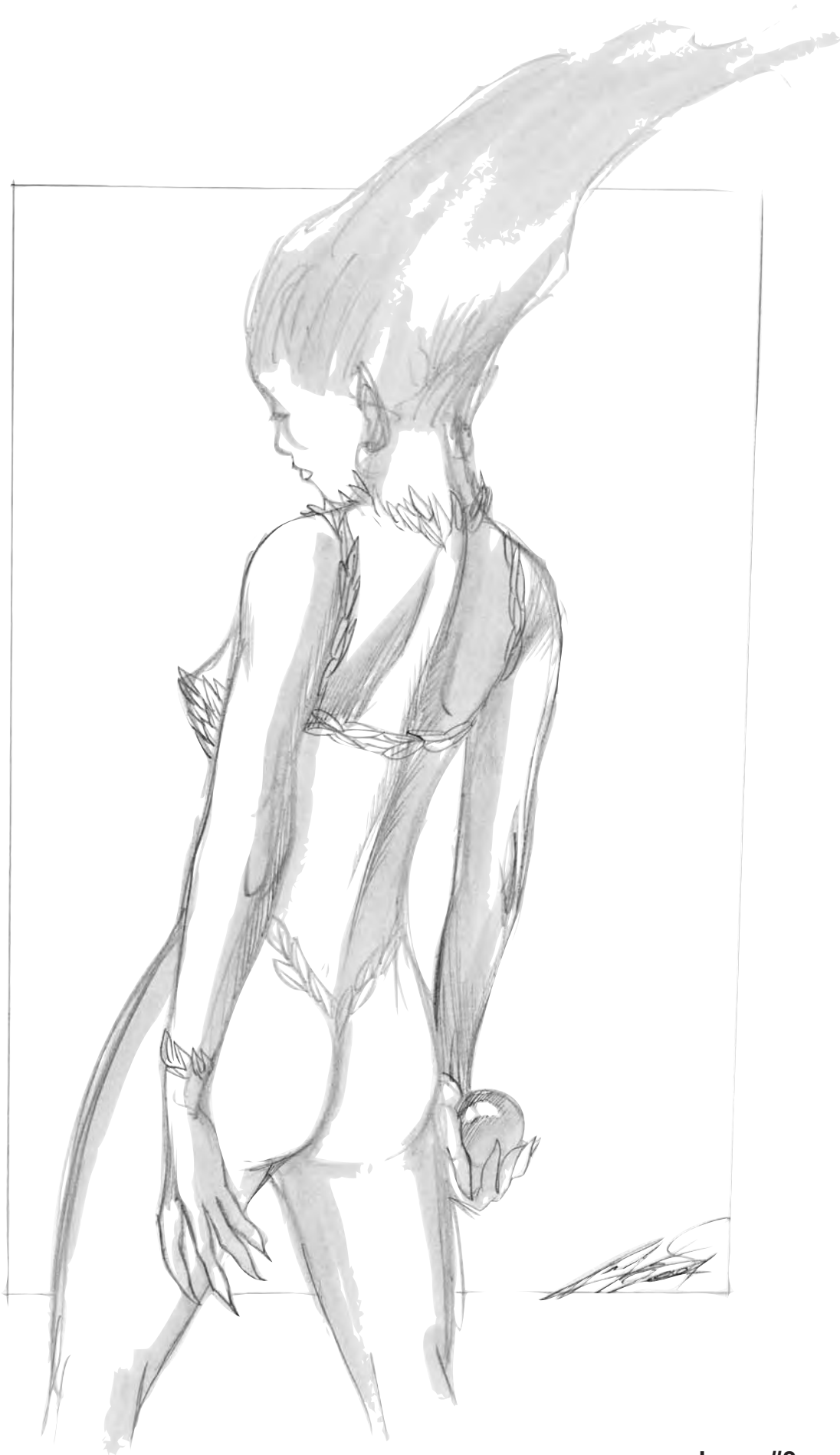


HEROINES' PORTAL



HERMES' PORTAL

Issue n° 2

November 2001



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HERMES' PORTAL

Publisher: Hermes' Portal

Layout: Eric Kouris

Contributors: Abelard, Niall Christie, Erik Dahl, Timothy Ferguson, Michaël de Verteuil, Sheila Thomas

Editorial and proofreading help: Sheila Thomas, Neil Taylor

Cover and back: Radja Sauperamaniane

Interior illustrations: Radja Sauperamaniane, Angela Taylor

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Contacting HP

Email

Hermes.Portal@wanadoo.fr

Web site

www.hermesportal.fr.st

Who's Who?

Niall Christie

Niall Christie is a mediaeval Islamic historian, currently teaching and researching at Cornell University in upstate New York. His wife, Steph, is a Visiting Professor in the Department of Mathematics at Cornell, and so they don't argue about their work very much.

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

Erik Dahl

His name means "King of the Valley." He is a Cancer, which means that today is a 7. He works as an information architect, which involves applying strategy to web design and drawing up site maps. He has been playing *Ars Magica* for about seven years, and has been a part of a troupe for almost a third of that time. He and his wife live in Davis, California with a lot of books, theater props, musical instruments and cooking utensils. He also heads his local chapter of the American Association Against Acronym Abuse, Abbreviations and Ambiguity (AAAAAAA). You can listen to the wacky music of his band Volvo Maroon for free at <http://www.volvomaroon.com/>.

Timothy Ferguson

Timothy Ferguson is 28 and lives in Townsville, the capital of tropical North Queensland. Since *HP* #1 he's been working as a roving librarian. He's also editing a book and writing about far chillier places for Atlas's next *Ars Magica* release "Sanctuary of Ice".

Michaël de Verteuil

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

Radja Sauperamaniane

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

Angela Taylor

Angela studied English Literature at Clare College, Cambridge, and Mediaeval History at York, taught for some years, then married Neil. She draws and paints, while making rude comments about Neil's gaming (fair enough, really!); she is a non-gamer... almost a "gaming widow" even!

Sheila Thomas

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

Publisher's corner

Hello!

Issue #2 and already late! Well, it is only a week late... Radja inked the cover of *Ars Mag*'s upcoming issue instead of *Hermes' Portal*'s cover, and then forgot an illustration... I hope you weren't too worried by this delay.

On the other hand, I initially announced four issues would be released each year, and we are now running on a five/six issues per year rythm. So, I still feel issue #2 of *Hermes' Portal* is ahead of schedule. To keep going, issue #3 should be released around the end of January.

In this issue, you'll find the second and last parts of the "For Ever and Ever?" arc, so you can play it without further waiting. I'm also looking for other scenarios or mini-sagas to be published in *Hermes' Portal*. To encourage you to submit your ideas, I'm launching a contest with a big prize: a complete set of the late Redcap fanzine. You'll find the details on page 35.

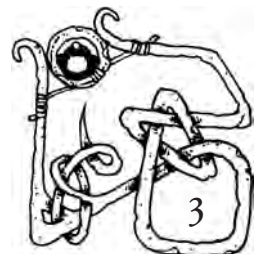
Sheila Thomas, who edited this issue and the previous one, wrote an article on Fossils in *Ars Magica*. I hope you'll appreciate her ideas and the fine art Angela Taylor has done to illustrate them.

With this issue, a new series begins. Following Adam Bank and Jeremiah Genest's *Mysteries*, we're publishing articles on new mysteries and secret societies for Bjornaer, Merinita and pious magi. In this issue, Erik Dahl opens the series with the Bjornaer mysteries.

Of course, you'll also find your regular columns: "Dear Abelard" and "Heretic's Corner". Don't hesitate to send your questions to the authors — they'll be glad to answer!

Last, you'll also find three small (two pages or less) articles. I'm always looking for this kind of text: so, if you don't feel like writing a full-fledged scenario for the contest, you can still send your ideas to the zine. I'll be glad to publish them.

Eric



Continuing Forever

by Timothy Ferguson

The characters become aware of a regione which opens once a century, providing access to a covenant fallen into ruin. Journeying there, they encounter other groups interested in the regione's contents. Negotiating alliances with one or more of these groups, the characters loot the regione.

Part of the treasure of the regione is a vis source called the Heart of Forever. The corpus vis which spills from it is cursed. As part of the *Fa Ever and Ever?* arc the NPC romantic interest, Veronica, is exposed to this vis, which draws the menace to her in *Ever After?*, the next arc segment.

Background

The Covenant of the Unending Ribbon was destroyed by a wave of magical energy unleashed by Martin of Bonisagus's final experiment. Its members driven into Twilight, the very stones of the covenant were saturated with magical energy and ripped from the mundane world. Each century the aura on the site fluctuates upward, allowing brief access to the covenant, now in a regione.

The twist for this adventure is that the "dungeon" doesn't resist the characters in any organized sense. It's easy to pillage because there are no guards. The plot's tension arises from other groups present in the regione, whose goals conflict, and may differ from those of the player characters.

The Discordant

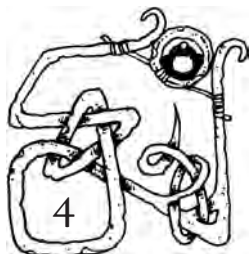
The Regione of the Unending Ribbon is the greatest repository of the works of Martin of Bonisagus, so his victims are drawn here. Their statistics are given in *Prelude to Forever* (HP1, p.14). They appear in sufficient numbers to threaten the player characters, and aim to destroy as much of Martin's legacy as they can.

The leader of the Discordant is Antony of Jerbiton. Once called Ulrich, he was the filius of Martin of Bonisagus. He has infiltrated the Order so that he can seek out his master's more obscure works. Antony retains many of his Hermetic abilities, much as a ghost would. He is made more dangerous than a normal spectre because his Per-

A reminder on mood

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

During this phase of the story, the characters visit a covenant fallen past Winter, release the menace and explore a regione, where distance is distorted.



manent Might pool is not reduced by casting materially-effective spells.

Characters who die while tainted with the vis of the Discordant rise as one of their number, acquiring powers and limitations similar to Antony's. At the storyguide's discretion they also immediately become NPCs.

The Criamon

These Criamon magi are seeking the writings and effects of their housemates. Once in the regione they discover that they can't remove mundane objects, but they have spells which allow them to discern portable treasures. Although these spells could transform other groups into the Mythic European equivalent of a commando team on a lightning raid, this is prevented by their house philosophy. They can't take mundane objects with them, but they can carefully inspect the covenant and carry memories away, which they'll later transcribe for the benefit of their House.

The Criamon magi aren't detailed here, but should be of sufficient number and seniority that the characters aren't tempted just to kill them and leave the bodies stacked in the regione of the Unending Ribbon.

The Mercere

The Mercere group is small and has a clear, material objective. A recap was visiting Unending Ribbon when the covenant was consumed by magic. His successors have come here to claim his bag

The Hook

Why are the PCs going to the regione? How do they find out about the Gathering? Here are some options:

- They become aware of the regione in a manner unrelated to the arc. For example, a character from the covenant may have stumbled into the regione a hundred years ago and left diary entries. This method should be foreshadowed in a previous game session, so that the characters can research the site and become aware of its Hermetic past.
- If one of the characters has tainted themselves with the vis of the Discordant, their leader, Antony of Jerbiton, can sense them and contacts the character to negotiate their assistance.
- If Veronica lives at the covenant, she may have a symbolic dream which draws her to the site.
- House Criamon may make the characters aware of the regione. Although they are aware of the Discordant, they are unaware of their link to the Covenant.
- The redcaps know where the covenant was, and their research has indicated the time and place of entry into the regione. They may trade this information for assistance within the covenant.

Antony of Jerbiton, once Ulrich of Bonisagus

Antony is a monomaniac, like all of the Discordant, but his obsession differs slightly from that of the others. Since he assisted in the experiments that created most of the other Discordant, he can't rest until all of the others do. As the most powerful Discordant, with the strongest grudge against his former master, Antony has risen to the position of nominal leader of Martin's victims.

Antony looks like a young man of Scandinavian extraction, with metallic green eyes and blond hair. Taller than average, he's surprisingly well muscled for someone who's both a magus and a cadaver. He plays the flute or fiddle in spare moments, depending on his mood. This is a distant echo of his faerie heritage. Ulrich was drawn into House Bonisagus toward the end of a Merinitan apprenticeship.

Magic Might 50

Size: 1

Characteristics: Int +3, Per +2, Pre +1, Com +1, Str 0, Sta. Tireless, Dex +4, Qik 0

Personality Traits: Contrite (for his role as Martin's assistant) +5, Hatred (Martin of Bonisagus) +5

Weapon/Attack: By weapon

Soak: +8

Fatigue: Tireless

Fatigue Levels: Tireless

Body Levels: No penalty for injury short of incapacitation

Powers

- *Heal* (5 points): This power allows Antony to repair damage to himself, even regrowing lost body parts. Each expenditure of points cures one Body level.
- *Ignore Fatigue* (0 points): Antony requires neither sustenance nor rest.
- *Magical Projection* (CrVi25, 5 points): This power allows the Discordant to project people or objects into the Twilight Realm. Antony can use this power at Touch range. The Discordant themselves are immune to this effect, as are personal items they are currently using: clothing, for example.
- *Feigned Parma Magica* (ReVi45, 5 points): Antony can perform the Parma Magica ritual, activating this power that simulates the magic shield of a Hermetic magus. He cannot share his protection, as Hermetic magi can.
- *Return to Earth* (0 points): If Antony loses his body, he continues to dwell as a ghost within the world. The next time that a nearby magus suffers Twilight, he will possess a nearby corpse, which rapidly transforms into a duplicate of his original body.
- *Sense the Spectral Hearts Which Beat* (InMe45, 9 points) Allows Antony to know, within a few hundred feet, the location of each Discordant.

- *Speak From Heart to Heart* (InCrMe40, 8 points): Allows Antony to speak telepathically with a single Discordant, at any range.
- *Simulated Spellcasting* (1 per magnitude of spell): Antony was a competent Hermetic magus, but is now limited in the number of effects he can produce in quick succession by his Magic Might pool. He is able to simulate many Mentem spells of up to sixth magnitude, and other spells up to fifth magnitude. He cannot suffer Twilight. When simulating spellcasting, Antony plays the ghost of his flute, since this was a Necessary Condition while he was alive. He does not expend fatigue when simulating spellcasting.
- *Regenerative Might* (0 points): Hermetic ghosts spend permanent Might points to cast spells which affect physical objects. Antony's unique link to the magical realm allows him to regenerate one lost point of permanent Might per day. Separate totals should be kept for his permanent and temporary Might scores.
- *Suppress Magic Resistance* (1 point): This power allows the Discordant to hide their magical nature. It permits them to appear human to magical Sight and to step through wards against magical creatures. While their magic resistance is suppressed it provides them no protection.

Abilities: He has two centuries worth of experience points, but they've been spent seeking his masters' creations. His monomania makes it difficult for him to study abilities for long periods.

Vis: 15 pawns Corpus

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

Why don't I want this?

Players are often tempted to experiment with undead characters, but monomania isn't much fun to role-play. Once a character becomes Discordant, it becomes an itinerant guerrilla, roaming the countryside making suicidal attacks on Hermetic covenants. By its nature it can't choose to do anything else but find ways of destroying the works of Martin of Bonisagus. This inhibits development of magical skills, so that the bicentennially ancient Antony still can't cast any spell above 30th level.

Players should note also that Antony's obsession differs from that of the rest of the Discordant. He can't rest until all of the others do, so he's more flexible within the constraints of his obsession than his comrades. Player characters won't have his ability to rationalize that substantial delays in the short term, like magical study, will save time later. Antony, who doesn't want someone else joining the queue ahead of him, will make the limitations of the undead state clear.





of messages. Although they'll gleefully steal useful objects they discover, safely retrieving the antique missives is a matter of House pride, not to be diverted by shabby kleptomaniacs.

Avoiding bottlenecks

The Discordant avoid direct conflict with magi while outside the regione, hiding themselves until the magi enter the grounds. Since their goal is to destroy, or remove for later destruction, all of Martin of Bonisagus's effects, they aren't averse to having Hermetic magi walk away with some of the items. At least they needn't wait a century for another crack at the loot. It isn't likely that the Hermetic magi will fight each other, so even if they do meet, they may just march off in opposite directions, looting as they go.

