually emits a horrible stench, while in gaseous form.

Hide of the Dragon: The fomor has a tough and leathery hide that provides PD 1 and DR 7. Some have huge knots,

scales, lumps and other disgusting features to accompany the protection. A fomor may not have both this ability and an Exoskeleton.

Increased ST: The fomor has base ST of 20 instead of 10.

Infectious Touch: The fomor can transmit fever and sickness with its touch. This ability effectively incapacitates the victim if he fails a HT roll; it lasts 1d days. Characters with Immunity to Disease will not be affected.

Lashing Tail: The fomor has a semi-prehensile tail which can wield a simple weapon or be used as a whip in combat. The tail can be up to twice the fomor's height in length. Any attacks with the tail are made at DX or Brawling -3; as a whip it does normal swing crushing damage.

Mouth of the Dragon: The fomor can swallow objects up to the size of a medium dog or a child, if the object is within reach. If the object swallowed is alive, it will suffocate if it cannot somehow get out (see *Holding Your Breath*, p. B91). The fomor will also digest the creature as food; its stomach acid is a corrosive that does 1d every 10 seconds. When the victim reaches -5×HT, they have been completely digested. All indigestible parts (bones, shoes, glasses, etc.) will be eliminated normally.

Plasmic Form: The fomor can turn itself into a viscous, reddish-brown liquid which is invulnerable to all kinetic damage. Changing forms takes 3 seconds and 1 Fatigue.

Roar of the Dragon: The fomor is able to issue a guttural scream that terrorizes those around it. All those who hear it must make a Fright Check at -3.

Stomach Pumper: The fomor is able to vomit forth a acidic stream of digestive juices that does 4d damage. The attack has a range of 25 feet, and is made with a skill level equal to the fomor's DX. After being hit, the target must make a HT roll or be incapacitated for 1 minute due to the stench of the vomitus.

Tumorous: The fomor is covered in tumors filled with a noxious pus; when struck, these spurt forth a 3d corrosive venom. Barehanded attacks automatically inflict this venom on the attacker. If the attacker strikes with a melee weapon, he must Dodge or be hit by the squirting pus.

Umbral Passage: The fomor may "step sideways" into the Near Umbra.

Webbing: The fomor has a special gland over his abdomen that is about the size and shape of a football, and which projects a tough, sticky webbing through an orifice above the navel. The fomor rolls against his DX to hit with this webbing, which has an effective ST of 20 if used to entangle a target; the fomor may also manufacture walls (DR equal to the fomor's ST) and ropes of webbing. The web strands themselves are about an inch thick but are almost invisible (-5 to Vision rolls to spot them).

Hyper Intelligence Technologies Mark V

ST: 18+ **Move/Dodge:** 7/7 **Size:** 1
DX: 15+ **PD/DR:** 5/25
IQ: 11 **Damage:** 1d+3 Imp/3d+1 Cut
HT: 16+ **Reach:** C

These cyborgs are the grunt soldiers of Iteration X. They are very dangerous foes because the mechanical monsters are armored with a magickal alloy that, in addition to providing them with PD 5 and DR 25, renders them somewhat resistant to magick; it gives them automatic counter-magick – see p. 87 – on a 10 or less. They possess Combat Reflexes and suffer no stunning or slowing effects from wounds. HIT Marks are highly perceptive, with sensory systems that give them +3 Alertness.

HIT Marks vary in appearance, so that each appears as a unique man or woman – except for the eyes, in which a flicker

of laser-red flashes every few seconds. They are almost universally Handsome or Beautiful – perhaps a quirk of Iteration X aesthetics. HIT Marks have extensive programming in many skills; the GM should decide which on an individual basis, but they will always have a large selection of Combat and Thief/Spy skills. Among these, they will always have Tracking-14, Brawling-14 and Gunner (Machine Gun)-16. Individuals may vary in their ST, DX and HT, but these will never be less than the levels given above.

All HIT Marks come equipped with two basic weapons systems. For hand to hand combat, they have retractable claws that do Thrust+2 Impaling and Swing+2 Cutting damage. For longer ranges, each comes equipped with a machine gun that also retracts into its body. The machine gun is functionally equivalent to an EX34 Chain Gun (*GURPS High Tech, Second Edition*, pp. 109 and 124; 7d Damage, SS 20, Acc 15, $\sqrt{2}$ D 1,000, Max 4,700, RoF 9, Rcl -1). Because of space considerations, the HIT Mark can only fire 200 rounds before needing to reload. However, they can make the most of those 200 rounds, as they have a weapon link to the gun (see p. 33 of *GURPS Cyberpunk*); their targeting system gives them a +5 to hit with the chain gun (and only the chain gun). Internal targeting computers grant them a +2 to other ranged weapons which they may decide to use.

There are also animal-based varieties of HIT Mark; the most common are cyborg dogs which are frequently used as guards for Technomancer installations. These have substantially the same abilities and equipment as their humanoid counterparts.

The description above is for an average HIT Mark; GMs should feel free to create more powerful models – perhaps using material from *GURPS Cyberpunk*, *Ultra-Tech* or *Supers* for inspiration.

Men in Black

ST: 13	Move/Dodge: 6/6	Size: 1
DX: 13	PD/DR: 0/0	Arete: 3
IQ: 19	Damage: 1d/2d-1	
HT: 13	Reach: C	

The mysterious Men in Black are the servants of the New World Order. These ominous black-clad warriors are the personification of their intimidating parent Convention. Their mere presence seems to sap the spirits of everyone in their vicinity. This effect is actually evoked by their Mind Sphere, used coincidentally through their ominous garb and intimidating presence.

The true nature of the Men in Black is unknown. Mind probes turn up no thoughts or memories; Life magick shows their bodies to be healthy yet somehow hollow, as if lacking souls; Spirit magick detects an ominous spiritual aura about them. Beneath their all-black costumes, Men in Black are pale and hairless, with few if any distinguishing features. They melt to nothingness within a few moments after they are killed, an effect that somehow never calls a Paradox spirit. In fact, Men in Black are often unaffected by Paradox. In short, they are the perfect unholy implements of the New World Order.

The Men travel in organized groups of individuals that complement each other. Each one specializes in two Spheres and works with others in the group to create any conjunctive effects that are deemed necessary; otherwise, they use magick independently. Unlike “ordinary” mages in the service of the Technocracy, they are not constrained to the use of rites.

Certain character traits are common to all Men in Black: Alertness +5, Arete/3, Charisma +1, Common Sense, Immune to Paradox, Intuition, Strong Will +3, and Appearance: Unattractive. They always have two Spheres of magick at level

3, with a skill level of 12 in each. They also have the skills Acting-14, Detect Lies-19, Diplomacy-16, Drive (Car)-12, Fast-Talk-16, Intimidation-14, Psychology-14, Stealth-18, and Shadowing-18. They will also have a Gun skill and a melee weapon skill, both at 14, as well as the weapons to go with them.

Superiors

ST: 16	Move/Dodge: 8/8	Size: 1
DX: 16	PD/DR: 0/0	
IQ: 8	Damage: 1d+1/2d+2	
HT: 16	Reach: C	

The Progenitors have been successful in some simple (to them) genetic engineering experiments. Among their achievements is the creation of a “perfect” human specimen. Perfectly physically, that is – Superiors have psychotic tendencies and their intelligence regresses over time.

Superiors all have the following traits: Appearance (Handsome/Beautiful), Charisma +1, Combat Reflexes, Common Sense and Weak Will -2. They are subject to a wide variety of mental disadvantages, often completely debilitating. They all possess the following skills: Acrobatics-16, Brawling-16, Climbing-16, Diplomacy-10, Fast-Talk-10, Guns (any)-16, Jumping-16, and any one melee weapon at 16. In addition, all Superiors are able to attempt counter-magick at 10 or less, even though they have no magical knowledge whatsoever.

Werewolves

Werewolves (or the Garou, as they call themselves) tend to live in tightly knit tribes and operate in “packs” of between two and 10 members. They are quite ritualistic and rustic in outlook. Werewolves are very secretive, insular and xenophobic. Many mages who have stumbled upon their territory in the physical world or the Near Umbra have been hunted down and slaughtered. Dreamspeakers, who have the most frequent contact with werewolves, say they are ferocious fighters and skilled shamans. It is most dangerous to gain their enmity. On most nights of the full moon, whole tribes of werewolves go on mad rampages; all those caught in their path – mortal or otherwise – are slain.

Though not enemies of the mages, werewolves will eliminate any who seek to despoil their nodes (called caerns) for the Quintessence and Tass found there. They are as secretive as vampires and mages.

GMs intending to make extensive use of Werewolf characters are referred to *GURPS Werewolf: The Apocalypse*, in which they will find complete rules for their design and special powers. For less frequent use, follow the guidelines below.

Basic Werewolf Design

Werewolves can be built as characters, with a minimum of 450 points; werewolf elders can be 700 points or higher. They have 100 points of disadvantages and 5 quirks.

Being a werewolf is a 226-point advantage, which covers 5 different physical forms plus the following which are common to all forms: Combat Reflexes, Instant Regeneration (No effect on aggravated wounds), Step Sideways, Were Form; Berserk, The Curse, Enemy: Wyrms, appears on 12 or less, Secret: Were (-30 points), Vulnerability to Silver, 1d; and Garou Language at IQ.