Layout

The Covenant of the Unending Ribbon was constructed as a Clue, a physical representation of an aspect of the Enigma. A metaphor for the lifelong journey toward the Enigma is incorporated architecturally. A paved road winds and twists about buildings and through tunnels to create a three-dimensional braiding. If characters steal the idea and construct a meditational labyrinth, walking it for a season can serve as practice for skills like Concentration. Enchanted labyrinths can teach other skills or Arts. The Unending Ribbon was designed to teach Enigmatic Wisdom, but the characters are unlikely to be in the regione long enough to utilize this property.

Each of the six magi had an area within the knotwork that served as their sanctum, except Martin and Petula, who shared a tower. Most contain tall, non-military buildings, although some magi lived in parks, meeting their needs with spontaneous spells. An area within the knotwork contained lodging for the grogs, servants, companions and visitors, including storerooms and food preparation areas. A last area was reserved as a library, meeting place for the magi and storehouse for supplies needed in the profession of magic.

The Ribbon

The Ribbon has been heavily enchanted; deliberately, as an Aegis; co-incidentally, when it was made into a Clue; accidentally, when the wave of magical energy flooded the covenant. The Aegis of the Hearth that was in effect during the cataclysm that destroyed the covenant still stands. It was constructed with a procession about the Ribbon, and, instead of the usual circle, is a tangled, overlapping loop.

Spells cast toward the protected areas splatter off, much like those hitting a normal Aegis of ninth magnitude, except that the effect always dissipates clockwise along the Ribbon. Those standing on the Ribbon will find all of their spells tearing off clockwise, doing a complete circuit, then striking them – provided they are an acceptable target. Spells otherwise continue circling until their

durations expire. The magi who annually constructed this odd effect were able to ignore it if they wished, or use the Aegis as a conduit.

A side effect of the Ribbon becoming a physical representation of the quest for enlightenment is that walking it backward would make the user increasingly foolish. To prevent this the Ribbon has been enchanted with a powerful Rego effect (Level 50) that prevents pedestrians, or anything else, journeying widdershins. Each time magi resist this effect, or find sneaky ways around it, like flying, they lose experience points in abilities related to the Ribbon's pedagogic functions. Characters may not notice their skills are declining until they attempt to use them, so storyguides might be merciful by rapidly giving the characters ability checks, or by allowing lost points to slowly return. The experience drain is equivalent to a Perdo Mentem effect of 75th level.

Conflict within the Ribbon

It's likely that four separate groups will enter the Covenant, and they may come to blows. If this occurs, a special consideration is that the space along the Ribbon is warped. The closer something is to your widdershins side, the further away it lies, in practical terms. This makes ambush particularly deadly on the Ribbon, since retreat is impossible. Similarly, it makes enemies directly behind you incredibly dangerous, since a spell cast backward along the ribbon is caught the moment it leaves the magus's finger and flung back into their face. Skirmishing within the covenant is difficult for the unwary, since where you are standing is so very important. A related inconvenience is that magi walking the Ribbon are standing on an Aegis and feel the usual tingle for every instant they remain. Prolonged exposure can lead to giddiness, otherworldliness, schizophrenia and ecstatic visions. Apply Enigmatic Wisdom checks as you see fit. Even if the characters don't engage in violence, they may need to avoid skirmishes between the Discordant and other Hermetic groups.

Destroying the Ribbon

Destroying the Ribbon isn't easy, but after a few hours the Discordant will discover a way. The magical nature of the Ribbon is interlinked to its role as a teaching tool. If they collapse one of the tunnels that add the third dimension to the structure, then it cannot be used as a meditational labyrinth and will fade when the Aegis expires, in a year's time. Fractured Clues are tremendously dangerous and have a tendency to pitch people into the Twilight Realm, or, in this case, trap them up against the obstruction created by the fallen tunnel until the Aegis expires, by which time the return journey to the Mundane realm will be impossible. If the Criamon suspect this is about to occur they'll make a getaway. The Discordant will evacuate most of their number from the regione before attempting this experiment.



The Buildings

As required by the conventions of gothic romance, the covenant's buildings resonate with decay and loss. Although detail can't be given for each segment of the covenant in this article, you are encouraged to tailor your descriptions so that they contain imagery that evokes opportunities lost, ambitions incomplete and structures worn away by time. These themes appear most striking in the sancta, since the magi were swept without warning into the Twilight Realm. Unfinished chores await hands that will never return.

Some of the buildings have static defences, such as waiting spells or mechanical barriers, but no living guards remain within the covenant. There are many items acquisitive magi might covet, but many of them are unrecoverable, fading away if removed from the region. An Enigmatic Wisdom score of 12+ is required to understand that the objects in the region have lost much of their mundane substance and would fade away if removed. The exceptions are objects that were magical before the cataclysm. Their magical nature often protected their mundane elements from the wave of contaminating magical energy that has made everything else ephemeral.

You should tailor the number and contents of the towers to suit your players. Remember they won't be able to visit them all, since there are competing groups also working their way through the covenant's riches. Since this is a Criamon covenant, the effects emphasized should relate to the arts of Intellego, Mentem, Imaginem and Vim.

Certain items can be found throughout the structure. These include:

Cadavers

The bodies of the covenfolk may prove useful since their ghosts can be recalled from the Void. The wave of magic has distorted them so that, once called, they are able to repossess their fallen bodies and act as though alive while within the region. The bodies of the Criamon magi faded into Twilight during the cataclysm, so they are unrecoverable.

Resurrected covenfolk may not realize their inability to leave, but if warned they forbid looting. If they have to spend eternity here, they want the covenant as full of interesting toys as possible. The degree to which they co-operate with the magi depends on their beliefs during life and the justification the magi give for their acquisitions. Even once embodied, aggressive ghosts can be dismissed with spells such as *Lay to Rest the Haunting Spirit*.

The disci

These platters of stone can be vocally commanded to perform simple tasks, such as fetching objects from elsewhere in the covenant grounds. Although they haven't much offensive capacity and follow the widdershins rule, they are very use-

ful as time-savers. They move at human sprinting pace and were used to perform the minor menial tasks for which a circuit of the Ribbon would be excessive effort. Each is stamped with the covenant sigil, a Celtic knot.

Those Discordant who lived at this covenant know about the disci, and might give simple instructions, such as "drop this over there", to harass magi. Although each discus is only as powerful as an Unseen Arm, an overseer can co-ordinate them sufficiently for work in groups. Clusters of disci can lift humans from the ground, pin them spread-eagled to a wall or snap objects that could be pulled apart between two average humans.

Brassworks

This covenant wasn't as focused on material possessions as other covenants, due to the philosophical bent of its Criamon founders. It lacks many of the little bits and pieces magi collect to remind them of their adventures. To commemorate particularly inspiring events, one of the magi created brassworks which adorn the corridors of the common areas.

Although irremovable, fading away if they leave the region, the brassworks can be reproduced by making rubbings. A complete collection of these rubbings can be studied like a book, (Summa: Enigmatic Wisdom 1, Unending Ribbon Lore 2, Quality 12). They also give hints as to the personalities of the magi who lived at the covenant. One represents the wedding of Martin and Petula, with the symbol of the Infinite, the double-vim twisted loop that Criamon use to represent Twilight experience, superimposed over the couple.

Mantra

The Ribbon's progress is marked by a series of posts, each of which is inscribed with an ideogram. Although not directly translatable into Latin, the ideograms form a mantra, which, if recited while walking a meditational labyrinth, allow the speaker to develop Enigmatic Wisdom.

The Tower of Martin of Bonisagus and Petula of Criamon

It is useful for the magi to have access to this tower before one of their rival groups loot it. It contains vital hooks for the rest of the *For Ever and Ever?* arc, which are disguised by the presence of several other interesting items.

The Heart of Forever

The Heart of Forever was created during the Final Twilight of Petula of Criamon. Her heart was transformed into a physical representation of her path toward the Enigma. Her spirit can be recalled from the distant Twilight realm, using her heart as an arcane connection, but this magic is beyond Hermetic scope. Martin's experiments bought him close to Petula's resuscitation, but he could never find a suitable body for her to inhab-





it. He required flesh arcanelly linked to his lover's, but his many attempts to create or procure it failed.

He's about to find it now.

The Lucid Dreaming process that Veronica has undergone links her intimately to the Heart. If the vis it produces is used to cure her wounds or fortify her longevity potion, then she becomes a suitable candidate for possession.

And that's going to happen, because you, the Storyguide, will make sure it does. This shouldn't be too difficult. Corpus vis and combat in the same scenario... Gothic Romances are a type of Curse, so Veronica's flaw has become active.

It's not vital that the characters keep the Heart, although they'll certainly want to. If it is given to one of the other Hermetic groups, Martin steals it. If one of the Discordant tries to project the Heart into the Void, they instead are released from the chains of Earth. If the Discordant obtain this short-cut to eternal rest, they gather outside the regione and, one by one, destroy themselves. Messages are left in secret places for those who are disembodied, so that they can find the Heart once they re-animate.

The Spirit Cage of Martin of Bonisagus

A shadowy fragment of Martin of Bonisagus is trapped in the glass of a full-length mirror found in his laboratory. It flits about the scenery and can hide under or behind the reflections of objects. Originally a piece of laboratory equipment, the Mirror was used to capture ghosts during the process that created the Discordant. A magus whose interests lie in the Arts of Rego or Mentem can add it to their laboratory as part of the improvement process outlined in the Wizard's Grimoire.

Once the Mirror is removed from the covenant grounds, a *Waiting Spell* will discharge Martin's shade into the Mundane Realm. He'll return in *Ever After?*.

The Casket of Discord

A sarcophagus, carved of ivory, which prevents the decay of any once-living material placed within it. As a nasty surprise, there may be one of the Discordant within, from Martin's last dabble. To those unfamiliar with the Discordant, the figure carved into the lid appears to be Jesus displaying the Sacred Heart. Those using *Greeting the Maker* may be surprised to discover that the Casket of Discord was originally designed to prevent food spoilage. The carving is a modification of Martin's.

The Crumble of Hubris

A cauldron that has burst, spilling its contents, vermilion and crystalline, across the floor. This item was ruptured during Martin's botched experiment. The crystals are shattered bits of a body that Martin was growing in the cauldron. Although they don't contain vis, they can be used by a magus



A reminder on mood

Gothic romances have three key elements: crumbling structures, a supernatural menace who becomes romantically obsessed with a principal character, and inimical natural forces which conspire against the protagonists. Keep these elements in mind when framing your descriptions during this story. Martin of Bonisagus arises from the dead in this arc segment. He kidnaps Veronica and spirits her to a faerie forest aligned to Winter and Night.

In gothic romances, the protagonists don't necessarily survive the denouement. Even in stories that, like "Dracula", end with the death of the menace, sympathetic characters perish. The player characters fulfill similar roles to Lucy Westenra's suitors, one of whom dies in the final paragraph.

experimenting in a similar field to produce a little guaranteed insight.

The Pastoral Necessarium

A large chamber pot, marked with a serene-looking cow. This item wasn't originally designed for laboratory use, but Martin, like many Corpus specialists, found that his laboratory quickly became cluttered with dripping, smelly things if he became engrossed in his work. The chamber pot destroys material placed within it, allowing him to keep his workspace tidy.

The Habit of Martin of Bonisagus

A cloak of dark wool, with the Unending Ribbon mark at the collar in red yarn. This item is enchanted to make the wearer silent and shadow-like. They can walk through solid objects, cause others to fall into a deep sleep, and carry others away by making them insubstantial and hazy.

The Cardinal Extraction Tool

Martin's talisman is a wand of hazel marked with the symbols for Rego, Perdo and Corpus. Tapped on the centre of a victim's chest, it bloodlessly peels back their skin, levers open their ribs and extricates their heart. It also paralyses their throat and limbs, so that the victim won't run away or cry out. That it is activated by touch indicates that Martin never considered the combat potential of a similar device with an extended range.

Martin's laboratory texts

Martin was drawn into House Bonisagus as part of the continuing project attempting to regularize Faerie Magic within the Hermetic system. His notes are in a mundane book, so it can't be taken from the regione unless ensorcelled, and cannot be used without the Faerie Magic virtue. Any Discordant made using Martin's notes begins tracking their creator, destroying their achievements.

Petula's laboratory

Her obsessed lover has gradually transformed Petula's laboratory into a shrine. Most striking is a

life-sized representation in translucent quartz, detailed down to her Criamon tattoos, of a woman who appears to be in her middle thirties. It stands in the centre of the laboratory, surrounded by other items of sentimental value to the couple. As a magic item, a determined party with heavy-lifting equipment or its magical equivalent can remove it from the region. It's a failed attempt at providing Petula's spirit with a vessel. Ghosts summoned into the statue can animate it, but trapped halfway to Twilight, Petula can't be summoned by conventional methods.

Petula's laboratory items were destroyed by her Twilight experience, except the discs, which are distributed throughout the covenant.

Conclusion

For the health of the rest of the arc, the storyguide should ensure that

- one of the groups removes the Heart of Forever from the Aegis.
- the covenant has enough of the vis produced by the Heart of Forever that tainting Veronica with it doesn't seem too contrived
- the Spirit Cage, which looks like a full-length mirror, is removed from the Aegis.
- characters not yet aware of the depth of the bond between the Martin and Petula become cognizant of it.

Diversions along the way to Forever

Although not vital to the core arc, the following adventure seeds can flesh out a short session, or fill sessions between this section of the arc and the next.

Escort duty

Now that the redcaps have copies of century-old messages, they need to deliver copies to all Hermetic heirs of the intended recipients. Some of these people live in distant and dangerous places, and the redcaps may request the assistance of the player characters.

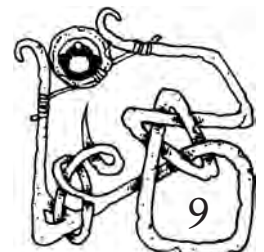
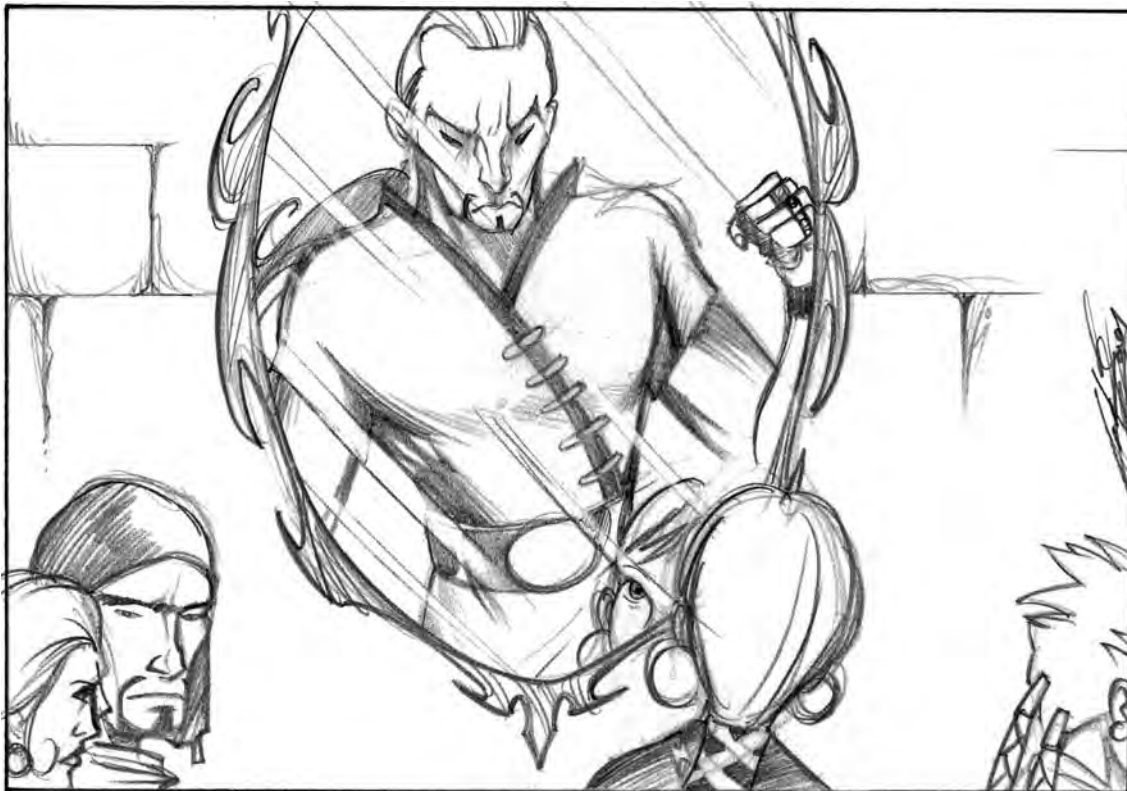
Retrieval duty

If the Heart of Forever's power to grant rest to the Discordant has been discovered, Antony of Jerbiton may ask the players to assist him by digging up his dormant fellow-victims. He'd like to pile them all together in a place where there are bodies without Christian burial, near a covenant with magi likely to soon go into Twilight.