The Five Werewolf Forms

The Garou have five separate forms. Each has a different set of form-specific traits:

Homid: The human form of the werewolf, built as a normal human character. All other forms are described as modifications of the homid. All homid knowledge and skills carry over into other forms, even if they are not usable by the form.

Glabro: The half-man; a neanderthaloid brute. ST +5, Claws (+2 to hand-to-hand damage); 5 Extra Hit Points; Increased Density×1; Sharp Teeth (do cutting damage based on ST, as per p. B140), Stuttering (represents difficulty with human speech); minus one level of Appearance. +6 inches or so to height, +100%-200% of body weight in additional, visible muscle. The face becomes sloping and beetle-browed, and the ears become noticeably elongated. Body hair is profuse and nails and teeth are longer.

Crinos: The "Wolf-Man." Base ST is 20 instead of 10; DX +3. Claws/Talons (hand-to-hand damage is thrust/impaling and swing/cutting); the Delirium; 8 Extra Hit Points; Fangs (do impaling damage based on ST, as per p. B140); Increased Density×2; Longer Arms (+1 hex reach, +1 to swing damage, +2 to any attempt to grapple); Penetrating Call. Appearance (Ugly); Bloodlust; Inconvenient Size: Larger; Stuttering. Height increases to 150% normal (yes, a six-foot homid becomes a 9-foot Crinos!), and body weight is anywhere up to 400% that of the homid form. The body becomes covered with fur and the head becomes that of a snarling canine. Fangs and talons are now pronounced, the arms are long and apelike, and a tail is present.

Hispo: The near-wolf. Base ST is 18 instead of 10; DX +5. Claws/Talons; the Delirium; 8 Extra Hit Points; Fangs (do impaling damage based on ST, as per p. B140); Four Legs; Increased Density×2; Penetrating Call; Speak With Animals (Wolves Only). No Fine Manipulators; Stuttering. The Hispo is a huge, hulking beast resembling the prehistoric dire wolf, with massive head and jaws. In emergencies it can stand on its hind legs, but mostly stays on all fours. Its weight is roughly the same as the Crinos'.

Lupus: The true wolf. ST +3; DX +5. Alertness +2; Claws; Discriminatory Smell; 8 Extra Hit Points; Four Legs; Penetrating Call; Sharp Teeth (do cutting damage based on ST, as per p. B140); Speak With Animals (Wolves Only). Mute; No Fine Manipulators. The Lupus is essentially a normal wolf, but usually a large and physically perfect specimen.

Werewolf-Specific Advantages and Disadvantages

The *Curse* is the tendency for normal humans – and sometimes even mages – to feel uneasy around Garou, even those in human form; humans suffer a variable -1 to -4 penalty to reaction dependent upon how angry the Garou is.

The *Delirium* is the unreasoning, blind fear that the Garou inadvertently bred into humanity; those subject to it suffer abject terror in the presence of a Garou in Crinos or Hispo form, and later succumb to traumatic amnesia or extreme rationalization of their encounter with the werewolf. Mages and other Awakened beings are immune to the Delirium.

Increased Density raises the mass of the Werewolf's flesh. Each level of this advantage gives +100 lbs. to body mass *without changing his size*, +1 DR to Crushing damage, and -1 to knockback.

The *Penetrating Call* advantage is a howl that can be heard for miles, and which can inspire a Fright Check in those nearby when it is sounded.

In addition to these inherent abilities, all werewolves are shamans of one degree or another, with a wide range of magick-like abilities. The exact number of these abilities, which are learned rather than inherent, depends upon the individual Garou's status in werewolf society. The GM may use spells from the following magical colleges (found on pp. B155-164) to duplicate these gifts: Animal, Communication, any elemental, Healing, Knowledge and Making and Breaking.

Vampires

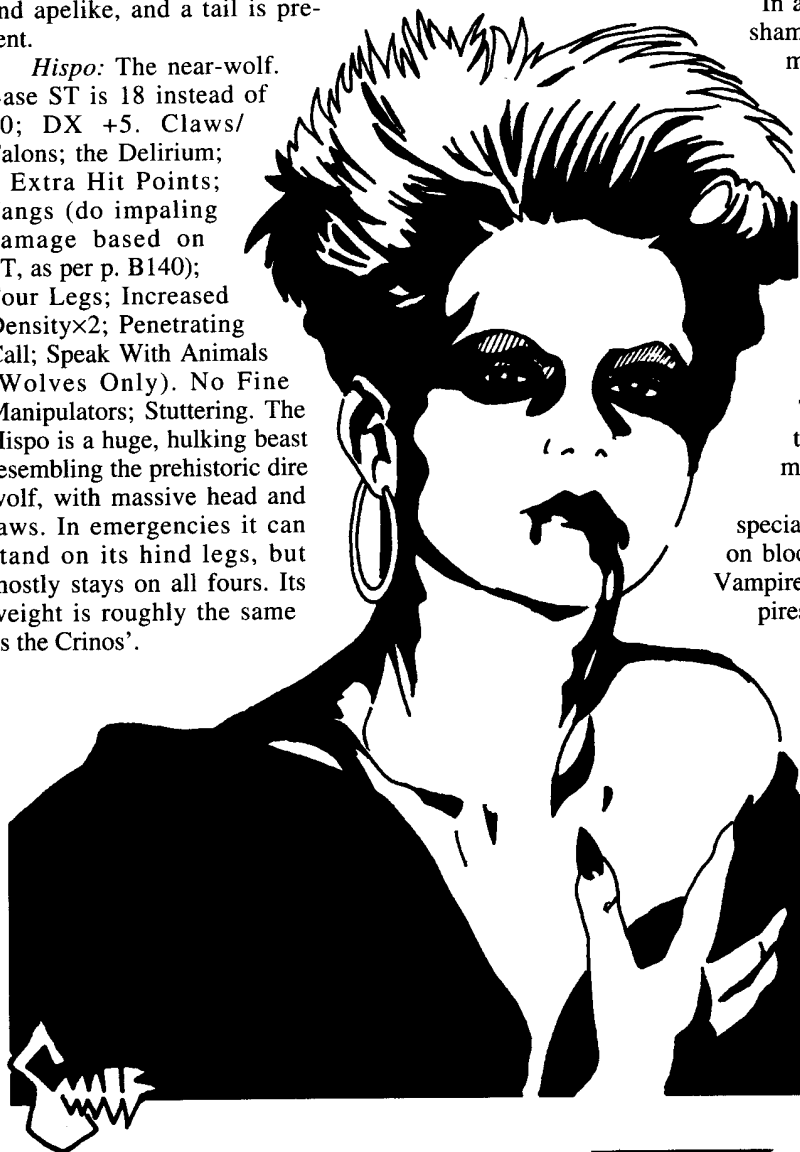
Vampires are creatures of cities. They feed off the human population of urban areas. Along with the Technomancers, vampires are largely responsible for the unchecked growth of urban sprawls, as they need more human population (and thus more food).

Vampires subsist on human blood, and derive many special powers from it. A vampire who has recently feasted on blood is usually much stronger and faster than a mortal. Vampire fangs and claws cause aggravated wounds, and vampires are capable of berserking, which they call Frenzy.

GMs intending to make extensive use of vampire characters are referred to *GURPS Vampire: the Masquerade*, in which they will find complete rules for their design and special powers. For less frequent use, follow the guidelines below.

Basic Vampire Design

Vampires are built as characters, with 200 to 300 points. Being a vampire is a 55-point advantage. This is a package which includes the following: Unaging, Blood Healing (a regenerative ability powered by blood at 2 HT per point of blood spent), and Doesn't Breathe. Also included is Vampiric Invulnerability: the vampire cannot be killed except by sunlight, fire and aggravated damage. They take damage from all other attack



forms, but cannot die from that damage. They may also reach - HT before having to make HT rolls to remain conscious. They suffer no debilitating effects from injury (shock, reduced Move, etc.) until they reach 0 HT.

Vampires suffer 1d of damage per minute of exposure to direct sunlight. They accordingly suffer from Röttschreck, a severe phobia of sunlight and fire. They also all possess the Berserk disadvantage and a -20-point Secret (that they are vampires). They lose 1 Blood Point per night and cannot heal normally, but must use their Blood Healing.

The amount of blood a vampire can hold is called his Blood Pool; the size of this pool – and how much of it he can use in a turn – is determined by the vampire's Generation – how far the character is from the original vampire:

Generation	Blood Pool	Blood Points/Turn	CP Cost
13th	HT	1/turn	0
12th	HT+1	1/turn	5
11th	HT+2	2/turn	15
10th	HT+4	2/turn	25
9th	HT+6	3/turn	35
8th	HT+10	4/turn	60
7th	HT+15	5/turn	75*
6th	HT+20	6/turn	100*
5th	HT+30	8/turn	125*
4th	HT+40	10/turn	160*
3rd	HT+60	15/turn	200*

*Not recommended for starting characters

A vampire can drain 1 point of blood per turn; once he begins draining, the victim no longer resists the attack and indeed becomes a full partner in the ecstasy of the feeding. A Will Roll at -5 is required to resist the Embrace. The average human has 10 Blood Points. The average Garou (in Crinos form) has 25. A wounded character has 1 less Blood Point for every 2 HT he has lost.