Antony's bargaining position is strong. He has access to vis, but, more importantly, he has access to powerful versions of the Enigma's Gift and is willing to assist the magi in Wizard's War, provided that the characters don't kill their victim, just immobilize them until their Parma wears off, so that Antony and his remaining followers can project them into Twilight.

Filial Duty

During the first section of this arc, the players helped you construct a covenant. They played out sections of the apprenticeship of one of the PCs, describing the covenant in which the arc's romantic leads were trained. Now's a good time for the characters to visit. A funeral's a simple reason to draw characters together. Veronica and her husband may sort out an argument between their parents. This allows you to deepen the characterization of the PC's teacher, and attempt situation humour.





Ever After?

by Timothy Ferguson

Ever After? concludes the *For Ever and Ever?* arc. Although it can be played without the earlier arc sections, it will need to be modified. As required by the conventions of gothic romance, a supernatural menace threatens the future of the couple, then kidnaps Veronica. The characters brave a place of ill-omen to rescue her, their safety by no means assured.

Stalking

Martin is disorientated by his resurrection, but is still drawn to Petula of Criamon. The Heart of Forever is constituted of her mortal remains and wedding ring, so he is drawn to the covenant that possesses it. This may belong to one of the other groups who entered the regione with the player characters, in which case the PCs hear about its theft via the redcap network. If it is the characters' covenant, the theft is easily accomplished. Just as Martin is drawn to the Heart, the Heart is drawn to Martin. When he approaches, it ceases to hover and flies toward him, projecting obstructions into the Twilight Void.

Covenfolk may see a dark, cloaked figure skulking in the lands surrounding the covenant, and they may discover his strangled victims, but Martin is careful to avoid Hermetic magi. Although drawn to Veronica, if the covenant has a solid Aegis he won't be able to contact her, save when she leaves on journeys. In Martin's presence, Veronica begins to act like Petula, a subconscious use of Martin's Control Person power. Veronica is aware of her odd behaviour, but residual effects of Martin's control prevent her taking effective action to prevent its further use.

Characters observing Veronica note slow changes in her personality, utilization of previously unknown skills, and subtle changes in posture and movement. These alterations are least severe in the presence of her beau, since the True Love virtue suppresses the residual effects of Martin's control. The degree to which Veronica is able to remember her conversations with Martin, define the threat he presents and request assistance should be tailored by the storyguide to suit the skill of their players.

Martin stalks Veronica for a prolonged period, possibly years. He can appear in other adventures as a mysterious ally, assisting the characters to minimize the danger to "Petula". During this time he regains mental cohesion, familiarizes himself with his strzyga form, and prepares a laboratory in a faerie wood. Once he's ready to draw Petula into Veronica's body, he snatches her, using his Control power to simplify the abduction, whisking her away to the Forest of Perpetual Winter.

Unexpected allies

The Discordant

If his victims still roam the Earth, they can track Martin, although their technique lacks precision. As they are drawn toward his creations, they are drawn toward spells he has cast, although they lose his scent when the spells' durations expire. Killing Martin doesn't free them from their geas, but it does prevent him creating new objects.

The Daughter of Winter

The Daughter of Winter is the child of the previous Lord of the Forest of Perpetual Winter. Without her father's crown, she lacks the authority to command the inhabitants of the wood, but aids characters who come to challenge Martin. The Daughter's key role is to serve as a guide, should the characters lack Discordant assistance, so that they needn't wander the frozen wood randomly.

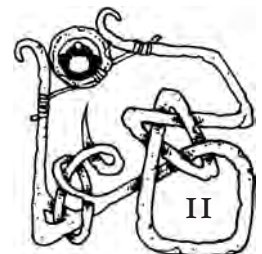
Note that if a human gives the Daughter of Winter the Crown of Briar and Ice, the symbol for sovereignty over the forest, her role is enhanced and her statistics rise to those given in brackets after each category. The two sets of statistics are appropriate for a variant of the nymph and faerie lady and are drawn from *Faeries 2nd ed.*, pp. 104-5 and *The Dragon and the Bear* pp. 84-5. Once Lady of the Forest of Perpetual Winter, this faerie cannot be deposed without dying. Martin's strzyga nature would allow him to become Lord of the Forest, but he doesn't want to be transformed by the assumption of the role.

The Daughter is slight and pale, but has the springy strength of the Nymphae. Her hair and eyes are sky-grey, her costume a monochromatic wolf's pelt. If she assumes the role of Lady, she draws colour from her sovereignty and surroundings: hair as black as a raven's feather, lips as red as a rose petal, skin as white as snow. Her accoutrements, constructed glamorously, are of these shades. These include a coal-black cloak on which stars and snowflakes swim.

The Forest of Perpetual Winter

The forest of Perpetual Winter is inimical to all mortal life. It has lost its Lord, and suffers in his absence. Its mood is reflected in the weather, the deadly motion of its foliage and plagues of verminous animals. All light is murky within the wood, the closer the characters approach to the centre, the dimmer it becomes. At the centre of the Forest it is always night, and no source sheds more light than the full moon.

The path described below isn't the quickest from the edge where the characters arrive to Martin's position. Travel to Vineyard of Ice Grapes or the Glen of Statues detours from the swiftest path, but since each locale contains items useful to her, the Daughter of Winter will divert the party to them.





Martin of Bonisagus

Martin of Bonisagus, trapped for centuries within the Regione of the Unending Ribbon, escapes his reflective prison after it is looted from his laboratory. Martin rises from the dead as an enhanced version of the strzyga, described on page 92 of *The Dragon and the Bear*. Strzyga are people born with two souls. When they first die, their human spirit departs and their evil nature takes control of their body. Strzyga gain sustenance, and additional Might, from the final breaths of strangled victims. Martin's Faerie Might is double that of other strzyga, an effect of his Hermetic training.

Martin is dark, sinister and handsome, with perfect manners. He is Polish, but tempted as you may be, don't give him Bela Lugosi's accent. Linked to the courts of Dark Winter, he has the icy grace of his kinfolk. His taste in dress tends toward black, with touches of gold and fur. He wears a wedding ring inscribed with a Celtic swirl. His physical abilities have been enhanced by his resurrection.

It's important to remember that although this creature thinks of itself as Martin of Bonisagus, and inhabits the body which once cradled his human soul, this is but a fragment of Martin. Coupled with his multi-centennial imprisonment, this explains why Antony, his apprentice and creation, is of greater Might and ability.

Faerie Might 30

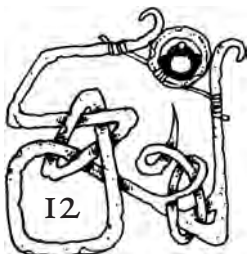
Characteristics: Int +3, Per +1, Pre +2, Com +1, Str +2, Sta. +2, Dex +1, Qik +1

The forest has an aura of 6, except on the Lake of the Moon and in the Glen of Statues, each of which are regiones with an aura of 8.

Sentries of the Forest

The outermost ring of foliage once served to delay intruders, while alerting the Lord of the Forest to incursion. Maddened by his death, these sentries now kill any mortal creature that intrudes. Flocks of flesh-eating ravens work together with animate, thorny underbrush to harass and murder the player characters.

Individually, each sentry is a minor inconvenience. Their lethality derives from their numbers. The ravens drive victims toward the thorn bushes, which in turn immobilize the victims of the carnivorous avians. Even if held at bay by magic, the ravens surround the characters with a flickering black cloud, which makes navigation difficult. Although all of the trees in the wood are murderous, only the thorn bushes and grapevines move swiftly enough to engage in combat. The other trees are only dangerous if they have over-laden branches to drop, or if the characters sleep under them.



Size: 1

Personality Traits: Obsession (Petula fillia Laura, follower of Criamon) +5, Malicious +3

Weapon/Attack: Init. +5, Atk +6, Dfn +3, Dam. +8

Soak: +5

Fatigue: +4

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

Body Levels: OK, 0/0, -1, -3, -5, Unconscious*

Although strzyga have two hearts, one of Martin's stopped when his human spirit entered Final Twilight.

Powers

- Control Person 8 (doubles with respect to Veronica), Curse 5, Fear 8, Glamour 6, Possession 10
- Sense Petula of Criamon (0 points) Martin can sense the location of the Heart of Forever, and Veronica of Jerbiton.
- Spellcasting: (1 per magnitude of spell) Although Martin is undead, he still has a soul, so he can cast a version of Hermetic magic. Martin is a specialist in Corpus effects; each storyguide should select the spells Martin knew at the time of his death. Martin is particularly dangerous, because he doesn't spend fatigue to cast magic.

Weakness: Vulnerable to Iron

Vis: 3 pawns Perdo, 2 pawns Corpus

Statistics

The Ravens of the Forest in Perpetual Winter are birds of prey, according to *Ars Magica* 4th edition, page 260. They have tiny Faerie Might scores, can see perfectly in gloomy conditions, and, if heaped in great drifts, small amounts of vis can be extracted from them.

The Briars of the Forest of Perpetual Night attack with runners similar to powerful, spiked whips (Init +5, Atk: +12, Dfn: +4, Dmg: +5). A successful strike allows the briar to Brawl (Atk +4) in the following round, attempting Immobilization. The Briars prefer to use the all-out attack option, but this hasn't been factored into the statistics above. Any successful attack destroys a runner. Briars have two body levels, but suffer no penalty due to injury or fatigue. The briars are able to move their roots, but cannot leave the comparatively bright sunlight found in the first hundred yards of the forest.

If the characters fight their way past the sentinels, the Daughter of Winter approaches and offers to join causes with them.

The Vineyard of Ice Grapes

The forest canopy in this glade becomes so thick that the characters cannot see more than a

Scavenger

Magic Might 20

Characteristics: Int -3, Per -2, Pre n/a, Com n/a, Str +1, Sta.+5, Dex -2, Qik 0

Size: +2

Weapon/Attack

Bite. Init: +3, Atk: +5, Dfn: +3, Dam +15

Soak: +12

Fatigue: +4

Fatigue Levels: OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5,

Unconscious

Body Levels: OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Unconscious

Powers

- Slither (ReAn15: 1 point) Allows the scavenger to ignore minor inconveniences of terrain, slide up walls and along overhangs.
- Resistant to extremes of heat or cold.
- Can survive in aquatic or terrestrial environments.

Weakness: Salt burns like fire.

Vis: 2 pawns Perdo

few feet. Grape vines have been trained up nearby trees so that they form a snow-covered green mat twenty feet above the forest floor. The Daughter of Winter has bought the characters here because gourds of Changeling Wine are fermenting, hung from a branch at the centre of the glade. She wants to collect the wine, but doesn't want the characters to fight the grape vines, because they're valuable to her people, and she knows they'll become docile again if she acquires the crown.

The Daughter of Winter stops the magi before they reach the vineyard and tells them that, although they need to get the gourds, they shouldn't cause the vines to stir. Offering them a fallen grape, free of decay because of the icy conditions in the forest, she says that the vines cannot be killed, and have a combined mass of almost a ton. Characters inspecting the grape may notice it contains a pawn of Creo vis. The simplest way to retrieve the wine is to use spells that move objects at a distance. If one of the characters has a discus from the Covenant of the Unending Ribbon, it is ideal, since it is not alive so it doesn't stir the vines.

The Changeling Wine transforms humans into faeries. Regardless of their age or injury, those drinking this potion become lesser court faeries in full health. The Daughter of Winter wants to carry the wine with the party, so that if one of her humans is fatally injured, she can revive him in a useful form. Characters who become faeries retain their characteristics, gain Magic Might of 15, and, if they were magi, can cast spells by spending 1 point per magnitude of the spell. Faeries who drink the wine regain lost Body levels. The Daughter carefully ensures that these faeries don't claim the Crown of Ice and Briar, probably claiming that it'd be damaged if it were given to one not of her line.

The Scavengers on the Battlefield

In this clearing the faeries of the forest clashed with Martin of Bonisagus and the creatures he summoned. It is strewn with human body parts; not a single corpse is intact. After the massacre Martin walked from corpse to corpse, gathering vis into each heart, then ripping them from the bodies. Preserved by the forest's intense cold, the bodies show no sign of decay, although, thankfully, snow obscures much of the gore.

Within the clearing some of Martin's creatures remain, feeding, while they await their master's return. Like great leeches, his Scavengers are elongated, oily, ridged, black sacks. Their mouth-parts look like the blades of a modern circular saw. Each hacks and sucks from the corpses in the sort of sickening way that it is best not to describe. As the characters enter the clearing the scavengers will orientate on them, sliding through the snow, faintly clicking and humming.

The corpse of the Lord of the Forest of Perpetual Winter lies desecrated here, surrounded by his servants and bodyguards. His daughter spends a little time with him, checking that the Crown of Briar and Ice, which contains vis, is missing. She then mocks him for being stupid enough to get killed and grabs his knives, in case she needs them later. The Daughter of Winter has had time to mourn her father, and is archetypically dispassionate.

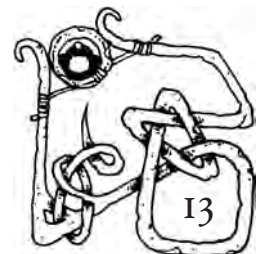
The Glen of Statues

The Daughter of Winter stops the characters by a statue of a knight, carved from black ice. She kneels next to it, as though it could whisper to her, and proclaims a barrier has been placed across their path. Taking a brief detour, she stops before a henge of stone blocks marked with a setting or rising sun.

She announces their enemy has raised a circle sacred to summer about the innermost portion of the wood. This barrier is focused on a glade just beyond the arc, which she cannot enter. The characters should proceed, says she, and destroy the symbols of summer they find there; otherwise she won't be able to proceed. This is untrue, but the Daughter of Winter is insistent.

Primitive statues representing joy, generosity, fertility, indulgence and hope surround this tiny grove. The only warm and bright place in the forest, the glade is sacred to the forces of summer, and has existed since before recorded history. If the Daughter of Winter becomes the Lady, this shrine will limit her power, an incessant irritation. Since her humans aren't likely to be killed in the glade, she's taking this opportunity to have them destroy it.

Redefining the glade is less simple than it appears. Simple destruction is insufficient. The characters need to find ways of altering the symbols on each statue so that they represent traits that are linked to winter: sorrow, malice, sterility,





frugality and despair. Although the Daughter of Winter is already aware of this, she doesn't want the characters to know that she's familiar with the contents of the glade. She doesn't give them instructions until the characters have failed, then described the scene to her. Storyguides wishing to complexify this section can include guardians, such as faeries who sleep in the glade, waiting for a spring that never comes. They rouse themselves to repel the characters.

Once the characters desecrate the statues, the glade's temperature plummets, as light is leeched away by the Perpetual Winter. The aura of the forest rises by one, and the Daughter of Winter's Might increases by 5. If a character with Free Expression has redefined the glade so that it is now sacred to the forces of Winter, the forest's aura rises by 2, the Daughter's Might rises by 10, and a gate to Arcadia opens at the Lake of the Moon.

The Lake of the Moon

Martin has constructed an extensive Hermetic laboratory at the centre of a frozen lake, above which the moon squats, fat and still in the sky. By that dramatic convenience which allows heroes to arrive in the nick of time, when the characters enter the region at the lake edge, Martin is piling the vis-enriched hearts of faeries about Veronica, who lies supine on a slab of ice. If not prevented, in the next minute he'll raise the Heart of Forever in his left hand, then stab it, point downward, through the centre of Veronica's chest.

Martin's been expecting trouble, and enough of his scavengers to give the characters pause are placed strategically within the ice of the lake, ready to burrow up and assault the interlopers. The characters have a slight advantage because Martin's

unwilling to discontinue the ritual so close to culmination. He casts no spells for the first few rounds.

Unexpected assistance

If the characters are outmatched and you'd like to even the odds for them, there is a god in the machine. Slightly before Veronica is murdered, Petula gains awareness of the Heart's surroundings. Rapidly realizing that this "Martin" is nothing like the man she fell in love with, she saves Veronica's life. The method easiest for Petula is to tug Veronica into temporary Twilight, so that she vanishes as the Heart stabs downward.

But if you'd prefer that she possess Veronica and provide spells and stirring oratory, then that's within her ability.

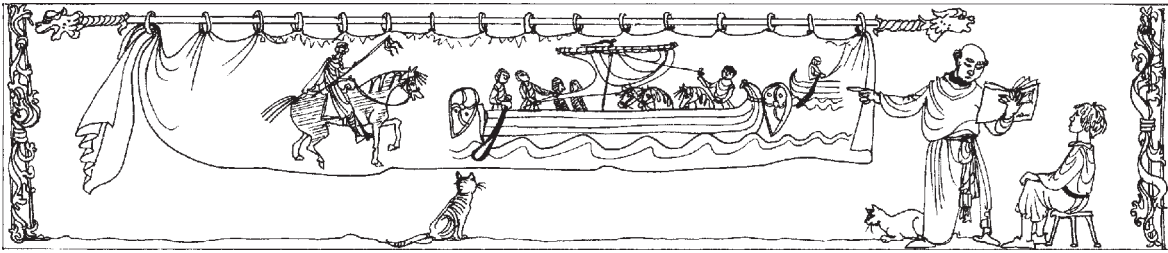
Menaces in gothic romances rarely leave corpses. If not consumed utterly by one of the characters' spells, Martin might be destroyed by the unchannelled power of his ritual, drawn into Twilight by Petula, flee into Arcadia, vaporised as the Heart explodes, or lost beneath the cracked ice of the lake.

The Heart of Forever should be destroyed dramatically. Once Petula is aware of her condition, she channels some of her Spirit Might into a spell which smashes the Heart from within. Since this represents her link to the Earth, this should only happen after any dialogue you want Petula's ghost, or Petula-in-Veronica, to engage in is complete.

Ending

The menace dead and his servants destroyed, the characters still need to deal with their erstwhile ally. If they give her the Crown of Briars and Ice, she gladly lets them leave, for now, although she may plant the seed of infatuation in one or more of "her" humans.





Dear Abelard

Translator's Note:

Dear Abelard is a column devoted to the writings of an elderly follower of Bonisagus who believed the best way to fulfil his duty to the Order was to share all of his advice and research in the form of written correspondence with a network of readers, carried by Redcaps to magi throughout Europe. If, through the course of your saga, you discover a question that you think could have been asked of Abelard, please forward it to the editor or to:

dearabelard@yahoo.com

and we will attempt to find a record of his answer.

Salvete sodales,

I had intended to devote some of this summer's writings to my travels in Europe and the Holy Lands, for those experiences have given me many amusing anecdotes to share with you, but my dear colleague Moratamis, follower of Guernicus, has asked me to allow her a few pages to bring to your attention a pressing issue that she feels to be quite important. I hope that you will read her words with the same courtesy and friendship with which you read mine, and that you will treat her advice as a service message delivered in a neighborly spirit of good will. Here then, without delay, is Moratamis, follower of Guernicus, filia of Empistula, member in good standing of Scriptoris Socii, and Quaesitoris of the Normandy Tribunal, and she brings with her a message, the topic of which she will disclose to you herself.

I can scarcely contain my anger at an outrageous annual custom which prevails in certain parts of Normandy and, I hear, in many other Tribunals too. On the night of All Hallows' Eve, it has become a tradition among some thoughtless magi to ambush and capture dark faeries of Winter that come forth to celebrate the turning of the seasons. It appears that the misguided idiots, heedless of the consequences, think only of what might impress their elders. These magi present their prisoners as trophies to the senior members of their Houses, covenants or socii, to study and abuse as they please or to aid them in experiments. Thus do the fools hope to ingratiate themselves with their superiors! Indeed, this seems to be a common initiation ritual among many organised groups of magi, accepted as a demonstration of loyalty by a young maga or magus desiring to learn

I must concur and agree with my just colleague Moratamis, for I had no idea that this sort of activity might occur during the autumn season. If it does, it certainly must not continue. What amazing secrets lie buried among the many who make up our Order! Secret cults practising ancient mysteries — why, it sounds almost like some kind of Eastern fable. I am sure that these groups are merely having a joke at their initiates' expense, albeit a dark and frightening joke. However, as I have promised my wise amica that I will always make room for her advice when she cares to share it with us, I hope that we can look forward to other great Hermetic hints such as this from her in the future.

Read on for a question sent to me from a young magus in Provençal, which I will attempt to answer to the best of my ability.



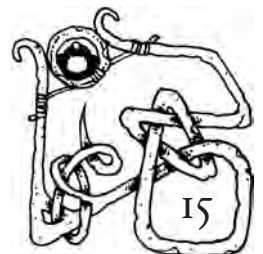
Dear Abelard,

I enjoy your letters very much, and though I didn't think I would ever need your advice, I do now! I want to start a covenant, and I want to do it right. I have borrowed enough money to purchase supplies and hire some grogs, and I think I know a good place to build (I can't tell you more about it, because I'm afraid someone else might beat me to it!). But, I don't know exactly what I should do first, so I hope that you can give me

more of the secrets possessed by these mystic hierophants.

Abelard, I beg you to make your readers aware of the grave threat this activity poses, not just to our irresponsible sodales but also to the Order as a whole. An offence such as this is a clear breach of the Code — a deliberate molestation of the fae that endangers the entire Order by angering the Good Folk and bringing their wrath down on us all. There is no excuse for this kind of irresponsible behaviour among the learned men and women of Hermes. It is neither acceptable nor just to capture a living being and torture it for amusement, to obtain vis, or for any illegal purpose. I have heard arguments that the dark fae deserve this treatment, as punishment for the many pranks and insults they unleash upon humanity on

(Continued on the next page)





the harvest eve. I have also heard it said that we do nothing to them that they do not also do to us, and that they expect to be abused so, as part of an elaborate game. There are even some that say the fae do not have souls, and so understand nothing of what is done to them, as if they merely play a predestined part in some natural cycle of life. No matter what the allegations, or the truth or falsehoods they may represent, I tell you that this intolerable practice must end!

I urge you, Abelard's readers, wherever you are, to guard yourselves and your covenants against this abominable behaviour this Autumn. I have made it my personal mission to seek out every instance of this abuse and bring to bear the full authority of Hermetic law against the offenders at next Tribunal. Consider this a warning and

some advice. What do I need most to build a covenant that will last?

Signed, Guisep, follower of Bonisagus

My dear Guisep,

To found a successful covenant, I believe you must look to three things: the structure, by which I mean the physical place in which you will dwell; supplies; and a staff, meaning your sodales and servants who live and prosper with you. There are other things as well, but I will say that these three factors are most important to ensure your long-term success.

A covenant usually begins with a structure, either an existing building you can convert into a covenant, or a tower or cave that you have created in a place with a strong aura. You do not tell me enough about your site for me to divine whether you are building a new structure or improving an old one, but I recommend you consider the following:

I Defenses. There is no great need to reinforce your walls and build elaborate defenses unless you have reason to believe you will be attacked. Indeed, many young covenants earn the wrath of a noble protector precisely because they build a garrison on his lands. I do not counsel you to ignore your safety, nor do I suggest that you attempt to hide upon lands governed by another, but I suggest that you do not feel you must construct a fortress in order to be considered a worthy covenant.

II Aura. Your aura is the cornerstone of all of your magical activities, and you must be able to rely upon it; if it is a magical aura, it must not fail you and if it is another sort, beware its source. Investigate your aura, and be sure you have a good idea of its origin. I have heard tales of an aura that waxed glorious when a large stone lay in the sunlight, but when a covenant was built upon it, the aura faded to nothing. I have also heard tell of a spring covenant whose

a cry for your help, for I will do everything in my power to punish those who breach the Code in this manner, and to reward those who defend the Code honourably. To those who consider taking part in this bizarre ritual, I promise you: no mysterious knowledge or secret power is worth breaking your Oath for. The dire consequences will far outweigh any virtue you may gain in associating with these power-hungry miscreants.

If you have any information or questions concerning this matter, write to me and I will see to your safety whilst I investigate. To make contact, write either to Abelard or directly to myself at Scriptoris Socii, Normandy. I assure you that your confidentiality will be respected, just as firmly as I swear that those who flout the Code will regret it.

members believed themselves extraordinarily lucky for stumbling across a magical cave with a powerful aura, only to learn several seasons later that it was the den of a great sleeping wyrm. Do not stumble blindly into the mysteries that magic holds, especially where your aura is concerned.

III Health. See that your mortal needs are well considered, and your immortal ones as well. Sad as it is, a covenant must often deal with death, especially of loyal servants who do not live as long as we do. A common belief among the peasantry is that magi do unspeakable things to human bodies after they die; if you set aside special earth for burial, you may avert such superstitions among your covenfolk, as well as protect your living custos from the spirits of disease who so often linger about the dead.

Your supplies are very important, not only your stores but also your income, for you will never survive without cultivating your assets and using them to prosper. I suggest you consider these questions when examining the future prospects of your covenant:

I Food and drink. Your covenant must grow grain for bread, and keep animals that may be milked to make cheese and butter. You will probably brew beer or perhaps make wine. For all of this, you will need fresh water, good soil and healthy animals. Without them, you must plan to purchase your supplies in large quantity from local peasants, and if they are not prosperous, it is not likely they will have much to spare for you. Also be sure that you can obtain salt, for without it your dairy products and meat will quickly spoil. Consider where your supplies will come from and protect those sources as well or better than your vis.



II Equipment. You will need a wide variety of materials to build a place where magi and their custos can study and learn. I find it is easier to comprehend the nature of this equipment by considering those who will use it. For example, magi will need laboratory supplies that include vellum, ink, glassware, fuel, furniture, quills, and more. Other specialists will need equipment and supplies appropriate to their craft. By considering what you will have your covenant members do, you can see that their activities are well supplied.

III Magical stores. Protect and add to your magical resources — your library and your vis cannot be underestimated in their value over time. Care for these as you would your most senior sodalis. Over time your treasury will surely grow, and if you are not able to guard it well, you will certainly lose it. Communicate with a Quaesitor to register your claim to vis sources, so that there is no doubt of precedent should a conflict arise.

Finally, you should consider those with whom you will share your covenant. If the structure is the body of your covenant, and your supplies are its blood and breath, then your sodales are its spirit, the heart that fills it with life.

I Covenfolk. It may be difficult to find men and women who are willing to live and work with you in your secluded place, but it is essential that you have them, since you cannot study magic and run a covenant at the same time. If you can find trustworthy servants, value them highly and reward them however you can, for they, more than anything else, will keep your covenant from faltering. If you build near a village, most of your grogs will come from there, so try to maintain good relations with its inhabitants.

II Specialists. You will need master craftsmen, learned custodes and strong allies to make the journey from Spring into Summer. Consider what raw materials you have available to you and seek out those who can shape it into great work. For example, if you have an abundance of clay, find an

experienced artisan or potter. If you have great books and learning, build and staff a scriptorium. You will probably need to pay your specialists with more than just shelter and a living, so be sure that you have someone worthy enough to look to your accounts and manage your trade and commerce.

III Magi. Your fellow members of the Order will shape your covenant as much as or more than you do, so choose them well. Define your goals and expectations clearly. When you send word that you are looking for sodales to join you, you might also extend some idea of the challenges you expect to face, for then you may attract magi particularly suited to overcoming them. It is worth hiring the services of a Quaesitor to help you write your charter, and you should plan on a trial period for new members that is long enough for you to investigate those who offer to join you and their references. I have seen many a covenant fall after its first few steps because of disagreements among its founders or magi who were not all they appeared to be during their initiation.

I do not mean to scare you, Guisep, for the task that you have undertaken is one of great magnitude, and I honor it. It is through your efforts, and the efforts of others like you, that our Order grows and flourishes. A final word of advice: support and heed your Redcaps. More likely than not, they have seen many more covenants than you have, and they know why those that have succeeded did so. I could write pages and pages of correspondence on this subject without even beginning to share the volumes of good advice they can give you. I hope that God and Fortune smile upon your enterprise, and that you will keep me informed of your progress.

Until next issue, my dear readers,

ABELARO

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





Stories of formed stones

by Sheila Thomas

Introduction

Fossils turned up as often in the past as they do now, and people made guesses about their origin and nature. Folklore built up about many of the fossilised shells, bones and other residue of creatures long gone; in Mythic Europe, much, if not all, of this lore is true. The stories presented here encapsulate some of these beliefs and may provide ideas for incidents in a saga.

Story Guides may find it convenient to divide the items described here into two types when considering the applicable Arts. Items that are shaped stones alone are best treated as Terram while those that are, to the eye, bones, would be Animal or Corpus. There is scope for complication when using the myths, however, by adding requisites, which are suggested below. The important thing is that the stories are true, so no amount of Intellego will elicit information about what we now know to be the origins of the 'formed stone' or fossil bone. No magic can turn a gryphon bone into a dinosaur, though it might turn an ammonite into a snake.

N.B. For the convenience of keeping the stories close to the illustrations of the type of fossil they are about, the notes are grouped by modern-day fossil family and, where possible, the modern name of the animal is given in parentheses for

completeness. Note that one type of fossil can have several different beliefs associated with it.

Bivalves

The Devil's Toenail

(*Gryphaea arcuata*)

Affected by Vim; infernal

This afternoon, I happened to pass by one of those boys who habitually loiter about in the courtyard before meal times. He was peering intently at something he turned over and over in his hands so I looked at what had captured his attention so. Imagine my horror when I saw that what he had was one of the toe nail clippings of the devil himself! Here it is. Look at the growth lines that form ridges all along the vicious curving claw. How huge and horrible must be the claw from which this tip was trimmed!

Fr. Edward of Winchester

Clach crubain

(*Gryphaea arcuata*)

Affected by Terram and Corpus

So, you have pains in the bones! What else do you expect at your age? It comes to us all, you know. I could tell you about the way my old joints ache in the long, damp, dark nights when the fire has gone cold. I will show you how I ease the stiffness. See this strange-shaped stone here? You'll not find any like it around the edge of the loch; it came from a place a long way to the south. See how it is bent over, like a body half-crippled with the pains we suffer? I crush a little of it and mix the powder with honey, then spread it on scraps of cloth and bind them around the inflamed joints. Try it!

Niall of the Covenant of Mac Gruagach

In play - see Hedge Magic; Link & Snead; Atlas Games 1997, p.35 and Ars Magica 4th Edition; Atlas Games 1996, p.49. The ointment described counts as a minor potion and adds +1 to a chirurgy or medicine roll made at the time the ointment is applied. Any character



treated with the ointment can add +1 to the effects of the Arthritis Flaw for 12 hours following application (i.e. the penalty for having the Flaw is reduced to -2 or -5 for that period).

Crinoids

St Cuthbert's Beads

Affected by Terram; divine

Look over there! Yes, it is Sister Winifred on her knees as usual. See that string of beads in her hands? She uses them to count the number of times she repeats each prayer. Those beads make Sister Winifred's prayers very powerful, you know, for though they look like little stones, the beads on her string were made by St.Cuthbert himself! Not that she met him personally, of course. No, she gathered those beads from along the seashore when she was just a little girl.

Sister Hildelith of Durham

In play - see Pax Dei; Chupp & Hildebrande; White Wolf, pp.46-47. Anyone, not just a member of the ordained clergy, praying sincerely while using St.Cuthbert's Beads may have their prayer granted according to the rules for Blessings.



Star stones or Asteriae

(Pentacrinites)

Affected by Terram, or beyond the limits of Hermetic magic

This is my special stone and no-one is going to take it from me. I'll let you look at it if you promise not to touch it. It is cold and dull now but once it shone high above us with a great light. Yes, it is a fallen star! I did not see it fall myself, but you can see from the shape that that is what it is.

Gall, son of Seppi the woodcutter

In play - see The Fallen Angel; Buchanan & Robertson; Atlas Games 1997, pp.63-64, for ideas on using fallen stars in a saga

Fish teeth

Toad Stones, Bufonites

(Lepidotes)

Affected by Terram and Animal

Come back tomorrow, girl, and then you shall have your charm. These things cannot be rushed however much you wish for haste. See here. These are the eyes of toads that have been turned to stone. No, just the eyes, not the whole toad! I have to leave these soaking overnight in a stone vessel full of... but no! Be off with you and come back the same time tomorrow. And be sure you bring with you that bacon you promised me!