Vampires have a variety of special gifts and powers, called Disciplines. Most deal with the control of minds, both human and animal, and some allow the temporary improvement of attributes, Damage Resistance or Move and number of attacks. The GM can use the Mind Sphere, psionic powers or magical spells from the *GURPS Basic Set* to give vampires their abilities.

Ghouls

Many of the Kindred (vampires) create Ghouls. This is accomplished by giving a mortal or an animal some Kindred blood, without first draining them of all their own blood. Ghouls make excellent retainers, for after they are given blood three times, they are Blood Bound to that Vampire, making them unwaveringly loyal and devoted to their master.

No statistics can be given for a Ghoul, since they can be so different from one another – simply take a typical 100-point human and then adapt them so that they become more “Ghoulish” – Odious Personal Habits, Claws (hand-to-hand damage becomes thrust/impaling and swing/cutting – and aggravated), a Vampire Patron and disturbing Compulsions and Delusions would be appropriate. All Ghouls gain a +2 to their ST.

Ghouls have a number of special powers which they derive from the blood they receive from their patrons. As long as they receive vampire blood regularly, they are able to live forever. Their Claws, while not full talons, do aggravated damage. They

are able to use blood in the same manner as a vampire (a recently fed Ghoul is significantly faster and stronger than a mortal). In rare instances, Ghouls are also able to use some of the powers that their “sire” is able to use.

However, Ghouls are also susceptible to Berserking, and older Ghouls (those beyond their normal lifespan) must always have vampire blood in them, or they will die very quickly – in a few days or even hours.



Creatures of the Mythic Age

Though the Mythic Age has long been over, a scattered few survivors from its heyday still stalk the Umbra. Occasionally, such a creature crosses the Gauntlet into a wild and lonely place on Earth. Mythical survivors are also employed by Marauders as allies and servitors. Sometimes Marauders set them loose upon the Earth to wreak what havoc they may before the forces of Paradox destroy them or drive them back to the Umbra.

GMs are referred to the *GURPS Fantasy Bestiary* as a source for such creatures, should he desire to include them in his campaign. In addition to the statistics provided in that volume, each creature also possesses a level of Quintessence, from a mere 1 point for the smallest or most inconsequential, to 20 or more for dragons or other large creatures. If they are killed, either on earth or in the Umbra, some or all of this Quintessence can be harvested from the corpse by mages as Tass. Creatures described as having “mana organs” will usually produce a larger quantity of Tass. The GM is the final arbiter of how much Tass is available from any given corpse.

When manifested on Earth, many mythic monsters will accumulate Paradox simply by virtue of their presence, from as little as 1 Paradox/week for a creature that is inconspicuous and has little magickal impact upon reality, to 1 Paradox/hour for beings whose very nature reeks of magick and power. They also accumulate Paradox in the same manner as mages, from creating magickal effects. When all its Quintessence is supplanted by Paradox, a mythic creature must either return to the Umbra or be destroyed; some creatures – usually very powerful ones – have a choice, while others will only be destroyed or only be banished. If a mythic creature should inadvertently summon a Paradox spirit, it will almost always be a battle to the death.

Some creatures, such as dragons, are able to exist indefinitely on earth if they have some source of Quintessence – typically a node – from which to “feed” or “recharge.” Lesser nodes (up to level 4) will allow them to extend their visits from days to weeks or months, while the greatest nodes theoretically would allow one to remain on earth indefinitely. It is not uncommon for Umbral exiles like these to seek to return to earth and take over a Node so they may seek to continue the life they once led, long ago.



Melarch hated to do this the hard way, but for his first appearance at the Chantry house, he had no choice. He had to prove his worthiness by making the journey, rather than simply stepping through a portal.

Still, it wasn't as bad as he'd feared. The journey through the Near Umbra to the Horizon was harrowing, but never so dangerous that he'd actually feared for his life. Well, maybe once or twice . . .

Now, though, after his long journey through the Near Umbra, Melarch had finally reached his destination. There, through the wisps of cloudlike spirit matter, he could spy the towers of the Chantry House for the first time. HMMMMMMMM, he thought, I must be coming in from above. He could just make out two towers at an odd, oblique angle to each other; then he passed through another wispy cloud and saw the third, extending proudly . . . Downward from the bottom? he thought, stunned for a moment as he drew closer to the massive structure. Oh, of course . . .

In the Umbra, this close to the Horizon, no concern had been given to the gravity-imposed constraints of earthly construction. The Chantry House was a huge sphere of stone, with great towers radiating out from its surface in all directions. Some of the towers were topped with conical roofs, like a fairy-tale castle might have; others were crenelated. Still others were open to the "atmosphere" of the spirit world, like great square chimneys.

One of these caught his eye, for dozens of figures clustered around it. Some were waving – at him, he realized – and others were signalling with flags of many colors. Melarch suddenly grinned, knowing he was expected, and that a welcoming committee jubilantly waited for him. With an effort of will, he put on a burst of speed and dove toward the Chantry House, smiling broadly and waving in return to those waiting below.

Chapter 9

CONVERSIONS

We are the music makers, and we are the dreamers of dreams.

– Gene Wilder, in *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*

Many players will come to *GURPS* with *Mage* characters already designed in the Storyteller system. To make things simpler, this chapter contains notes for converting characters from one system to the other. Characters converted with these rules will have the same abilities, and more important, they will “feel” and play like their *Mage* counterparts.

Fortunately, most of the abilities, attributes and skills for Storyteller characters are direct analogues to those found in the *Basic Set*. For example, the Social Attribute *Charisma* converts almost directly to the *GURPS* advantage *Charisma* (see p. B19). Others, however, are more complex. The Social Attribute *Manipulation* converts as a combination of the *Fast-Talk* and *Diplomacy* skills.

Note: The GM should *not* allow *GURPS* players to create Mages using the Storyteller system, and then convert them to *GURPS* using these rules. There are too many ways this could be abused. These rules are designed only to convert existing Mages to *GURPS*.

Ratings

The Storyteller system uses a system of ratings from 1 to 5 to show relative skill or aptitude in an ability. These ratings are shown with dots or filled circles on character sheets. In the conversion notes that follow, these dots are referred to simply as a "rating." For example, a rating of 4 in the Acting talent is equal to an Acting skill of 16.

Please note that this conversion system does not allow as much variation among characters as the normal *GURPS* rules. Players are encouraged to customize characters to their liking upon conversion, using the rules in Chapter 2.



Required Advantages and Disadvantages

A mage will have *Arete* at a level of at least 1 (15 points) and *Immune to the Delirium* (25 points). He must also take *Secret: Non-Technocracy Mage* (Possible Death; -30 points), which does not count against his disadvantage limit.

Essence, Nature and Demeanor

These "metaphysical" traits will often determine many of the personality elements of the mage.

Essence

The mage's *Essence* has no direct impact on character design; simply note it on the character sheet.

Nature and Demeanor

The easiest way to convert these to *GURPS* is to assign each one some recommended advantages and disadvantages. Remember that these are simply recommendations. Players converting their characters may ignore any or all of these suggestions.

Architect

Advantages: Reputation, Status, Wealth.

Disadvantages: Code of Honor, Obsession, Sense of Duty (any).

Avant-Garde

Advantages: Alertness, Status (Sleeper), Wealth.

Disadvantages: Obsession: Novelty, Odious Personal Habit: Contempt for the Old, Overconfidence.

Bon Vivant

Advantages: Reputation (among the party crowd).

Disadvantages: Addictions, Compulsive Carousing, Lecherousness, Weak Will.

Bravo

Advantages: High ST and DX, Charisma, Combat Reflexes.

Disadvantages: Bully, Intolerance, Sadism; or Sense of Duty to the Weak; Bad Temper or Berserk.

Caregiver

Advantages: Empathy, Reputation.

Disadvantages: Sense of Duty.

Conformist

Advantages: None.

Disadvantages: Weak Will, Gullibility.

Conniver

Advantages: Charisma.

Disadvantages: Greed, Compulsive Behavior (Swindling).

Critic

Advantages: Alertness, Eidetic Memory.

Disadvantages: Obsession: Perfectionism, Odious Personal Habit: Perfectionist, Overconfidence.

Curmudgeon

Advantages: Unfazeable

Disadvantages: Bad Temper, No Sense of Humor, Odious Personal Habit: Cynicism or Sarcasm.

Deviant

Advantages: None.

Disadvantages: Odious Personal Habit(s), Reputation, Secret.

Director

Advantages: Charisma, Status (Sleeper).

Disadvantages: Overconfidence, Stubbornness, Megalomania.

Fanatic

Advantages: Strong Will, Charisma.

Disadvantages: Fanaticism, Stubbornness.

Jester

Advantages: Charisma

Disadvantages: Compulsive Behavior (telling jokes).

Judge

Advantages: Common Sense, Intuition.

Disadvantages: Overconfidence.

Loner

Advantages: None.

Disadvantages: Shyness.

Martyr

Advantages: Reputation (possibly).

Disadvantages: Odious Personal Habit (attention seeker), Sense of Duty.

Rebel

Advantages: None.

Disadvantages: Stubbornness.