Mieke the Cunning Woman

In play - see Hedge Magic, pp.36-39, 58-60 and see The Medieval Bestiary, Revised Edition; Kasab; Atlas Games 2001, p.77 (use statistics for the frog). A Toad of Virtue is like any other toad except that it has a Toad Stone in its forehead. A Toad Stone is a Stone of Virtue and contains wild vis. Uncommon. Wild Vis 1. Standard Vis 0.

You think this dull grey stone not worthy of the gold in which it is set? I tell you, it is most assuredly as valuable as any pretty stone, and harder to come by. This stone was removed from the head of the toad whilst it was still alive, then placed on red cloth until the ring setting was ready to receive it. Now, I wear it to protect me. I have but to touch the stone to my food and drink to detect whether anything is poisoned.

Lady Alissende of Moret

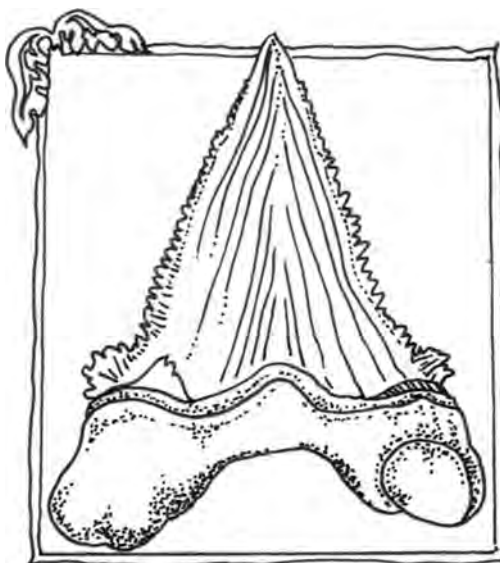
In play - see Hedge Magic, pp.36-39, 58-60. A Toad Stone acquired in this fashion is a Stone of Virtue. Rare Wild Vis 2. Standard Vis 1 (Animal). The stone turns from greenish grey to dull red for a few minutes on contact with poison.

Glossopetrae

(shark teeth)

Affected by Terram or beyond the limits of Hermetic magic

I will consider your question and give you answer on the morrow, for tonight I must observe the moon to learn the answer. This is teaching that





has come down to us from the great days of Rome's supremacy, that arrow-shaped stones like this fall from the sky during eclipses of the moon. Thus it will help me to learn the information you desire. Incidentally, it has been reported that stones like this can be used to make the wind die down, but Pliny did not believe this and nor do I.

Giovanni, Selenomancer

In play - see The Mysteries; Bank & Genest; Atlas Games 2000, pp.108-109. Selenomancy is a form of Ceremonial Augery. Observation of the face of the moon normally gives bonuses for Mentem +2, Mental illness +4, Conception +3. Observation while holding a glossopetrae stone gains an additional +1.

Adder's tongue

Affected by Terram and Animal

There is treachery all about us, but never fear that I will be poisoned. See this, in this goblet? Let me fish it out of the wine so you can see it. Some say that this is the tongue of a bird that has been turned to stone, but I assure you that it is the petrified tongue of an adder. I got it off a merchant who told me it had come all the way from Malta, where St.Paul had turned the snakes' tongues to stone when he was bitten. One has only to soak it in wine overnight to produce a drink that is a guaranteed antidote to snakebite. Its efficacy as a cure for poison is also quite certain. Every night I drain the cup and refill it, so whatever my enemies do, I shall not die of poison.

Geoffrey the Inquiet of Anjou



In play - see Ars Magica 4th Edition, p.180. If nothing poisonous has been ingested, the drink has no special effect. If there is poison, the drinker gains +2 to their Stamina roll.

Trilobites

Petrified butterflies

(tail of certain Ordovician trilobites)

Affected by Terram and Animal

Look at this poor butterfly! Hold it tightly. You won't hurt it, because the poor thing has been turned into stone. It was done long ago, by Merlin, Great King Arthur's wizard. I don't know why he did such a cruel thing!

Medi o Caerfyrddin

Ammonites

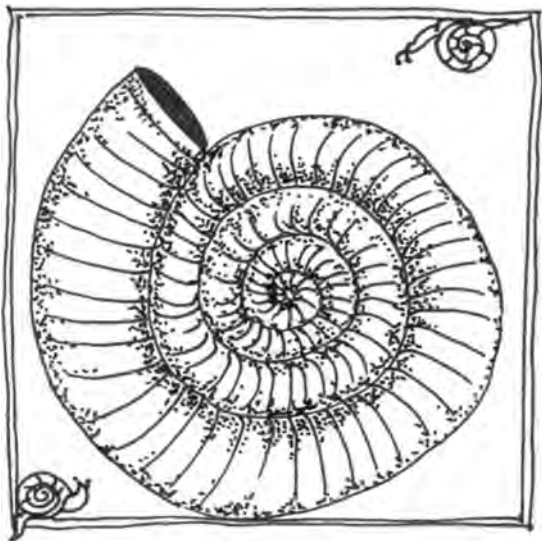
Snakestones

(Dactyloceras commune and others)

Affected by Terram and Animal

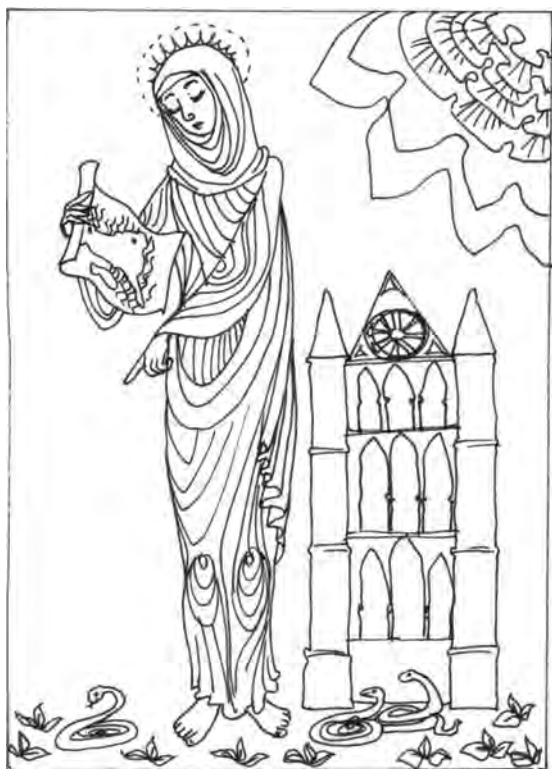
Good sir, you look like a man who would appreciate an oddity from across the seas. Here I





have something come all the way from the north-east of England! I see you know it at once for a petrified snake, all coiled tightly with the tail in the centre. Of course, that is just what it is, but did you know that this snake was turned to stone by St. Hilda of Whitby? She had chosen the site on the cliff top for her new nunnery, you see, but the snakes were reluctant to vacate the premises. The head? Well, St. Cuthbert cursed the creatures for paying so little heed to St. Hilda's wishes and so they lost their heads. Take this home from the fair and amaze your friends!

Francesco at the Troyes fair



The Horn of Ammon, 'Cornu Ammonis'

Affected by Terram

Turn over that little round grey stone on the table there. Yes, it is no wonder you are surprised! It looks just like a tiny golden ram's horn, does it not? But those bright crystals are not true gold. They are what the alchemists call fool's gold, but

very beautiful, none the less, and it is useful too. According to Pliny, it can bring about prophetic visions in dreams. I put it under my pillow on the night before I intend to commence a new project or make a journey. As to where it came from, Aristotle tells us that minerals are formed by vaporious exhalations of the earth, some tending to be dry, smoky and others moist. It may be that this pretty thing formed in this way.

Fidens, Bonisagi, filius Auditor Iovis

In play - The Horn of Ammon is useful to an Oneiromancer with the Virtue Dream Interpreter (see Kabbalah; Honigsberg, Bank & Genest; Atlas Games 1998, p.116) in Dream Augery, as detailed in The Mysteries, p.96, where it confers an additional +1 if placed under the dreamer's pillow with the necessary arcane connection to learn something about an object or person. If used by an Oneiromancer with the Dream Interpreter Virtue on the night before commencing a significant project or setting out on a major journey, no arcane connection is needed to induce an auguring dream about the project or journey.

Brachiopods

Spiriti Sanctus

(*Rhynchonella*)

Affected by Terram; divine

I always wear this on a cord about my neck. It is an amulet to the Holy Ghost. Look closely and you will see that this stone is shaped like a dove with outstretched wings. It is my protection from the devil's wiles. I clutch it and pray when temptation comes my way.

Sr.Konstanze of Tübingen in Schwabia

In play - see The Maleficium; Earley; White Wolf 1992, p.53 and Festival of the Damned Anniversary Edition; Tweet & Nephew; Atlas Games 1998, pp.66-85. Anyone touching the Spiriti Sanctus and praying will resist that specific temptation until the next sunset.

Belemnites

Thunderbolts

Affected by Terram and Auram

Stones like this are flung down as darts from heaven during a thunderstorm. As they fall, you see the flash and when they hit the ground, you hear the thunder. I found this one just after the huge storm that brought down the far side of the





castle wall six years ago. It has several uses. It can prevent nightmares, so I keep it by me when I sleep. It can protect you from being carried off by demons from the sky. See here, where the edge is damaged? I break away just a little of it at times because powder from it can be used to make a charm to ward off lightning or, if blown into the eyes, the powder can cure soreness. Let us pray that there are not so many eyes to treat or storms to ward away that I use it all up and the demons come for me!

Brother Matthias of Wallingford

In play - see The Mysteries, p.103. Sleeping with a Thunderbolt has some of the effect of the spell Blissful Dreams (MuMe 20), keeping nightmares away but not affecting pleasant or neutral dreams. The target gets no bonus to rolls the following day.

see The Maleficium, p.65. Minor/lesser demons keep away from anyone with a Thunderbolt on their person or within Touchrange.

see Hedge Magic, pp.34-35. The powder works as a Minor Potion giving +2 to a medicine roll to cure sore eyes.

see Ars Magica 4th Edition, p.77, pp.120-121 and Hedge Magic, pp.42-43. A Hermetic or Natural magician may use powder from a Thunderbolt to give a +3 spell focus bonus for Perdo Auram spells affecting lightning.

Oyster shells

Affected by Animal

I found this shell while taking one of the less-frequented passes, little more than a goat track. The path is only usable in summer since the snows come early up there, and linger through spring. I'll show it to you next time we're that way. Now, examine this shell. It looks just like the shells of those oysters we ate fresh from the sea last year, doesn't it? But this came from inside the rocks near the peak of a mountain. It is certain evidence that the great Flood, sent by God as a punishment for man's wickedness, did indeed cover all the land. Let it be a warning to us all to shun sin.

Wilhelm 'Celeripes', House Mercere,
to his apprentice, Eva

Bones from extinct large vertebrates e.g. mammoth, mastodon

Giants

Affected by Corpus

Of course there are giants! Don't you believe the story of Goliath in the Bible? St. Augustine has seen their remains, and he undoubtedly speaks the truth. I'll find the right book in a minute... look here. He writes of the large bones revealed by the ravages of time, the violence of streams and other events which are tangible proof that men and creatures were once much larger than they are now, and tells how he himself found a tooth of a giant on the shore of Utica. There are numerous reports in the old writings of enormous bones and teeth being found. See here, Pausanias reports the bones of giants from places in the Empire of the Nicaea. You must work hard on your Latin and Greek so you too can read these and learn.

Cyprian, librarian of Constantinople
in the Theban Tribunal

Heroes

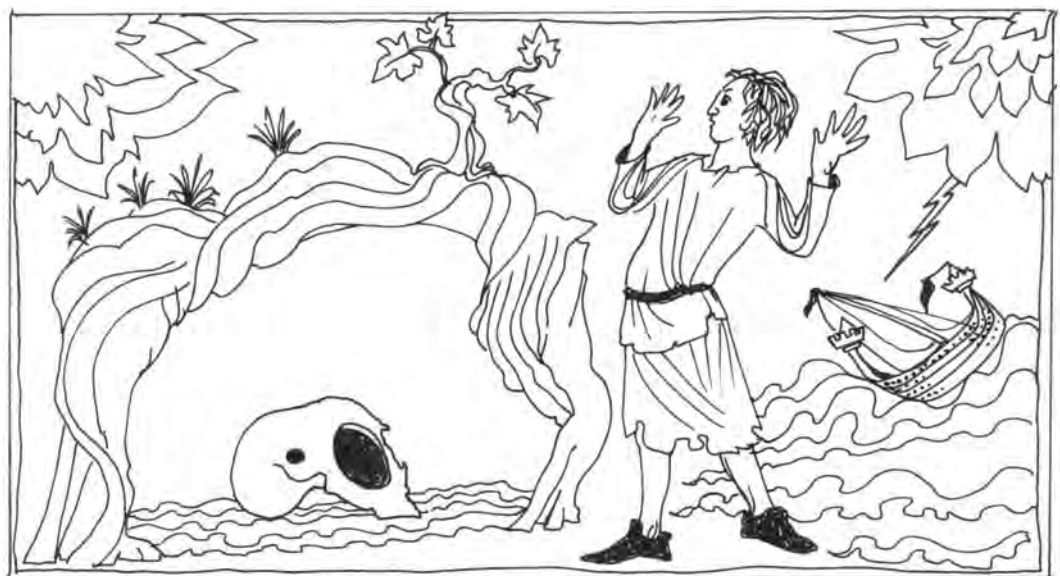
Affected by Corpus

It was a fact well-known to the ancients that the great heroes of the past were superior to us in many ways. How did Samson bring the building crashing down about his captors if his strength did not exceed our own many times? There is clear evidence for their greater stature. St. Clement of Alexandria particularly warns against the pagan practice of honouring the shoulder blade of the hero Pelops, whose bone of polished ivory is ten times the size of a normal man's. Philostratus reports the words of a Phoenician merchant who spoke with a grower of grapes in Elaeus, at the mouth of the Hellespont, who had himself set eyes on the bones of great Achilles in a cave at Sigeum.

Cyclops

(skull of dwarf elephant of the Pleistocene era)

Affected by Corpus



Come into my Sanctum, if you dare, and I shall show you a wondrous thing, the skull of a monster out of legend! You may know that in my younger days I explored far, seeking relics of our Roman heritage. One stormy October night I was on a ship bound from Palermo to Salerno. My magic held off the worst for a while but I tired and the seas overwhelmed our vessel. I came ashore alone on a small beach and took shelter in a cave where I found a heap of bones. The limb bones were immense so that at first I thought this had been the abode of a giant but when I found the skull...! There, right in the centre of the forehead was a great hole, just the place and size and shape for the eye of a cyclops!

Lorenzo of Jerbiton, a Seeker,
at Literatus in the Roman Tribunal

Echinoids

Fairy loaves

(*Micraster* and *Echinocorys*)

Affected by Terram

Ma says I have to put this back where I found it, under an old cracked bowl in a dark corner behind the cooking pots. She says it is a loaf of fairy bread and that if we keep in it the house, the family will never go short of bread. If that's true, how come she won't give my brothers and me an extra slice when we ask? Ma says that some people say that a stone like this should be kept on the shelf in the dairy to keep the milk from going sour, but we don't keep a cow. I suppose if I put it back, it can keep our jug of milk fresh as well as keep us in bread.

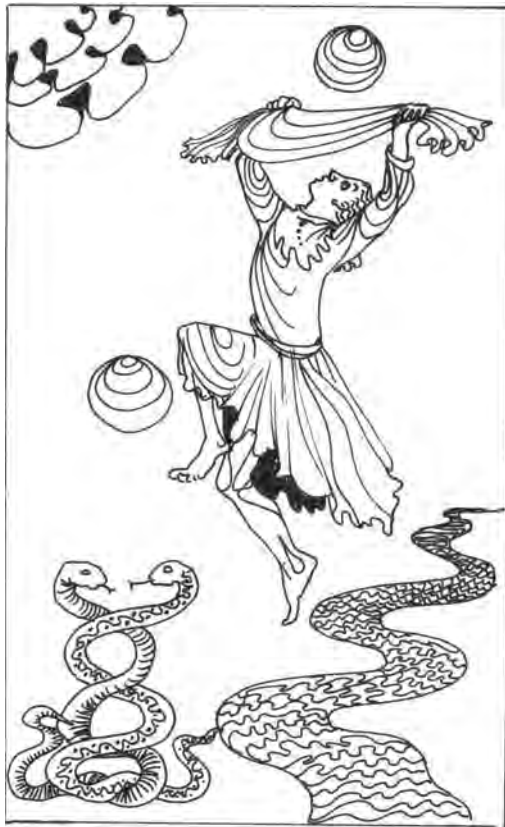
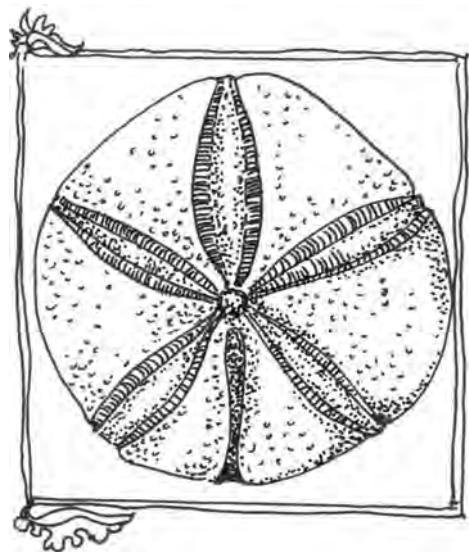
Mari, daughter of Simon
with the red beard from Pond Cottage

In play - A Fairy loaf in the dairy will keep milk there fresh for one day longer than is usual. It does not generate extra bread, however.

Snake's Eggs

Affected by Terram and Animal

Do not fear for me, wife. Remember, I have the ovum anguinum that my father left to me. My tutor told me that one of the ancient writers gave



its history. The druids of Gaul would go out at midsummer to the places where the snakes would gather and entwine about each other. As the snakes writhe, a ball of froth forms and rises up into the air. If one can leap up and catch this in a cloth before it falls to the ground then carry it over a river that the snakes cannot swim, one will have a charm that will offer protection from poison and illness and give success in legal disputes and even in battle. Just such a charm is this stone.

Richard of Thouars

In play - see Ars Magica 4th Edition, p.40. The keeper of this rare item gains the Virtue Immunity to mild poisons and inconvenient illnesses. The advantages are lost if they lose the Snake's Egg. Someone carrying the Snake's Egg with them, concealed or not, gains +2 to Communication when arguing in a court of law. In the same way, they also gain +2 to Soak when in meke.

Lapidus Judaici, Jew-stones

(spine of *Balanocidaris glandaria*)

Affected by Terram

What are you staring at? No, this isn't something I am going to eat. Look here, this is what I'm licking, this little white stone shaped like a club or an acorn, with ridges running down it lined with tiny bumps. I get these pains here in my back, see? And how it can hurt when I make water! This helps, this little white stone. I got it long ago and far away, when I went to the Holy Land with the crusaders as a washerwoman. That's a story and a half!

Odile the blessed

In play - licking or sucking the stone for around fifteen minutes alleviates symptoms of kidney and urinary tract disease for a day.





Dinosaur bones

Griffin or gryphon

(*Protoceratops*)

Affected by Animal

Whilst I was in Venice recently, I made the acquaintance of a certain merchant who has contacts who trade east along the silk route. He was a cultivated, generous man who employed a skilled and inventive cook so taking dinner with him was a pleasure in several regards. During my second visit to his home he told me of the great beasts, half lion, half eagle, that menace the trade caravans as they pass through the desert regions of Persia. I thought he was perhaps making an excuse to over-charge me for the silks I was proposing to buy from him, but research proved his tale to be correct. The existence of these creatures is confirmed in the words of the poet Aristeas, as quoted by Herodotus, Philostratus and others.

Walter of Vézelay, House Jerbiton

In play - see The Medieval Bestiary, p.55

Late medieval ideas on the origins of fossils

Behold this stone, very like a large beetle, the body divided into three sections, with ridges running across it. It is as finely detailed as if a living creature had been turned to stone. Or maybe you think that some craftsman has carved it? No, this grew in the earth just as you see it now.

Some call such shaped stones *lusus naturae*, sports of nature, formed by a creative force, *vis*

plastica, in the soil. Some alchemists labour to control this force in the hope that it will lead them to the *aura vitalis*. Others say that shaped stones are the result of certain astral conjunctions which fertilise the nature of the soil and rocks with *vis formativa*. There are those who teach that they arise through the individualisation of objects by a condensation of vapours liberated by fermentation in deeper-lying rocks. Some claim formed stones are anomalies in causality, others that they are reflections of ancient failures and omissions in creation, but how can any believe that God errs? Are these put into the ground by devils, to tempt us to believe that God makes mistakes? Perhaps they are the sterile creations of Satan, who, mocking life, may form the likeness of a living thing but can never give it breath.

Fr. Pedro de Alvarez y Toledo

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Bjornaer Mysteries

by Erik Dahl

The shapechanging powers of the followers of Bjornaer are described in many different *Ars Magica* books, and several references are made to their ability to eventually master multiple forms. Legend states that Bjornaer herself, in the early days of the Order, could adopt multiple shapes, and mastering a powerful repertoire of forms is described as one of her followers' highest priorities in *Order of Herms*. Rules for achieving this goal have always been sketchy, though *Medieval Bestiary: Revised Edition* presents a simple (but not very exciting) solution. Using the revolutionary guidelines for teaching secret magical knowledge presented in *The Mysteries*, however, the following path to Bjornaer wisdom has been developed as an alternative.

Bjornaers practice an unusual variety of Hermetic magic, one so different from the standard that not even Bonisagus could fully integrate it into Magic Theory. Having learned this arcane wisdom from their elders, Bjornaer magi can effectively be considered *mystae* — initiates into a magical order devoted to secret knowledge. Appropriately, only members of House Bjornaer have access to these secrets, perhaps because its power is impossible to combine with Magic Theory as taught by other Houses, or perhaps because the House will not teach it to outsiders. All shapeshifting members of House Bjornaer are associated with the outer mystery of Will Over Form.

While it is possible for others with the Gift to possess this knowledge (perhaps those who begin studying magic with a Bjornaer master and later join another House), only followers of Bjornaer should have access to the inner mysteries. Those magi who pursue the deeper levels of knowledge probably belong to secret societies and factions based in the House, learning their secrets while forwarding the group's spiritual and political goals. You should feel free to invent these societies to match the tone and structure of House Bjornaer in your saga. *The Mysteries* provides several examples of shapechanging societies, and excellent guidelines for creating your own. Through ordeals, story experience, and maintaining their position in the hierarchy of these societies, Bjornaer magi may thus learn deeper understanding of their wills and forms, and discover more of the legendary powers of shapeshifters in Mythic Europe.

While Bjornaer magic is not the only form of shapechanging found in Mythic Europe, it is certainly the most common variety found in *Ars Magica*. When dealing with shapechangers in a saga, questions often arise regarding how the rules apply to their other forms and the physical act of changing shapes. The following ideas are presented to help you address these situations, and more effectively deal with shapechanging magic in your saga.

They have been written primarily for followers of Bjornaer, though you may certainly apply them to other shapechanging powers if they seem appropriate.

The Magic of Shapechangers

Shapechanging Magi of House Bjornaer learn how to transform themselves into the shapes that dwell within their spirit and imagination, part of their inner nature. Through mastery of their physical bodies and diligent honing of their discipline, they can force their outward identity into other forms, and become so attuned to the wild, untamed earth that they can almost perfectly blend into it as their native habitat. The ceremony of transforming into one's heart-beast is so intrinsic to the Bjornaer magical tradition that for many it is considered the only test for a successful apprenticeship.

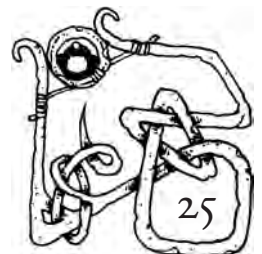
Transformation comes from within, and the effect is based entirely on the individual's magical style. When a follower of Bjornaer changes, she magically transforms herself in a manner equivalent to an innate Muto spell, just as if she had cast such a spell upon herself. Her mind remains her own, though she may gain traits and quirks of the form she adopts, and she gains all the physical aspects of her new identity. To clarify how her character's attributes should apply to her new form, the following guidelines are suggested.

Characteristics

A maga's Characteristics are immutable, but based on her human form. They represent her essential strengths and weaknesses; in a sense they are what distinguishes her from other humans. When transformed into a different shape, she may still retain some of these qualities, for they are part of what make her unique, and may therefore similarly distinguish her from other animals in her new species.

Assuming that the stats given for an animal are the average, and that a similarly average human has 0 in all Characteristics, the troupe may decide to modify the values of a Bjornaer animal's traits by her human scores, to better represent her shape's individuality. For example, a typical hawk has Strength -4, Quickness 0; Pterra of Bjornaer has Strength +1, Quickness +2. Using this system, her hawk form might be Strength -3, Quickness +2 — stronger and quicker than the average hawk, just as Pterra is stronger and quicker than the average human. Pterra is also not very perceptive (Perception -3), so her hawk form, while still better than her human form (0), would be much less perceptive than most other hawks (+3).

Pterra's Characteristics are part of her essential nature, and while her magic can improve her shape, it cannot change the basic traits that make her unique. Of course, a Bjornaer retains her Intelligence and Communication when in beast shape, since most animals do not possess these qualities,





and in any case these Characteristics do not represent physical changes. Most animals do not have Presence either, but a maga with high Presence might become a particularly fine example of her shape, reflecting the same kinds of features that her human form displays, and the same premise might apply to a maga with negative Presence — her animal form would be socially penalized, just like her human form. For example, Pterra is a striking woman (Presence +2) with long, wild black hair and piercing eyes. In her hawk shape, she might have a similarly attractive appearance: darker feathers, sharp eyes, and an intimidating demeanor. Other hawks might be favorably drawn to her as humans are.

When adopting inanimate shapes, most Characteristics are meaningless. However, much as a maga's spells are shaped by her wizard's sigil, a Bjornaer maga's inanimate shape may also reflect her Characteristics. For example, if Pterra were to change into a rock, she might become black, volcanic stone, a little heavier than most, with very rounded edges and a shiny surface. This is really a question of flavor and should not have any mechanical effect upon the saga.

Flaws or Virtues should remain with the Bjornaer maga, since they also are clearly a part of her true self. Those that affect her physical form should apply to her new shape in the same way — for example, a maga with an Evil Eye might retain a frightening gaze in her animal form, and a magus who is Tough (+1) would still get a +3 bonus to his new Soak score. A Bjornaer's Size changes to that of the shape she becomes, but if she is larger or smaller than the human average, due to Virtues or Flaws like Giant Blood +5 or Small Frame -3, you may wish her new form to be similarly modified, for these aspects of her character may also be considered part of her essential nature. Thus, when Pterra (Size -1) changes into a cat, she might become Size -4 instead of -3: a very small cat by comparison, but relative to her identity as a smaller, weaker human.

Likewise, Decreptitude is the mechanical representation of the body's decay in *Ars Magica*. As such, it cannot be affected by shapechanging magic. When a Bjornaer maga changes into another form, any afflictions she has suffered due to aging or other calamities are unchanged. For example, if she has poor eyesight, she will receive the same penalty to her Perception rolls, regardless of how strong the Perception of her new form may be.

When a Bjornaer maga changes into a new shape, she still possesses her own faculties, including her Abilities. Some animals are described as possessing Abilities, but these are activities that the animal learns naturally, and the maga may also need to learn these skills to use them. She may also need to re-learn many of her existing Abilities to use them in another shape; a maga skilled in Brawl as a human cannot necessarily apply the same tac-

tics as a bear or snake. Part of learning a new shape is learning how to function as it does in the wild, so if the storyguide approves, you may use your shape's basic combat totals and skills immediately upon "officially" gaining the form, but additional physical Abilities must be practiced and learned with story experience before they can modify your totals in that shape. A character who is already very skilled in other forms or who is learning an Ability known for a very similar shape might apply some of her existing experience to the applicable Ability, if the troupe allows.

Fatigue and Body Levels

By changing into a new form, a Bjornaer maga can often double (or halve) her Fatigue and Body levels, which can be a valuable effect. But if she is tired or injured, the wear on one form should show upon the others, according to the Limit of Energy. Thus, when changing shape, the maga should note her Fatigue and Body levels and ensure that her new body remains at the same general level of wear. Any wound or fatigue penalties should remain, regardless of the form she becomes, though for the purposes of determining additional levels you could round up to the next highest box if the animal's size does not exactly correspond. For example, Pterra is Tired (-3) but has only Light Wounds (-1) in her human form. When she changes into the form of a fish (OK, -3, Unc./Inc.), she is still Tired (-3), and while she is effectively at the Unhurt (OK) level should she be injured, she still must keep track of the -1 penalty. When she later becomes a rhinoceros (OK, 0/0/0, -1/-1, -3/-3/, -5/-5, Inc.), she will be back at the first of her two Light Wounds (-1) Body levels.

Damage should still be measured in number of Body levels, regardless of penalties. The character's wounds are stretched and compressed as she changes shape, but they must still exist as individual levels of damage, no matter how small or large they become, since Muto magic cannot heal them. Changing shape is not an effective way to make damage "disappear," so it is important to keep track of how many actual Body levels of damage the character has suffered.

If a maga fights a battle in bear shape (OK, 0/0, -1/-1, -3, -5, Inc.) and takes four Body levels of damage before returning to human form, she will still only be at Light Wounds (-1), but she must heal two levels before she is considered Hurt (0), and two more before she is Unhurt (OK). Likewise, if Pterra fights a battle in hawk form (OK, -3, Inc.) and takes one Body level of damage, she will still have Medium Wounds (-3) when she changes back to human shape, but only one Body level must be healed to return her to full strength. Thus, it is more dangerous for a shapechanger to engage in combat when in a smaller form, since one well-aimed blow can still incapacitate or kill her. Non-magical creatures of Size -2 or smaller



are not usually considered combat-worthy for this reason.

When incapacitated or unconscious, a Bjornaer maga can no longer change her shape (the troupe may rule that she automatically reverts to her “natural” form) and thus she may be easily killed by damage that might otherwise only be an inconvenience. Many Bjornaer develop combat-worthy shapes as soon as they can, to protect themselves from this possibility.

Possessions

Shapechanging is personal magic, and thus typically affects only the person of the Bjornaer maga. She is part of nature, and those mundane trappings that she carries with her are not usually part of the form shaped by her will. When she changes, her possessions fall uselessly to the ground, perhaps even stretching or tearing around her if her new shape is not large enough to contain them — a maga who wears a tight metal necklace should remember to remove it before changing into a beast with a larger neck, or she may choke herself to death!

However, if the maga always wears the same clothing or carries the same equipment, a troupe may decide that these objects have in effect become part of her identity. In a sense, her clothing and possessions become a second skin, and when she changes, they change with her. The distinction between personal items and those of passing significance is left to the player and the troupe to determine, but be careful that this does not get out of hand. A newly acquired rook of vis can certainly not be considered part of a character’s identity, no matter how convenient it would be if it were. Generally, items like furs, magical items created by the Bjornaer, and other very personal or natural items might fall into this category.

It is recommended that when equipment encumbers the maga before changing with her, her Encumbrance penalties should be applied to the new shape as well. This represents the slower response of the “shape inside”: her identity involves wearing equipment, so her identity is essentially encumbered. For example, if a Bjornaer magus often changes while wearing a full suit of armor — a suit that he considers part of his true identity — he would still have his human Encumbrance subtracted from appropriate actions, regardless of the Strength or Encumbrance of his new form. This extra Encumbrance is internal, carried “inside his skin,” and cannot be overcome through any means other than changing back to human form and removing the armor. If he carries additional items in his new form, their Load would be added to his Strength as normal, generating a separate, “external” Encumbrance.

Shapechanging and Hermetic Magic

Magi who are transformed into other shapes may still use their magic, though they cannot use words or gestures. For most magi, this is a -15 penalty to all their spellcasting totals. If a shape has humanlike hands or a voice that it can use to approximate Latin, the storyguide may allow the maga to cast as if she were using subtle gestures or soft voice, but this involves an incredible amount of concentration and exaggerated effort, the equivalent of booming voice or sweeping gestures in the wild. Such behavior will appear obviously unnatural and dangerous to other animals or humans.

To complement the use of Bjornaer shapechanging with Hermetic magic, the following additional powers may be made available to magi with some kind of voluntary shapechanging ability. At the troupe’s discretion, they might also be available to characters who can involuntarily become some other form, such as lycanthropes or victims of faerie mischief.