Survivor

Advantages: Strong Will, Toughness, any of the usual "survivor" advantages.

Disadvantages: Stubbornness, Intolerance.

Traditionalist

Advantages: Common Sense.

Disadvantages: Stubbornness.

Visionary

Advantages: Reputation, Charisma.

Disadvantages: Absent-Mindedness, Reputation.



Tradition

Each Tradition has a set of suggested and/or required advantages, disadvantages and skills. See the listings on pp. 56-71 for those appropriate to the character's chosen Tradition.

Attributes

Attributes are a Mage's basic building blocks. In *GURPS* terms, however, they cover a wide variety of traits, including attributes, skills and advantages.

Physical Attributes

Strength

Strength converts directly to *GURPS* ST. Convert ratings on the following scale:

Rating	<i>GURPS</i> ST
•	8
••	10
•••	13
••••	16
•••••	18

Dexterity

This Attribute converts directly to *GURPS* DX. Conversion is the same as for Strength.

Stamina

Stamina converts directly to *GURPS* HT. Conversion is the same as for Strength.

Social Attributes

Charisma

This converts to the Charisma advantage. A rating of 2 is equal to a +1 Charisma, with each additional rating equal an additional +2. A rating of 1 indicates a lack of Charisma, so gives no bonus and no advantage.

Manipulation

In *GURPS* terms, Manipulation is a combination of the Fast-Talk and Diplomacy skills. Use the *Ratings to Skills Conversion* table below to convert, but if the initial rating is 1 or 2, subtract 2 from the indicated skill level. Otherwise, use the indicated level. The result is the Mage's skill in *both* Fast-Talk and Diplomacy.

Appearance

This Attribute converts to the appropriate Appearance advantage or disadvantage. A rating of 1 is equal to the Appearance (Unattractive) disadvantage, 2 gives no advantage or disadvantage, 3 is equivalent to Appearance (Attractive), 4 equals Appearance (Handsome or Beautiful) and 5 converts to Appearance (Very Handsome or Beautiful).

Mental Attributes

Perception

At first glance Perception appears to be the equivalent of the Alertness advantage, but there is a *talent* called Alertness that more closely matches that advantage. The easiest way to convert Perception into *GURPS* terms is to consider it simply a bonus to the character's IQ. To figure the bonus, subtract 2



from the character's Perception rating and add it to his IQ (or subtract if the result is negative). For example, a Mage with a rating of 3 in Perception would add +1 to his final IQ score. A Mage with a 1 rating in Perception would subtract 1 from his final IQ score.

Intelligence

Intelligence translates directly to *GURPS* IQ. Convert in the same way as Strength.

Wits

This Attribute is difficult to define in *GURPS* terms. The best conversion uses the following stipulations: a rating of 1 means the character has the Gullibility disadvantage. A 2 rating gives no advantage or disadvantage. A rating of 3 gives the Common Sense advantage, while a 4 gives both Common Sense and Intuition. Finally, a rating of 5 gives Common Sense, Intuition, Lightning Calculator and a +1 to IQ.

Abilities

Abilities include all of the Mage's collected experiences, be they untrained Talents, developed Skills or learned Knowledges.

Rating to Skill Conversion

Most of the Talents, Skills and Knowledges convert straight to *GURPS* skills. To make conversion easier, use the table below to translate to the appropriate skill level for any entry that indicates a direct translation.

Rating	Skill Level
.	10
..	12
...	14
....	16
.....	18

Important Conversion Note

Occasionally, the converted character will end up with a skill level that is lower than he would normally get for $\frac{1}{2}$ point, but higher than his default level of that skill.

This is normally impossible in *GURPS*, but occurs in the Storyteller system because the skills and talents are not based on the attributes, but separate from them. To correct this, simply raise the skill to the value that the character would get for $\frac{1}{2}$ point. Or, if it turns out that the skill level was lower than the default for that skill, use the default level instead.

This may seem very un-*GURPS*-like. However, this system produces more accurate reflections of the original *Mage* characters than would assigning CP values to ratings, or having ratings based on attributes.

Also, certain levelled advantages may be gained from several different sources below. In such a case, the character does *not* receive the cumulative total levels in that advantage; take only the higher of the resulting levels.

Talents

Alertness

Alertness converts to the Alertness advantage. Each rating is equal to a +1 Alertness bonus. A Mage with an Alertness rating of 4 would have Alertness at +4.

Athletics

The Athletics talent comprises three *GURPS* skills: Acrobatics, Jumping and Climbing. In addition, Mages with a high rating in Athletics will have some level of skill in Sports of various types. Use the Table above to convert the ratings to the appropriate skill level. The Mage will have this level in all three of the skills mentioned above. Plus, for each rating above 1, the character will know a separate Sports skill at DX+1 level. To illustrate, Siona has an Athletics rating of 3. She thus has a skill level of 14 in Acrobatics, Jumping and Climbing. She also knows two Sports skills at DX+1 skill level.

Awareness

The Awareness talent comprises several different *GURPS* advantages. The character gains Animal Empathy and Spirit Empathy (see p. 47). If the Awareness rating is 2 or less, he has the 15-point level of the Awareness advantage found on p. 44. If the rating is 3 or more, he has the 35-point level of Awareness, and Alertness +1 (cumulative with any bonuses gained from the Alertness talent).

Brawl

The Brawl talent translates directly to the Brawling skill. (Members of the Akashic Brotherhood may take Judo or Karate instead as noted on p. 48, or if the GM owns *GURPS Martial Arts*, the Do martial arts style; see p. 138.)

Dodge

In *GURPS*, Dodge is not a separate ability, but is a function of a character's Move minus Encumbrance. However, a Mage with a Dodge rating of 3 or more gains the Combat Reflexes advantage. No other bonus is gained by a high Dodge rating.

Expression

Expression converts to the skills Bard, Poetry and Writing, at the appropriate skill level using the table on p. 181. After the conversion, the player can alter his skill levels in each skill by up to plus or minus 4, but each alteration must have an opposite effect on another skill (i.e., if you had all skills at level 12, you could change Bard to 14 by bringing Poetry down to 10).

Intuition

With a rating of 1 or 2, the character has the Intuition advantage. Rating 3 also gives the Detect Lies skill at IQ. A rating of 4 gives both of the above, plus Danger Sense. At rating 5, the character has all the benefits of the previous levels, except that Danger Sense is replaced with ESP Power 5, and the character has the Precognition skill at IQ.

Intimidation

Intimidation converts directly to the *GURPS* skill Intimidation, detailed on p. B246.

Streetwise

Streetwise translates directly to the Streetwise skill.

Subterfuge

This talent does not convert directly to any specific skill. However, each level adds +1 to the Mage's Acting and Psychology skills. If the character possesses neither of these skills, this talent will give him both skills at the level indicated on the conversion table.

Other Talents

If the Mage character has listed other talents, they should be converted to the nearest appropriate *GURPS* skill.

Skills

Drive

Drive converts to the Driving (Car) skill, unless the character has specified a different vehicle. Use the table on p. 181. Note that most other vehicles will default to Driving (Car) at -4. See p. B68 for more on Driving skill.

Etiquette

Etiquette converts directly to Savoir-Faire. In addition, each level of Etiquette above 1 gives a +1 bonus to Diplomacy.

Firearms

This skill translates to any one Guns skill, usually Guns (Pistol). Use the table on p. 181. Note that all Guns skills default to each other at -4, so a Mage with a Firearms rating of 4 would have a Guns (Pistol) skill of 16 and all other Guns skills at 12.

Leadership

Leadership converts to the Leadership skill.

Meditation

Meditation converts directly to the Meditation skill (p. 47).

Melee

Since *GURPS* uses a separate skill for each melee weapon, this conversion forces a character to specialize. The character can pick on melee weapon skill (often Knife) and will have a skill level based on the *Rating to Skill* table on p. 181. In addition, the Mage gains a bonus to his default for other weapons equal to his rating in the Melee skill. For example, Medge the Mage has a Melee rating of 4. He translates that to a Knife skill of 16. He can also use a broadsword skill at default+4, which is DX-1 (since Broadsword skill defaults to DX- 5). Or he could use a flail at DX-2, and so on.

Research

Research converts directly to *GURPS* Research.

Stealth

Stealth converts directly to *GURPS* Stealth.

Survival

Survival consists of both the Survival skill and the Tracking skill. Use the table on p. 00 to find the level in *both* skills. If the character already has Tracking, use the higher of the two skill levels determined.

Technology

This skill converts to several others. First, the character receives the Mechanic skill. The character must choose a specialization, but most Mechanic specializations default to each other at -4, so someone with a rating of 2 could have a Mechanic (Automobiles) skill of 12 and a default skill in Mechanic (Ships) of 8. Similarly, the character also receives the Engineer and Electronics skills, with the same caveats. (The character must take the prerequisite skills for these as well, at 12 or IQ, whichever is higher.)

Finally, the character gets the Computer Operation skill at the level determined by the table on p. 181.

Other Skills

Most other skills will convert directly to their *GURPS* equivalents.

Knowledges

Computer

Computer knowledge converts to both Computer Operation and Computer Programming, per the table on p. 181. Figure the Computer Operation skill normally; however, subtract 2 from the character's Computer rating before figuring the skill level in Computer Programming. Thus, a character with a 1 or 2 in Computer would have the Computer Operations skill, but not the Computer Programming skill. Exception: If the character already has Computer Operations at a higher level than this knowledge gives, through the Technology skill, then Computer translates only to the Computer Programming skill, figured normally from the table.

Cosmology

Cosmology converts to skills Area Knowledge (Umbra) and Survival (Umbra), both at the level indicated by the table.

Culture

This skill becomes two under **GURPS**: Savoir-Faire and History, both at the level indicated by the table.

Enigmas

Enigmas translates directly to the new Enigmas skill found on p. 47 as per the conversion table.

Investigation

Investigation translates directly to both Criminology and Research skills at normal levels per the table on p. 181.

Law

This knowledge converts directly to the Law skill.

Linguistics

Linguistics does not translate directly to the **GURPS** skill Linguistics. Instead, the character takes one language at IQ level of each rating in Linguistics. (If the character is a member of the Order of Hermes, one of these languages *must* be Hermean.) However, Mages with a Linguistics rating of 3 or more gain the Linguistics skill as indicated by the conversion table, figured at the Mage's rating- 2. For example, someone with a Linguistics rating of 5 would know 5 languages at IQ level and have the Linguistics skill at level 14.



Medicine

The knowledge of Medicine includes the four skills First Aid, Diagnosis, Physician and Surgery. A character with a Medicine rating of 1 would have First Aid and Diagnosis skills of 10. A rating of 2 gives First Aid at 12, Diagnosis at 12 and Physician at 10. A 3 gives First Aid and Diagnosis at 14, Physician at 12 and Surgery at 10. A rating of 4 converts to First Aid and Diagnosis at 16, Physician at 14 and Surgery at 12. Finally a Medicine rating of 5 converts to First Aid and Diagnosis at 18, Physician at 16 and Surgery at 14.

Occult

The Occult knowledge translates to the Occultism skill.

Science

Science knowledge converts directly to the following skills: Astronomy, Botany, Chemistry, Ecology, Geology, Physics, Physiology or Zoology. The character can choose one skill per level of rating in Science and convert to the appropriate skill level using the table on p. 181. After the conversion, the player can alter his skill levels in each skill by up to +/-4, but each alteration must have an opposite effect on another skill (i.e., if you ended up with Botany and Chemistry at level 12, you could change Botany to 14 and Chemistry would go down to 10).

Other Knowledges

Additional knowledges should be converted to the nearest appropriate skill.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds generally describe a mage's position in the world. In **GURPS** terms, this is defined mostly by the social advantages Status, Allies, Reputation, Wealth, Contacts, etc. Most converted Mages will have at least one of these background traits.

Allies

Each rating in Allies give the mage one **GURPS** Ally, described on p. B23. A rating of 1 or 2 gives one or two Allies created with between 76 and 100 points. A rating of 3 gives two Allies between 76 and 100 points and one between 101 and 150. A rating of 4 gives three Allies between 76 and 100 points and one between 151 and 200, and a 5 rating gives four Allies between 76 and 100 points and one over 200 points. All the Allies appear Fairly Often (on a roll of 9 or less).

Arcane

The character receives a number of levels in the Arcane advantage (p. 44) equal to his rating in the Arcane background.

Avatar

The character's Avatar rating converts directly into the Avatar advantage (p. 44) at an equal level.

Destiny

The Destiny background translates directly to the Destiny advantage (p. 45), at 1 level per rating.

Dream

The Dream background becomes the Dream advantage. Convert using the following table:

Rating	Levels of Dream
•	1
••	2
•••	4
••••	8
•••••	12

Influence

Influence is connected to the **GURPS** Social Status advantage. This is the character's status among sleeper society, i.e., his standing among ordinary humans. Mages have a separate Status for their standing within their community (see *Finishing Touches* below).

Each rating of influence is equal to a level of Social Status, starting at level 1. For example, a mage with a rating of 3 in Influence would be Social Status 3, and would be equivalent to the Mayor of a large city or a corporate executive.

Library

The Library background does not translate easily; **GURPS** does not rate magical texts for their study value. The background becomes, instead, a measure of the size of the mage's personal library, expressed in dollars:

Rating	Library Value
•	\$2,000
••	\$5,000
•••	\$10,000
••••	\$25,000
•••••	\$50,000

The contents of the mage's library will never be exclusive-ly grimoires of power; it will rather be a wide variety of texts

that provide a broad grounding in both the theoretical and practical. The exact number and quality of the library's books may vary – a \$25,000 library may be a roomful of books, or a single volume of special value. The exact volumes and their contents, if they have not already been determined in play, are up to the GM and player.

Mentor

A Mentor is a Patron, usually a single person, but not always. The rating of the Mentor determines how powerful a Patron he is.

A rating of 1 indicates an individual mage created with between 450 and 500 points and a combined Status and Destiny of no more than 2.

A rating of 2 indicates a Mage worth from 500 to 550 points, with a combined Status and Destiny no more than 3.

A rating of 3 indicates a quite powerful and influential Mage, created with between 550 and 600 points, with a combined Status and Destiny of no more than 4.

A 4 rating indicates a very powerful and renowned mage of Status + Destiny 5 or 6, between 600 and 650 points.

And a 5 rating means the Patron mage has a total Destiny and Status of 7 or 8, almost certainly an Oracle, and worth 700 points or more.

All Mentors appear fairly often (a roll of 9 or less), but the character may trade off point total/status/knowledge with the frequency of appearance to match the conception of the Mentor in the Storyteller system; a 700-point mage who appears on a 6 or less is no more than a 4 rating, depending on how much he knows or is willing to impart, while a 400-point mage who appears on 15 or less would be a rating 3, or even 4 if he has a great deal of information he can share.

Node

The Node background converts directly to the Node advantage at one level per rating dot.

Talisman

The Talisman background is converted first by simply by noting down the *GURPS* versions of the character's talismans on his sheet under possessions, then – if the character has the Prime Sphere at level 3 or higher – by taking the Talisman Creation skill (p. 48) at the level indicated by the Talisman rating on the rating-to-skill table on p.181.

Other

Arete

Arete converts to *GURPS* advantage Arete at 1 level per rating.

Spheres

Convert Spheres directly, with 1 level in a Sphere for each rating possessed by the Storyteller character. The character's skill with that Sphere is equal to his IQ, unless that exceeds the ceiling imposed by the *GURPS* Arete level.

Rotes

Each rote is a separate skill – a spell in the classic sense, in fact. Each rote is a maneuver that defaults to the lowest skill level of the Sphere(s) employed by that rote. If the character has made extensive use of the rote, it maybe be possible

Willpower

Willpower translates to basic Strong Will or Weak Will in *GURPS*. Use the following table for conversion:

Rating	Converts to
•	Weak Will -4
••	Weak Will -3
•••	Weak Will -2
••••	Weak Will -1
•••••	No advantage or disadvantage
••••••	Strong Will +1
•••••••	Strong Will +2
••••••••	Strong Will +3
•••••••••	Strong Will +4
••••••••••	Strong Will +5

Quintessence and Paradox

The converted character will have the same number of Quintessence and Paradox points as the original Storyteller character.

Health Levels

Most converted Mages will be completely healthy, so Health Levels will not play a part in the conversion process. However, for completeness, conversion notes are given here.





Bruised mages are at HT-2. Injured are at HT-6, and Wounded are at -8. Mauled Mages are at HT-12, while Crippled are at HT-16. Incapacitated mages are at always at -1×HT, and must make HT rolls to remain conscious.

Finishing Touches

If desired, the player can specify quirks based on previous role-play of the character. He may also choose to take disadvantages not specified in the character's ratings, Essence or archetypes but displayed or acquired in play: hobgoblins, phobias, behaviors, odious personal habits and the like. Note that without such disadvantages, the point total for the character may seem unusually high.

Also at this time, the character's Status in mage society (based on his highest Sphere level) should be determined and added.

Possessions

While Libraries and Talismans will have been already defined, the character's other possessions should also be noted. In particular, any foci that he requires should be added to the character sheet, along with the Sphere or Spheres that require them. Also, any useful possessions or equipment acquired during play should be noted.

Sample Conversions

Following are two characters built with the Storyteller system and then converted to *GURPS*.