Magical Affinity (shapes) (+2 Virtue): You may add the value of this Affinity to magical effects that target animals whose shapes you can become, including yourself. For example, a maga who can change into a wolf and a fish may apply this Affinity to magic that affects herself in wolf or fish form, or that affects wolves or fish.

Transformed Duration: A shapechanging maga can create magical effects with Duration: Transformed, which last until she changes to another form or reverts to her natural shape. It is the same level of duration as Moon, but cannot be used with aimed spells and must affect the caster. The spell ends when she changes back to human shape, or otherwise changes shape in any way.

Outer Mystery: Will Over Form (+1 Virtue)

This is an arcane talent unique to the shapeshifting followers of Bjornaer. It reflects your ability to control your shape, using your will to force your body into another form. In addition to allowing you to learn the inner mysteries of Bjornaer magic, Will Over Form also functions as a Magical Affinity, adding to your total for any magical effect you use to transform your shape and only your shape (i.e. spells of Personal range). It may also be used to resist transformation effects that target you specifically, allowing you a natural resistance roll of Stamina + Will Over Form — a total of 9+ means that you resist the effect.

This Affinity encourages Bjornaer to learn and practice all manner of spells with Personal range, regardless of whether they transform them into beasts or otherwise. However, spells such as *Cloak of Black Feathers* or *Shape of the Woodland Prowler* earn special respect among those of the House, primarily because they can impart experience with





animal shapes that can be learned with the Many Forms Virtue (see below).

Because of this advanced understanding, your current shape is always your “true” form, and no magical or mundane investigation can detect otherwise. Even when transformed by other magical effects, you maintain command of your identity as your own, and no one can perceive that you are actually a transformed human. At the storyguide’s discretion, faeries or other supernatural powers with strong ties to your assumed form may realize that you are not what you appear, and if you do not have the Gentle Gift, mundane animals and people may recognize that you are magical, perhaps treating you as a Beast of Virtue (see *Medieval Bestiary* for more information on this kind of animal).

Heart-beast

During initiation into the House, your master magically probes your heart to discover the shape that represents you at the deepest, innermost level. This is called your heart-beast, or heart-shape, and is the new form that you first learn to assume. For most, this form is an animal, but some rare Bjornaers discover other forms for their heart-shapes. Such forms are always natural, not manufactured or hybridized.

The heart-beast ceremony, while making you perfectly one with your inner form, permanently removes your ability to ever have a familiar. Your profound discovery of your inner connection to nature makes you unable to forge the bonds that make an intimate, magical connection to a familiar

possible. Upon taking this Virtue, you must also take the No Familiar -1 Flaw.

Over time, you take on more and more aspects of your heart-beast, including personality traits and physical appearance. You gain a Personality trait named after your form, which begins at +1. This score may increase throughout the saga, at the storyguide’s discretion, depending on the relative amount of time you spend in that shape. The higher the score, the more closely attuned to the shape you are, and the more strongly you identify with it.

To change into another shape, roll Stamina + Will Over Form. On a total of 9+ you succeed. For more flavor, the storyguide may also have you add the Personality trait for the form you are taking to the roll, and/or subtract a strong Personality trait appropriate to your current form. Changing shape requires intense physical effort, much like casting a spell, and the storyguide may also require that repeated attempts to change require spending a Fatigue level. This is especially appropriate when the character is changing under extreme duress.

Will Over Form is normally a +1 Virtue. However, some Bjornaer discover powerful combat-worthy heart-beasts during initiation, similar to an Avenging Form (see below). For these magi, this Virtue costs +2, for they have happened upon deep insights that approach the level of an inner mystery, making it easier for them to comprehend the deeper secrets. The Many Forms is only a +1 Virtue for these advanced characters, should they later be initiated into the higher levels of Bjornaer mystery.



The Many Forms (+2 Virtue)

This inner mystery teaches you to discover multiple shapes within you, allowing you to change into shapes beyond that of your heart-beast. You may develop a number of different forms equal to your Will Over Form, though the troupe may allow you to replace any of your different forms with another, as long as you retain your heart-beast. Your heart-beast can never be replaced or lost, as it is the core of your being and the source of your magic. It is your soul given flesh. Your other forms are merely extensions of the different facets of your personality.

To learn a new form, you must spend time intently studying the shape you wish to become. Each season you devote to studying it earns you (Perception + Concentration) experience points towards mastery, with a minimum of 1. This knowledge can be studied from a text or a teacher, but you must halve your total if you have no physical access to the shape in question. You can study in a form other than your human shape, and it is easier to learn a new shape if it is similar to one you already know.

A new shape might even be a different version of a shape you have already mastered — perhaps a subtly different species, with different strengths and weaknesses (e.g. a draft horse rather than a riding horse). If the storyguide rules that the new form is very similar to the form in which you study it, you may also add your form's Personality trait to the experience gained. Likewise, if your study shape is extremely dissimilar, you may be required to subtract your Personality trait from your total.

When you have earned enough points to equal the target level, you have mastered the shape. You gain a new Personality trait for the form, and may change into it at will, just as you do your heart-shape. The formula for determining the target level is:

[inset: absolute value of (your Size while studying - the Size of the shape studied) + the number of shapes you already possess, including your heart-beast]

As Bjornaer magi learn new shapes, they often keep them separate in their minds by imagining themselves transforming “from” different locations within their bodies. Much like your first shape is your heart-shape, coming from deep within you, your other shapes might be brought forth by focusing your will elsewhere. This change is often associated with a purpose or emotion, and linked to the activities you perform while practicing the shape. It may be convenient for you to store the list of your shapes among your Personality traits, since they may help determine when you might decide to become a given form.

Different forms allow Bjornaer magi to overcome the physical shortcomings of their other shapes, to do things that their “normal” bodies cannot. By focusing on these weaknesses, you can

learn to draw forth the forces of nature that can help you offset them. Below are four kinds of shapes you might develop, to reflect different facets of your personality and different physical aspects you may wish to improve.

Avenging Form: You have discovered a shape with which you can defend yourself, much better than a human shape can fight. You are combat ready and fortified with natural weapons and armor. Often associated with the hands and arms, drawn from feelings of anger or fear, this form channels the strength of nature and turns you into a powerful adversary for those who would threaten you. Examples: stag, bear, wolf, shark.

Steady Form: This form protects you from the elements and allows you to weather time and turmoil with little difficulty. Bjornaer magi cultivate these forms for travel and for resting, or for protection. They are forms good for endurance and patience, usually associated with the back or legs. Examples: ox, tortoise, albatross, horse.

Cunning Form: This form is perceptive and clever, sometimes associated with the head and playful emotions. You might use it at times where speed and skill are essential, such as when delivering a message or hiding from trouble. It might be especially good when scouting or tracking, or spying on someone from a distance. Examples: hawk, cat, fox, hound.

Social Form: Many Bjornaer magi are reclusive among other humans, but develop animal shapes that are very sociable and friendly, especially among their own kind. These shapes might bring you comfort and safety, and facilitate your interaction with similar creatures in the wild. Examples: songbird, dolphin, antelope, bee.

Spells of the Many Forms

The followers of Bjornaer have developed several spells of non-Hermetic origin that they use during their ceremonies, to help them explore the personality and potential of an apprentice or initiate. Those who have reached this level of the hierarchy may have access to these spells.

Form of the Avenging Beast

MuCo25

R: Per/Touch, D: Sun, T: Ind

Spell Focus: A figure of the target (+3)

Requisites: Animal, Mentem

This spell changes a person into a ferocious land animal most appropriate to the target's dominant personality traits and motives. For example, a particularly Brave person might become a stag, while a Gluttonous person could be changed into a wolf. If the target is a Bjornaer in his Avenging form or heart-beast, his animal Personality trait may be added to appropriate rolls for the duration of the spell, much like an animal's Ferocity.

There are several versions of this spell, each designed to bring out a different type of animal, such as *Form of the Steady Form*, *Form of the Cunning Form* etc.





Form of the Beast of Desire

MuCo35

R: Touch/Near, D: Sun/Perm, T: Ind

Spell Focus: A figure of the target (+3)

Requisites: Animal, Mentem

This spell changes a person into a beast that most represents his current desires or motives. For example, a selfish man might become a pig, while a mournful woman might become a crow. This need is based upon the strongest thought or active Personality trait in the individual's mind, and many magi use an Intellego Mentem spell to first determine what the target is thinking about before unleashing this spell. While the target will retain his human awareness, he will begin to think like the animal if he spends too much time in this new shape.

Form of the Beast of the Heart

MuCo35

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

Spell Focus: A figure of the target (+3)

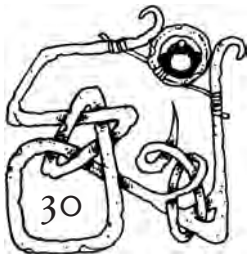
Requisites: Animal, Mentem

The individual changes into a beast that most represents his true nature. This is based upon the target's Personality traits, but also his appearance, goals, desires and preferences. If the target has a familiar, he will probably become that shape. If he is a follower of Bjornaer, he will become his heart-beast, or an animal that is most appropriate to his heart-shape if it is not an animal. The target retains his human awareness while transformed, but may find himself disoriented by his new body.

Followers of Bjornaer use this spell to evaluate a new apprentice and to determine what shape his heart-beast is likely to be. They also use it for a ceremonial event as a means of administering justice within many Bjornaer secret societies. The participants convene in a remote wilderness at dusk, to discuss and judge the transgressor's crimes. After the charges are described, they perform this ritual, and the transgressor is given one hour as a head start. The others then follow him, hunting him until dawn. If he survives, he is forgiven. If he is caught, he is torn apart and eaten. The shape that the target becomes is often taken as a sign of his guilt; the more innocent and harmless his form, the more likely it is that the hunters will allow him to escape.

Speech of Nature (+3 Virtue)

This inner mystery allows you to understand the languages of the wild, communicating at a deeper level with nature. You can speak directly with animals whose shape you have mastered by harnessing your knowledge of their ways. Through your understanding this mystery, you can speak directly with animals in their own tongue. You gain an arcane knowledge, Speak (Animal), for each of your mastered shapes. Like any Ability, you can improve it through practice and experience.



When in the corresponding form, you can communicate directly with similar animals at the level of your understanding. When in a different form, you may roll Communication + Speak (Animal) to attempt to speak with animals of that type, by approximating their sounds and body language. The ease factor of this roll varies depending on the similarities between the two forms, e.g. a human might approximate the language of a dog better than a snake.

When in the animal's native habitat, you may also use this Ability to call for other animals of your shape, assuming that they are nearby and able to respond. Because of your attunement to the form in question, your call resonates throughout the area, and can be heard by members of your species even if it is imperceptible to others. To determine the strength of the call, roll Presence + Speak (Animal). The storyguide should decide on an ease factor, depending on the beasts' proximity and the Bjornaer's reputation. Generally, animals will hear and respond on a 9+, and arrive as quickly as they can travel unless other circumstances prevent them. They will usually be well disposed towards the Bjornaer, unless they have some reason to fear or dislike her.

This Ability also makes it easier for you to perform Hermetic magic in your other shapes. Your Dexterity + Speak (Animal) may be added to your spellcasting totals, to balance the -15 penalty you suffer for no words or gestures. Obviously, if you do not suffer a penalty to spellcasting, this has no effect. Casting spells in this way still involves a noticeable amount of activity, however — enough to disturb other animals who may be watching. Animals who see you spellcasting will probably be spooked or threatened, and humans will probably assume you are rabid or dangerous.

Mythic Forms (+4 Virtue)

The highest initiates of Bjornaer mysteries have discovered how to change themselves into shapes of legend. They obtain complete mastery of their forms, so much that they can combine them into unusual hybrid shapes that display their true personality much better than their heart-beast can convey. With this inner mystery, you too can transform yourself into creatures of mythic significance, and become a strange creature never seen before in Mythic Europe, unique to your magical nature.

Shape of the Gift

Initiating this mystery gives you a Mythic shape, the Gift-shape, which can be a specific beast or shape of legend. It can be a dragon, an elemental, a giant — any creature with Magic Might. In the Gift-shape, you gain all the powers of that creature, and can use its Might as if it were your own. With this power, you can even develop a Gift-shape that does not exist, by imagining creatures that you have never seen. Your Will Over

Form score must be at least equal to the (Magic Might/5) of the beast in question to adopt it as your Gift-shape.

Initiation into the mystery usually involves examining the farthest reaches of your magical nature — often through Twilight — and months of studying the beast in action to become completely familiar with its behavior and shape. For many Bjornaer, the Gift-shape also involves some form of magical sacrifice, like a magical deficiency or non-spontaneity, as part of their Gift is forever transformed when they bring the creature from it into the world. It is said that this is why Bjornaer was unable to master Ignem.

When developing your Gift-shape, you must spend the time studying the creature as you would any new form. During this time, you must spend a number of pawns of Creo or Vim vis equal to the (target level × 5) of your intended shape. This is similar to the process for investing a magical item; in a sense you are opening yourself up to enchantment. Once this process is complete, you may adopt the Gift-shape as part of your repertoire, and change into it as you would any of your forms.

Signature Form

With understanding of Mythic Forms, you also gain control over the shape of distinct parts of your body. You can change only particular aspects of your shapes into those of your other forms. For example, you might change your arms into your Avenging Form, and your head into your Social Form.

Elite Bjornaer magi throughout history have developed distinctive combinations of animals, to better represent their inner shapes and their wizard's sigils. They become "new" creatures, in a sense, unique to the Bjornaer magi that invented them. They call these shapes their Signature Forms.

To change only a part of your body, roll Stamina + Will Over Form as normal, but the ease factor is 15. Any part of your body may be changed, but you cannot change things that are not part of your current form — you can't "add" new limbs or extra eyes, for example. You might change your skin into a shell, or your arms into wings, but the part should generally conform to the animal you are becoming, either in location on the body or in function.

Differences in size between your shapes are scaled to match the Size of the base creature, e.g. a lion changes its tail into that of a scorpion, and so its sting would become lion-sized. You can develop your unique combination of different shapes as a new form — your Signature Form — assuming that your Will Over Form is high enough to support another shape. Study the new shape the same way you would a new creature. You can change into this form the same way you do your other shapes, using the increased ease factor.

Esoteric Lineage: The Guardians

According to Hermetic accounts, Bjornaer the Founder was severely deficient with the Art of Ignem, to the point of being unable to produce a spark even late in life. This liability was passed down through many of her apprentices, since she could not teach it to them, and even in contemporary times many Bjornaer cannot master it.

During the Schism War, many Bjornaer were attacked and even slain as mistaken Diedne, for their Houses were very similar. Many Bjornaer retreated to Crintera to protect themselves from becoming involved in the war, and a militant young magus named Grantis with an unusual flair for Ignem appointed himself the guardian of the covenant. Through his efforts, magical skill and commanding presence, Crintera remained largely unharmed during the magical battles that raged across nearby lands.

Subsequently, Grantis took it upon himself to see that the magi of House Bjornaer would never become so weak that they could not defend themselves against the machinations of other magi. He fully trained three apprentices and tutored countless other Bjornaer in secret magic that they could use to protect the House. These magi became known as The Guardians, an elite group of Bjornaer with strong ties to Crintera.

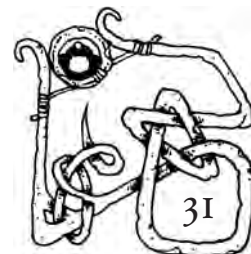
Grantis developed a particularly unusual Avenging Form: flame. By concentrating his will he could change into a searing hot sheet of fire, hurling himself upon his enemies with deadly efficiency and starting smaller fires wherever he landed. He could not maintain his shape for longer than a few minutes without fuel, losing Fatigue every round and eventually falling unconscious, but within the dry, hilly scrublands surrounding Crintera or the ranks of an approaching army, his shape was deadly. Traditionally, only the Guardians are allowed to master this shape, and those who develop it on their own are often given an ultimatum to join or fight. Other common Guardian shapes include the bear, the falcon, and the statue. Legends tell of one of Grantis' apprentices who learned to change himself into a fire-breathing dragon.

Bjornaer who manifest special understanding of fire or a strong desire to protect the House and who demonstrate their worth to its members may be initiated into the secrets of the lineage, including The Many Forms +2, Magical Affinity +3 (Ignem), and Mythic Form +4. Common ordeals include Subservience, Pledge, Sacrifice of Power and Zealot.