Mage Character: Helstrom

Name: Helstrom Essence: Primordial Tradition: Cult of Ecstasy
 Player: Nature: Deviant Mentor:
 Chronicle: Demeanor: Jester Cabal:

Attributes

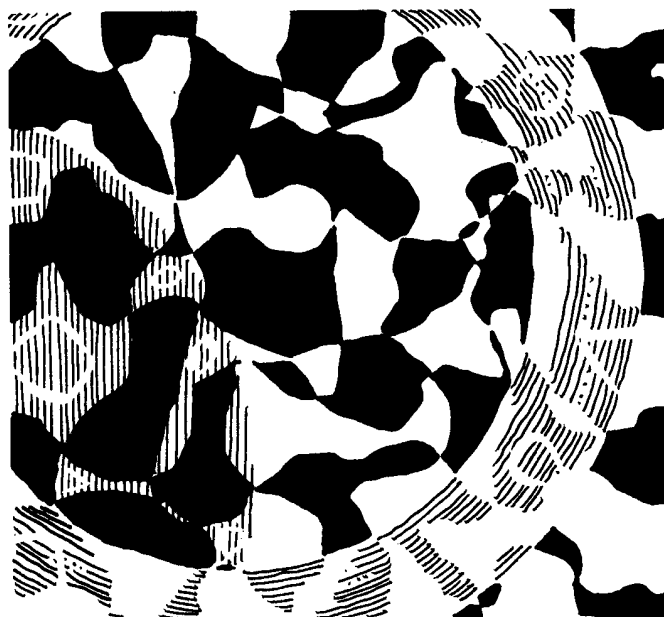
<i>Physical</i>	<i>Social</i>	<i>Mental</i>
Strength: •	Charisma: •••	Perception: •••
Dexterity: •••	Manipulation: ••••	Intelligence: •••
Stamina: ••	Appearance: •••	Wits: ••

Abilities

<i>Talents</i>	<i>Skills</i>	<i>Knowledges</i>
Alertness: •	Drive: •	Computer: ••
Athletics: –	Etiquette: ••	Cosmology: ••
Awareness: ••	Firearms: –	Culture: –
Brawl: –	Leadership: •	Enigmas: •••
Dodge: •	Meditation: –	Investigation: –
Expression: –	Melee: –	Law: –
Intuition: ••	Research: •	Linguistics: –
Intimidation: –	Stealth: –	Medicine: –
Streetwise: –	Survival: –	Occult: ••••
Subterfuge: ••	Technology: –	Science: •

Advantages

Correspondence: ••	<i>Spheres</i>	Prime: •
Entropy: –	Life: –	Spirit: •
Forces: –	Mind: •••	Time: ••
	Matter: –	
	<i>Backgrounds</i>	
Avatar: •••••	Influence: •••	Arcane: ••••
Library: ••		
Arete: •••	Willpower: •••••	
Quintessence: •••••		Paradox



Helstrom: Converted to GURPS

Mage of the Cult of Ecstasy

Essence: Primordial

ST 8 (-15 points) IQ 14 (45 points) Speed: 5.75
 DX 13 (30 points) HT 10 (0 points) Move: 5
 Dodge 5
 Damage: Thrust 1d-3; Swing 1d-2
 Quintessence Paradox

Point Total: 420 points

Advantages

Alertness +1 (5 points)
 Animal Empathy (5 points)
 Appearance: Attractive (5 points)
 Arcane/4 (40 points)
 Arete/3 (45 points)
 Avatar/5 (75 points)
 Charisma +3 (15 points)
 Immune to the Delirium (25 points)
 Intuition (15 points)
 Spirit Empathy (10 points)
 Status-3, Sleeper society (15 points)

Disadvantages

Compulsive Behavior: Jokes (-10 points)
 Lecherousness (-15 points)
 Odious Personal Habit: Manipulates others' minds for his kicks (-15 points)
 Secret: Non-Technocracy Mage (-30 points)
 Secret: Odious Personal Habit (-10 points)

Skills

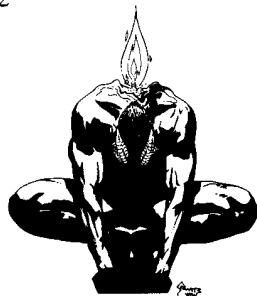
Acting-12 (½ point); Area Knowledge (Umbra)-13 (½ point); Chemistry/TL7-12 (1 point); Computer Operation/TL7-13 (½ point); Fast-Talk-16 (6 points); Diplomacy-18 (12 points); Driving (Car)-11 (½ point); Enigmas-14 (4 points); Leadership-12 (½ point); Musical Instrument (Guitar)-14 (4 points); Occultism-16 (6 points); Psychology-12 (1 point); Research-12 (½ point); Savoir-Faire-13 (½ point); Singing-11 (2 points); Survival (Umbra)-12 (½ point).

Spheres

Correspondence-12 (2) (32 points)
 Mind-12 (3) (32 points)
 Prime-12 (1) (17 points)
 Spirit-12 (1) (17 points)
 Time-12 (2) (32 points)

Possessions

Library worth \$5,000
 Incense
 Fender Guitar



Comments

Helstrom is an experienced mage; he has the bare minimum in disadvantages necessary for a member of the Cult of Ecstasy. He could easily take another 50 points of disadvantages, along with his 5 points of quirks, if the player wished to lower his point total.



Mage Character: Rhiannon

Name: Rhiannon Essence: Questing Tradition: Order of Hermes
 Player: Nature: Visionary Mentor:
 Chronicle: Demeanor: Fanatic Cabal:

Attributes

Physical	Social	Mental
Strength: ••	Charisma: ••	Perception: ••
Dexterity: ••	Manipulation: •	Intelligence: •••••
Stamina: ••••	Appearance: •••	Wits: •••

Abilities

Talents	Skills	Knowledges
Alertness: •	Drive: •	Computer: ••
Athletics: –	Etiquette: –	Cosmology: ••
Awareness: •••	Firearms: –	Culture: –
Brawl: –	Leadership: –	Enigmas: ••
Dodge: •	Meditation: –	Investigation: •
Expression: –	Melee: –	Law: –
Intuition: ••••	Research: •••	Linguistics: ••
Intimidation: –	Stealth: –	Medicine: –
Streetwise: –	Survival: –	Occult: •••
Subterfuge: –	Technology: •	Science: •

Advantages

Correspondence: •	Spheres	Prime: •
Entropy: –	Life: •	Spirit: –
Forces: •	Mind: •	Time: •
	Matter: •	

Arcane: ••	Backgrounds	Dream: ••••
Mentor: •••••	Avatar: ••••	
Arete: •	Willpower: •••••	
Quintessence Paradox		

Rhiannon: Converted to GURPS

Mage of the Order of Hermes

Essence: Questing

ST 10 (0 points) IQ 18 (125 points) Speed: 6.50
DX 10 (0 points) HT 16 (80 points) Move: 6
Dodge 6
Damage: Thrust 1d-2; Swing 1d
Quintessence •••••----- Paradox

Point Total: 551 points

Advantages

Alertness +2 (10 points)
Animal Empathy (5 points)
Appearance: Attractive (5 points)
Arcane/2 (20 points)
Arete/1 (15 points)
Avatar/4 (60 points)
Awareness/2 (35 points)
Charisma +1 (5 points)
Common Sense (10 points)
Danger Sense (15 points)
Dream/8 (24 points)
Immune to the Delirium (25 points)
Intuition (15 points)
Patron: Oracle of Forces, 9 or less (25 points)
Spirit Empathy (10 points)

Disadvantages

Fanaticism (-15 points)
Overconfidence (-10 points)
Secret: Non-Technocracy Mage (-30 points)
Stubbornness (-5 points)
Vow: Keep Tradition knowledge secret (-10 points)

Skills

Area Knowledge (Umbra)-17 (½ point); Bard-17 (1 point);
Computer Operation/TL7-17 (½ point); Criminology-14
(default); Detect Lies-18 (4 points); Diplomacy-12 (default);
Driving (Car)-10 (2 points); Electronics/TL7-15 (½ point);
Engineer/TL7-15 (½ point); Enigmas-15 (½ point); Fast Talk-
13 (default); Hermean-18 (8 points); Latin-18 (2 points);
Mathematics-18 (4 points); Mechanic (Any)/TL7-13 (default);
Occultism-16 (½ point); Physics-12 (default); Research-16 (½
point); Survival (Umbra)-16 (½ point).

Spheres

Correspondence-10 (1) (16 points)
Forces-10 (1) (16 points)
Life-10 (1) (16 points)
Mind-10 (1) (16 points)
Matter-10 (1) (16 points)
Prime-10 (1) (16 points)
Time-10 (1) (16 points)

Possessions

Seal of Solomon
Showstone

Rhiannon still has 65 points in disadvantages and quirks
which could be applied to bring her character point total down
to 486.



LEXICON



A mage's world contains many strange and unusual things, and mages have adopted or invented various words to describe the weirdness of their daily life. The next three sections list the most frequently used terms (Common Parlance), the vocabulary of ancient mages (Old Form), and the ever-evolving slang of the younger generations (Vulgar Argot).

Common Parlance

Acolyte: A non-Awakened servitor of a mage.

Adept: A mage who has achieved Level 4 in a given Sphere.

Arete: The measure of a mage's enlightenment and skill with magick.

Ascension: The enlightened state of being to which all mages aspire.

Apprentice: A mage who has not yet been initiated into a Tradition. Not typically applied to Orphans.

Arcane: A mystical veil erected by mages to guard their identities.

Avatar: A soul, said by some to be a fragment of the Pure Ones who originally inhabited the Tellurian. An Awakened Avatar enables a mage to perform magick.

Awakened, The: This term describes any supernatural creature of at least partially human origin, including mages, werewolves, mummies and vampires.

Awakening, The: The moment at which one realizes and accepts that reality can and does contradict one's previous experiences.

Branding: A punishment in which a mage has his Avatar marked (using the Spirit sphere) because he has violated a Protocol.

Cabal: A group of mages bound by loyalty and a common purpose.

Caern: A Node controlled by the Garou.

Censure: A common mild punishment among mages. It is similar to being on parole.

Chantry: The stronghold of a mage or cabal. On Earth, this may be a normal building, or a magically fortified and enhanced structure. These mundane places are often located on Nodes and connected to strongholds in the Umbra.

Coincidental Magick: This is magick performed in such a fashion that it is effectively indistinguishable from a mundane event. Coincidental magick is also known as static magick.

Continuum, The: All mages.

Convention: One of five groups of mages that form the Technocracy and enforce its policies. The Conventions are: Iteration X, the Syndicate, the Progenitors, the New World Order, and the Void Engineers.

Deacon: One of the founding members of a well-established Chantry.

Deep Umbra: The aspects of the Umbra that are only found away from the Earth. The Shard Realms are scattered throughout the Deep Umbra.

Demon: One of the Hordes of Darkness who await beyond the Horizon to devour the world.

Disciple: The lowest rank among the Tradition mages. Disciples can perform magick and have joined a Tradition.

Dream Realm: A world created out of old dreams kept alive by the Oneira, or Dream Lords.

Dynamic Reality: Reality in flux. It may be changing quickly because of vulgar magick, slowly because of coincidental magick, or simply because it is the reality of the Umbra (where anything can happen).

Errant: A mage whose Chantry and cabal have been destroyed. Errants are frequently shunned by other mages, as they are usually both hunted by and seeking revenge upon their enemies.

Fellow: A full member of a Chantry, but not a founding member and therefore of lower status than its Deacons.

Focus: An object, action or gesture required to perform magick. Foci vary from Tradition to Tradition.

Gaia: The Earth and the Near Umbra.

Gate: A temporary magickal "bridge" between two places. Frequently created at Nodes. See *Portal*.

Gauntlet, The: A mystical barrier between the Earth and the Near Umbra. The Gauntlet was created by the Technocracy to prevent free travel between the physical and spirit worlds.

Garou: The term that werewolves use for themselves. (Also used by mages who want their respect.)

Gilgul: The destruction of a mage's ability to work magick by removing or destroying his Avatar. This is the most horrible crime or punishment possible, as it essentially takes away the mage's soul.

Horizon, The: The magickal barrier separating the Near Umbra from the Deep Umbra.

Horizon Realms: Artificial Realms on the border between the Near Umbra and Deep Umbra. Umbral Chantries are built within them and earthly Chantries connect to them by way of Portals and Gates.

Initiation: A combined test and ceremony that marks a person's transition from apprentice to mage among the Traditions.

Kindred: The term that vampires use for themselves.

Lord: An Umbrood spirit; more powerful than either *Preceptors* or *Minions*.

Magic: Stage tricks, illusions, etc.

Magick: The act of altering reality.

Master: A mage who has attained Level 5 in a Sphere.

Marauder: An utterly unpredictable mage who has turned to chaos. Marauders believe in personal Ascension and a return to the age of legend.

Mentor: An older mage who Awakens the Avatar of a Sleeper. More often, any mage who teaches another mage magick.

Minion: One of the least powerful Umbrood spirits.

Near Umbra: The part of the spirit world that exists around each Realm. Usually used to describe the area of the Umbra that is around the Earth.

Nephandus: A mage corrupted by the forces of the Wyrms. Nephandi work closely with demons.

Node: A highly mystical place. Nodes collect and store Quintessence. The Gauntlet is thinner in their vicinity. Many Chantries, Gates and Portals are built on these sites.

Oracle: One of the legendary mages who have neared Ascension.

Orphans: Sleepers who have Awakened spontaneously, without the assistance or guidance of other mages. They have taught themselves magick and are disdained by the mages of the Traditions. There is only one known organization of Orphans: the Hollow Ones.

Ostracism: A punishment that completely divorces a mage from Tradition society.

Paradox: An anomalous state of reality, caused when the reality of un-Awakened observers conflicts with the reality a mage imposes on the universe. Quite simply, if the innocent bystanders couldn't believe it when they saw it with their own eyes, it generates Paradox.

Paradox Realm: A small Realm created by Paradox spirits to entrap a mage and thus prevent any further disruptions of reality. The Realm traps the mage inside an altered world and prevents her escape.

Paradox Spirit: A spirit formed from the collective beliefs of humanity. Mages who are careless or unlucky with their magick in front of Sleepers will find themselves hunted by these spirits.

Pattern: The mystical composition of an object, entity, place or idea.

Pedagogue: A tutor of great fame, usually surrounded by students and quite powerful.

Pure Ones: The original, primordial beings of the Tellurian. Mages believe that all souls are fragments of these shattered entities.

Pogrom, The: The systematic purge of all opposition by the Technocracy. The Pogrom primarily affects the mages of the Traditions, as there are few Marauders on Earth and the Technocracy believes the Nephandi confined to the Umbra.

Portal: A permanent Gate. Portals are usually guarded by powerful spirits that require a task to be performed or a puzzle solved before they will allow safe passage.

Postulant: A mage who has Mastered a Sphere and serves the Oracles, trying to gain admittance to their ranks.

Preceptor: An Umbrood spirit that is less powerful than a *Lord*, but still more powerful than a *Minion*.

Prime: The original unified force that composed the universe. It is still present in the Tellurian and may be manipulated by mages.

Protocols, The: A code of honor customarily followed by the Traditions. Violation of this code is punishable by *censure*, *branding*, *ostracism*, death, or *Gilgul*.

Quiet: A state of insanity caused by the excessive use of magick.

Quintessence: The stuff of magick; the raw substance of the universe in condensed form. See *Tass*.

Realms: The worlds of "solid" reality that exist within the Tellurian. Sometimes referred to as Domains.

Rogue: A renegade mage-turned-mercenary.

Rote: An effect used in instruction.

Seeking: A mage's Avatar-guided quest for enlightenment.

Sentinel: One of the guardian mages of a large Chantry; not typically a member himself.

Shade Realm: The Umbral "shadow" of a Shard Realm.

Shard Realm: One of nine Realms said to have been part of Gaia in ages past. They roughly correspond to the other planets (including Luna) and the nine Spheres of magick.

Sleeper: A person potentially capable of magick, but who is not yet aware of its existence.

Sphere: A certain element of reality manipulated by mages.

Static Reality: The laws of reality on Earth, as created and enforced by the beliefs of mundane humanity. At this time static reality is very strong because of the Technocracy's enforcement of its precepts.

Symposium: A monthly meeting of the Technocracy. At these meetings members of the Conventions gather to chart the course of reality.

Tass: Quintessence stored in physical form. It tends to collect in Nodes, and takes various forms based on its surround-

ings – i.e., mushrooms at a wooded caern, water from a specific spring, or magickal garbage mold at an urban Node.

Talisman: An object that stores Quintessence and uses it to create a specific magickal effect – i.e. magick carpets, wishing wells, or etheric ray guns.

Technocracy, The: The group of mages that currently controls earthly reality. The Technocracy's magick is based on the rule of science, and it destroys or subverts any opposition. See *Pogrom*.

Technomancer: A mage who supports the Technocracy. Such a mage will probably practice a rigid form of magick.

Tellurian: The whole of reality.

Tradition: One of the allied groups of mages that oppose the Technocracy, resist the radical changes of the Marauders, and fight the evil of the Nephandi. The major traditions are: the Akashic Brotherhood, the Celestial Chorus, the Cult of Ecstasy, the Dreamspeakers, the Euthanatos, the Order of Hermes, the Sons of Ether, the Verbena, and the Virtual Adepts.

Tribunal: A gathering of mages to discuss matters important to the Traditions; usually held in times of strife.

Tutor: Mages who have become known as proficient teachers. They are highly regarded by other mages.

Umbra: The astral plane that exists around each Realm.

Umbrood: Any non-human not born or created on Earth. This includes both the spirits that roam the Umbra and the inhabitants of other realms.

Vulgar Magick: This is the fireball-and-lightning kind of magick – magick visible as such to normal observers. Also known as dynamic magick.



Old Form

Certámen: A magickal, non-lethal duel between mages.

Consors: A non-mage who works closely with a cabal. The *consors* may or may not live in the Chantry.

Curtain, The: The reality in which most Sleepers believe; when a Sleeper is Awakened she is brought "through" the Curtain and sees that things are not truly as they seem.

Custos: A non-mage who works for or with a cabal as a warrior or bodyguard. A modern *custos* may be anything from a rent-a-cop to a fellow gang member.

Grog: A familiar form of *custos*.

Magus: A mage.

Pawn: A unit of raw *vis* or *Quintessence*.

Turb: A group of Grogs, used as one would use a "pride" of lions or a "murder" of crows.

Vis: Quintessence.

Vulgar Argot

Beelzebub: A Nephandus mage.

Black Hats & Mirrorshades: The Technocracy, taken from the traditional uniform of the enforcers of the Technocracy. "Looks like the land of Black Hats and Mirrorshades, folks . . ."

Blood Doll: A vampire groupie/wanna-be.

Bloodwork: Any magick that requires a tremendous amount of effort and involves risk to life and limb. Also: Verbena magick.

Copperfield: Slang for a mage adept at performing vulgar magick in plain sight.

Corpses: Vampires; considered especially derogatory.

Crowley: Term used to describe a flamboyant and pretentious mage.

Crystal Wavers: "New Agers" who have no idea what true magick is, but capitalize on it anyway; charlatans. Occasionally used as an insult to the Dreamspeakers.

Dram: One Tass of Quintessence.

Faust: A mage who bargains excessively with spirits, especially dangerous ones.

Freak: A dangerously insane mage; often applied to Marauders and Nephandi.

Fry: To attack someone with magick, specifically with the sphere of Forces.

Gremlins: Mages adept at using technology to cover their coincidental magick.

Greyface: A Technomancer – a term from the *Principia Discordia*. Describes any anti-dynamic mage or scientist, specifically those who most focus on conformity.

Juice: Quintessence.

Merlin: An old mage, especially one who very rarely visits Earth any more.

Mundane: A normal human; a Sleeper.

Nuke: What Paradox spirits do to those they attack.

Paraphobe: Someone who is desperately afraid of accumulating Paradox. Derogatory.

Pit Bulls: Werewolves; considered derogatory.

Technobabble: A derogatory term for the propaganda and inflexible magick used by the Conventions.

Wyld & Fried: An insane and highly Paradoxed mage. Often applied to Marauders.

INDEX

A

Abacus skill, 47.
Abilities, 181.
Acolytes, 29, 55, 188.
Adepts, 188.
Advantages, 41.
Aggravated wounds, 137.
Akashic Brotherhood, 48, 56, 138.
Ally Group advantage, 41.
Apprentices, 84, 188.
Arcane, 188; *advantage*, 44.
Arcanum, 35.
Area Knowledge skill, 43.
Arete, 184, 188; *advantage*, 44;
 raising, 132.
Ascension, 132, 188, 23.
Attributes, 180.
Autochtonia, 159.
Avatars, 20, 188; *advantage*, 44.
Awareness advantage, 44.

B

Backgrounds, 183.
Bardic Lore skill, 47.
Barriers, 149.
Bestiary, 166-175.
Blights, 148.
Branded disadvantage, 43.
Brawling skill, 43.

C

Cabals, 24, 141, 188.
Caerns, 80, 188.
Celestial Chorus, 28, 48, 58.
Channies, 24, 25, 27, 55, 188.
Character points, 39.
Characters, 38-51.
Chimarae, 92.
Code of Honor disadvantage, 42.
Coincidental magick, 81, 86, 188.
Colleges, 28.
Combat, 131; *spirit*, 147.
Conjunctive magick, 85.
Contacts advantage, 41.
Conventions, 158, 188.
Conversions, 178-187.
Correspondence sphere, 97, 135.

Countermagick, 86, 87.
Cult of Ecstasy, 49, 59.

D

Death, 137.
Deep Umbra, 90, 148, 188.
Demeanor, 179.
Dementia Paradox, 170.
Demons, 171, 188.
Destiny advantage, 45.
Disadvantages, 42.
Disease, 137.
Do, 56, 138.
Doissetep, 26.
Dorobo, 170.
Dream Realms, 147, 188.
Dream advantage, 45.
Dreamspeakers, 49, 61.
Dynamic magick, 81.
Dynamic reality, 189.

E

Enemies disadvantage, 42.
Enhanced Time Sense advantage, 46.
Enigmas skill, 47.
Entropy sphere, 102, 135.
Equipment, 40.
Erotic Art skill, 47.
Essence, 39, 179.
Euthanatos, 49, 63.

F

Farandwee, 169.
Federal Bureau of Investigation, 34.
Foci, 40, 55, 82, 92, 94, 189.
Fomori, 172.
Forces sphere, 105.

G

Gaia, 189.
Garou, 42, 43, 189.
Garou Kinfolk Unusual Background
 advantage, 42.
Garou Language skill, 43.
Gauntlet, 123, 146, 149, 189.
Ghouls, 175.

Gilgul, 31, 189.
Glens, 148.
Gothic-punk, 19.
Governments, 33.
Guardian spirits, 168.

H

Hellholes, 148.
Hermean Language skill, 43.
Hex, 169.
HIT Marks, 160, 172.
Hobgoblins, 137; *disadvantage*, 47.
Hollow Ones, 22, 49, 64, 189.
Horizon Realms, 91, 146, 189.
Horizons, 149, 189.
Humans, 23.

I

Igtukra the Unbridled, 169.
Immunity to Paradox advantage,
 46.
Immunity to the Delirium
 advantage, 46.
Injury, 137.
Inquisition, 34.
Iteration X, 157, 158.

J

Judo skill, 43.

K

Karate skill, 43.
Knowledges, 182.

L

Lady of Feathers, 168.
Languages, 43.
Life sphere, 109.
Lord Killavaro, 167.



M

Mages, *origins*, 20.
 Magical Aptitude advantage, 41.
 Magical Resistance advantage, 41.
 Magick, 21, 74-127 131, 189; *coincidental*, 81, 86, 188; *conjunctural*, 85; *dynamic*, 81; *static*, 81; *vulgar*, 81, 132, 190; *see also* *Counter Magick*.
 Mana, 80, 146.
 Marauders, 23, 30, 149, 150, 189; *Unusual Background*, 42.
 Martial Arts, 138.
 Matter sphere, 112.
 Meditation, skill, 47.
 Men in Black, 161, 173.
 Mentors, 29, 189.
 Middle Ages, 156; *see also* *Mythic Age*.
 Mind sphere, 115, 135.
 Mindscape, 137.
 Mythic Age, 21, 156, 175.

N

National Security Agency, 34.
 Nature, 179.
 Near Umbra, 90, 145, 149, 189.
 Nephandi, 23, 32, 149, 151, 171, 189.
 Net, the, 24.
 New advantages, 44.
 New World Order, 158, 159.
 Nodes, 79, 189; *advantage*, 46.
 Null-B, 27.

O

Oracles, 82, 96, 189.
 Order of Hermes, 28, 49, 66.
 Orphans, 22, 189; *disadvantage*, 43; *see also* *Hollow Ones*.

P

Paradox, 22, 50, 86, 133, 184, 189; *backlash*, 134; *flaws*, 42, 133; *realms*, 135, 147, 189; *spirits*, 135, 162, 169, 189; *spirits as Enemies*, 42.
 Paraphobia disadvantage, 43.
 Patron advantage, 41.
 Patterns, 78, 82, 189.
 Phobia disadvantage, 43.

Physical reality, 78.
 Pogrom, 155, 189.
 Poverty disadvantage, 43.
 Prelude, 138.
 Prime sphere, 119, 189.
 Progenitors, 158, 159.
 Prokaryote, 169.
 Protocols, 27, 189; *as a Code of Honor*, 42.
 Pure Forms, 171.
 Pure Ones, 189.

Q

Quiet, 31, 136, 189.
 Quintessence, 22, 50, 77, 78, 80, 83, 119, 184, 189; *advantage*, 46.

R

Ratings, 179; *converting to skills*, 46.
 Realms, 90, 135, 146-148, 189.
 Reputation advantage, 41; *disadvantage*, 43.
 Resistance, 86.
 Rogues, 26, 189.
 Rotes, 50, 88, 184, 189.
 Rune-fetter, 170.

S

Secret disadvantage, 43.
 Seeking, 132.
 Shade Realms, 147, 189.
 Shard Realms, 147, 189.
 Skills, 43; *and magick*, 131; *converting ratings to*, 182.
 Sleepers, 22, 75, 189.
 Social Stigma disadvantage, 43.
 Sons of Ether, 49, 67, 162.
 Spheres, 50, 55, 96, 97-127, 184, 189.
 Spirit Empathy advantage, 47.
 Spirit sphere, 122.
 Spirit world, 90.
 Spirits, 78, 90, 135, 150, 151; *guardian*, 168; *paradox*, 42, 135, 162, 169, 189.
 Static magick, 81.
 Static reality, 77, 189.
 Status advantage, 41.
 Superiors, 173.
 Survival skill, 43.
 Symposiums, 161, 190.
 Syndicate, 159, 160.

T

Talents, 181.
 Talismans, 48, 90-92, 190; *creation skill*, 48.
 Tapestry, 76.
 Tass, 79, 80, 83, 190.
 Teaching, 28.
 Technocracy, 23-24, 30, 39, 42, 154-163, 190; *as an Enemy*, 39, 42; *Technomancer advantage*, 47.
 Technomancers, *see* *Technocracy*.
 Tellurian, 90, 145, 190.
 Terra Firma, 170.
 Thaumaturgy, 76.
 Time sphere, 125, 135.
 Traditions, 20, 21, 48, 54-71, 180, 190.
 Tribunals, 27, 30, 31, 190.
 Trod, 148.

U

Umbra, 43, 90, 122, 144-151, 190; *Survival skill*, 43; *see also* *Deep Umbra*, *Near Umbra*.
 Umbrood, 150, 167, 190.
 Unusual Background advantage, 42.
 Urban Survival skill, 43.

V

Vampires, 174.
 Verbena, 49, 69.
 Vincula, 168.
 Virtual Adepts, 49, 70, 162.
 Void Engineers, 159.
 Vulgar magick, *see* *Magick*, *vulgar*.

W

Wealth, advantage, 42.
 Web, 148.
 Werewolves, 79, 173, 189; *see also* *Garou*.
 Willpower, 184.
 Wounds, *aggravated*, 137.
 Wrinkle, 170.
 Wylding, 148.

Z

Zigg'raugglurr, 171.