Starting Abilities: Will Over Form 3, Brawl 2, Magic Theory 3, Parma Magica 2, Scribe Latin 1, Speak Latin 3, Speak Own Language 4

Starting Experience Points: 23 + age

Required Virtues and Flaws: Will Over Form +1, The Many Forms +2, Cabal Legacy -1, Obligation (to the House) -2



Heretic's Corner: Artistic Ability

by Michaël de Verteuil

Heretic's Corner is a column dedicated to the simplification and streamlining of the Ars Magica rules. This is the third in the series of articles that began in the last issue of the now defunct and much mourned *Mythic Perspectives*. In the first article, "The Magic of Simplification" we discussed ways in which to reduce the type and number of die rolls, and examined the possibility of using a D6 instead of the usual D10. In the second article, "Less is more" (*Hermes' Portal* #1) we looked at consolidating and rationalizing Abilities in Ars Magica, and offered a new take on Specializations.

With this, the third article, I take aim at the Hermetic Arts themselves. In my most radical proposal yet, I will argue that we should transform Arts into Abilities. More specifically, I propose that the Arts be converted into Arcane Exceptional Knowledges available to those who have both the Gift and Hermetic training (i.e. Magic Theory). This step would permit us to consolidate the experience and learning rules and do away with spell levels.

The Ars magica system is widely recognized as one of, if not **the** best in the field of fantasy role playing. It is important that any proposed changes respect the basic flavour of the game. With those I am offering here, magi should be able to cast the same spells, the same way, and with the same relative difficulty as they currently can at the varying stages of their careers. The game should still be recognizably Ars Magica.

The current Ars rules are the product of an uneasy fusion of two similar yet distinct sets of mechanics: one for Hermetic magic, and one for everything else. Let's compare them.

A character's chances of successfully performing a "normal" feat, or of knowing, remembering or understanding something is determined according to a die roll, modified by the appropriate Characteristic, Ability score, and any relevant "environmental" factors (Virtues or Flaws, darkness, etc.). The resulting modified die roll is then compared to an Ease Factor set by the storyguide or (in a test of Abilities, for example) to the modified roll of an opponent.

A character's chances of successfully casting a Hermetic spell, on the other hand, is determined according to a die roll, modified by the appropriate Characteristic, Art scores (Form and Technique) and any relevant "environmental" factors (Virtues or Flaws, auras, etc.). The resulting modified die roll is then compared to a spell or effect level and to the modified magic resistance roll of an opponent.

Superficially, the only differences between the two mechanics are that one uses the score in one Ability in rolls against an Ease Factor, while the other uses the combined scores of two Arts against a spell or effect level. Yet, the two mechanics also involve different experience rules and point totals. Even though the two sets of experience points convert respectively into Ability and Art scores according to the same pyramidal function, an experience point in an Ability is five times as difficult to acquire through study than one in an Art. As such, Art scores are normally about 2.236 (the square root of 5, because experience points are converted into scores according to a pyramidal function) times higher than comparable Abilities.

Is this distinction really necessary? Do we really need separate rules and formulae for experience in Arts and Abilities? I think not! According to the rulebook, "Hermetic magi have a score in each Art, just as if it were an Ability" (p. 64). So let's make it so, and treat the Arts as a new set of Abilities: Exceptional Arcane Knowledges.

So how would this work? Well for a start, Art scores would be scaled back. This could be done by dividing the number of experience points in each Art by 5 and recalculating the scores accordingly. The separate formulae for books and learning would be done away with. As for any Ability, the minimum score would be 1 and not 0. Mage characters would thus have the 15 Arts as Exceptional Knowledges with a free experience point in each, in the same way as for the Exceptional Abilities they acquire as Virtues.

As Knowledges, the Arts could, at the discretion of the troupe and storyguide, also be improved through adventure experience, training and Lectio (unlike now). It could be argued that Arts are purely theoretical and, as such, should not be subject to "experimental" improvement. But why should this be more the case for Arts, which involve practical supernatural manipulation, than for Magic Theory, for example?

Nonetheless, such a change has significant implications from a game perspective that are worth weighing. If Arts can be improved through adventure experience, adventuring outside the laboratory becomes significantly more attractive to magi. There is still good reason to prefer laboratory study, however, beyond the risks inherent in adventuring. "A character can invest no more than one experience point in any Ability per story" (p. 186). There is no reason to assume that this would be any different for Arts if they were treated as Abilities. Thus study in the laboratory or the library yields a more focussed improvement with fewer experience points "wasted" (i.e. not contributing to actual score increases for significant lengths of time). I would also argue that Art improvement through training and Lectio should be possible so long as the rule of "one instructor for one student" be strictly adhered to for Arts.



These changes are not necessary consequences of turning Arts into Abilities. The troupe or storyguide can decide otherwise. They do open up options and possibilities, however.

Initial Experience Points

Beginning player-character magi would have 30 (instead of 150) experience points to distribute amongst their Arts. But as mentioned above, they would get a free experience point in each Art for a minimum score of 1. This means that if these 45 experience points are spread evenly, the mage will have a score of 2 in each Art. This is significant because it means that a beginning generalist mage could now train an apprentice since a new score of 2 in an Art is the equivalent of 5 under the current rules.

Some troupes or storyguides may feel that this makes beginning magi far too powerful. One option would be to reduce the number of experience points that can be freely distributed to the Arts to 15. While this would keep power levels nominally the same, it would also make initial specialization impossible. A compromise solution would be to reduce the total number of Art experience points (including the free 15) by 7. I personally prefer giving beginning magi the full 45. It does make them more powerful at the start but, as we shall see later, one of the consequences of scaled back Art scores is to reduce their relative importance. It will tend to balance out in the end.

Initial Spells

Instead of 150 levels, a beginning mage would now have 30 magnitudes of spells. Spells with Ease Factors (remember: $3 \times \text{spell magnitude}$) greater than **Form + Technique + INT + 6** cannot be initially known.

Objections

Let's digress a bit at this point and discuss some of the reasons that have been offered for keeping things the way they are.

1 "Magic is different." Is it? Last I checked Hedge Magic, Lion of the North and all the undeniably magical Exceptional Abilities in the main rulebook, all use the standard mechanics for Abilities. "Ok, but **Hermetic** magic is different." I don't buy this one either. If Hermetic magic is so different, why use the standard mechanics for such explicitly Hermetic features as Certamen, Penetration, Finesse and the Parma Magica (not to mention all the magical Affinities)?

2 "Too much change is not good for the game." Ah, the old battle cry of the dyed-in-the-wool conservative — I can't deny that if you apply a fine surgical scalpel to a body often enough, you end up with minced meat rather than a healed patient. But this can be used too handily as a defence against any change. Each proposed reform must be

assessed on its own merits. Changes that simplify, but do not fundamentally alter the game, can only improve it and make it more accessible to new players.

3 "High Art scores are needed to leave scope for fine granular variation, and because spell casting is done against spell levels and not Ease Factors." Here we are getting into more substantive arguments. Obviously, the formulae for spell casting will also have to be changed or spells will become more than twice as hard to cast as before because of the lower Art scores. But first let me deal with the granularity issue as they are both intimately linked.

Replacing Spell Levels with Ease Factors

How do fine gradations in Art scores matter? If the spells currently included in the standard grimoire varied in complexity by single levels, and if lab work was measured in days or even weeks, I could see how extra fine granularity (i.e. differentiation in Art scores) would be necessary. But they don't, and it isn't. Spells and magical effects vary in units of five levels, and lab work is measured in seasons. Indeed, it would be more accurate to say that Art scores currently have to be high because spell levels have been set artificially high, not the other way around. In fact, according to the canonical description of Hermetic magic, spell levels don't even exist. They are just a bookkeeping device. You don't believe me? "Magi refer to spell levels by using the word magnitude (magi do not use the term level), and one order of magnitude encompasses five levels of spells" (p. 68). If Hermetic magi don't use levels, why should we?

Not only am I proposing that we do away with separate rules for Arts, but I am also proposing that we do away with that old shibboleth: "levels". We already have magnitudes. Why do we need levels as well when they are only expressed in units of 5? (Spells of the first magnitude are insignificant exceptions.)

We still need magnitudes as measures of complexity and difficulty, but how do we translate them into Ease Factors? Here is the "simple" solution, and, as we shall see shortly when we look at the proposed casting formulae, the numbers work out quite nicely. According to the main rules, Ease Factors are normally expressed in units of 3. According to page 15 of the newer printing, the generic Ease Factor Chart is expressed as follows (it is included in the errata for the earlier printing):

Ease Factor Chart

Difficulty of Task	Target Number
Very Easy	3
Average	6
Difficult	9
Very Tough	12
Extremely Difficult	15





Just treat a first magnitude spell or effect as “Very Easy”, a second magnitude spell as “Average”, a third magnitude spell as “Difficult”, etc. In effect, the Ease Factor becomes three times the magnitude. It doesn’t get much simpler than that.

Spell Casting

Now on to the proposed new casting formulae:

Formulaic	Form + Technique + STM + die roll
Ritual	Form + Technique + STM + Concentration + die roll

For both Ritual and Formulaic magic, the spell succeeds if the modified roll is within 6 of the Ease Factor (i.e. within 2 magnitudes) at the cost of an additional level of Fatigue. So far, except for the fact that the roll is made against an Ease Factor instead of a spell level (and the Art scores are lower) the formulae are largely unchanged.

The value of auræ, gestures and voice also remain the same, though their relative impact increases. This increases the incentive for using a firm voice and bold gestures, which may in turn reduce the relative value of the +2 Subtle Magic and +5 Silent Magic Virtues. But more on Virtues later.

Spontaneous	(Form + Technique + INT + die roll) / 5, or (Form + Technique + INT + die roll) / 2 (if expending a Fatigue level)
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As for Ritual and Formulaic casting, this is rolled against an Ease Factor (3 × target spell magnitude). Unlike Formulaic and Ritual magic, however, Spontaneous spells always “succeed” to some degree (unless botched), though the degree of success might not be to the mage’s taste. The higher the roll, the more powerful the effect.

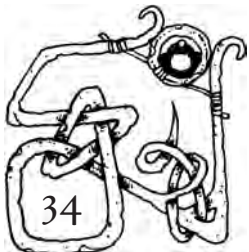
Acquiring New Spells

What about learning and inventing spells? If learning from a text, you succeed if your lab total **Form + Technique + Magic Theory + INT** is greater than or equal to the Ease Factor (which is still three times the spell magnitude).

When inventing a spell, a mage accumulates each season a number of spell points equal to **Form + Technique + Magic Theory + INT + Aura - the Ease Factor**.

The spell is successfully invented when the accumulated spell points equal or exceed the Ease Factor. As the rules and formulae for enchanting magical devices are basically similar to those for inventing spells, I don’t need to spell them out here.

The numbers for familiars, on the other hand, will need a bit of tweaking. An Animal score of 4 (instead of 10) would be needed to enchant a normal familiar, with a score of 6 (instead of 15) needed for an unusual cord. A +1 cord would only require 3 points, a +2 cord 9 points and a +3 cord 18 points. The bond qualities would be of 1st, 2nd and 3rd magnitudes at a cost of 3, 6 and 9 points respectively. A Primary or Secondary Power Bond



would boost the relevant Art scores by 1 and 2 respectively (not by 2 and 4).

A mage should now only need a score of 2 in each Art to train an apprentice. As mentioned earlier, this is now theoretically possible for a beginning mage. Though this is a change, I believe it to be a good one as it helps provide a non arbitrary definition of the point at which one becomes eligible for a gauntlet (i.e. the minimum time in which one could reasonably acquire the proficiency needed to train one’s own apprentice). Since most apprentices are going to aspire to be specialists to some degree, I don’t see many of them opting for this just so they can lord it over someone else for a change. The seasons of training that a starting mage would owe a new apprentice is, in any case, just too crippling a cost at such an early stage in a mage’s career, when greater profit can be derived from reading books than from lab work.

Thanks to *The Mysteries*, we now have mechanics for the instruction of the Arts to apprentices as Exceptional Abilities. Each Art corresponds to a +1 Outer Mystery of the Order of Hermes. In each year of apprenticeship, the future mage is initiated in one of the Arts by his master, with Subservience as the Initiation Ordeal. As all apprentices have a positive Intelligence, success is assured so long as they are first taught Hermes Lore (which conveniently also explains why all members of the Order start with a score of at least 1 in Hermes Lore).

“Other” Factors

So there you have it. Now that we have the new formulae and unified mechanics out of the way, it’s time to deal with one more potential objection:

4 “Scaling back Art scores reduces their relative importance in the various formulae as compared to other modifiers (Characteristics, Virtues, Flaws, spell foci, Form and Effect bonuses, lab quality, time spent away from the lab, familiar size, auræ, gestures, voice or Abilities) and even to the D10.” Well, this is true. I don’t think this is a bad thing however, as most (if not all) of these factors are individually currently rather marginal (though collectively they can add up). The new balance certainly makes enchanted devices more worthwhile. If making these factors mildly more significant is enough to discourage you from accepting this proposed simplification, you might consider scaling them back by a third (2.236 × 3 / 5). This doesn’t work for auras, of course, and I would recommend not doing it. Give these new rules a try for a while, and if you don’t like them, you can always change back. My players seem to feel that they (as players) have more control over the magic their characters perform as a result of the greater

consideration they have to give to these "other" external factors.

This objection does bring up the issue of whether the effectiveness of the Parma Magica and of the Might (i.e. magic resistance) of supernatural creatures should be reduced in line with the lower Art scores. Again, I would suggest leaving them the way they are. If anything, the 4th edition rules for improving Arts are so generous that the Parma Magica has lost some of its comparative lustre. The Might of creatures have also tended to increase in response to this Art "inflation". Now a Might of 10 will again provide a meaningful magic resistance.

Virtues and Flaws

Finally, a question arises as to whether the cost or effectiveness of Virtues and Flaws would need adjusting in the light of reduced Art scores and the use of Ease Factors instead of levels. Possibly, but mainly because the conversion of Arts into Abilities tends to highlight how unbalanced many of the Virtue and Flaw costs already are. Let's look at the following examples:

We know that a current Art experience point is 5 times as easy to acquire as an experience point in an Ability. As such it is readily apparent that the costs of the three Hermetic Virtues and Flaws are poorly assessed compared to the standard 7 experience points per Virtue point implicit in the other five mundane Virtues that grant extra experience points in Abilities. Working on the basis that an experience point is an experience point, +1 Extra Arts should grant 7 new (35 current) experience points in Arts (similarly +1 Extra Spells should

Virtue or Flaw	Cost	New Experience Points Value
Extra Arts	+1	2 (was 10)
Mastered Spells	+1	10
Stingy Master	-2	-8* (was 40*)
Magister in Artibus	+3	21
Educated	+1	7
Further Education	+1	7
Veteran	+1	7
Highly trained	+3	20

*This assumes that one spell level is worth one old Art experience point.

grant 7 magnitudes or 35 levels of extra spells), +1 Mastered Spells should only grant 7 experience points in spell mastery, and -2 Stingy Master should only cost -1.

An argument could be made that the costs of Virtues and Flaws that give specific pluses and minuses to magical activities should also be adjusted, but this might not be necessary. Take Method Caster for example. Since under this proposal all magical activities involving Arts are assessed against an Ease Factor normally 40% lower than the current spell or effect level, this Virtue could be reassessed at +3 to formulaic spell casting for a cost of +2. In fact, however, this Virtue is currently grossly too expensive. Increasing its value by 50% by leaving the cost the way it is would go some way towards pricing it more accurately. What these examples show is that the costs of individual Hermetic Virtues and Flaws are somewhat arbitrary and not well balanced with one another. Another project for rule simplification would be a system for determining the fair value/cost of Virtues and Flaws. But that will be for a future instalment of Heretic's Corner.

Scenario Contest

Heretic's *Portal* is looking for your scenario and mini-saga. The best entry gets a big prize, and we'll try to publish as many entries as possible. No theme is imposed, only quality is required!

Rules

- The scenario should not have been previously published, even in a fanzine.
- The scenario must be ready to play. All necessary elements have to be included in the text, excepting rules already published in ArM 4th ed. or in any official supplements. Necessary maps can be sketchy (they will then be redrawn upon publication).
- The scenario should be complete, including a proper introduction and a proper end.
- Pre-generated characters should be avoided.
- All important NPC characteristics should be included.

- The scenario should be divided in at least three installments. The total length must reach 18.000 words, not counting NPC characteristics. There is no upper limit.
- The scenario has to be written in understandable English.
- The scenario should be submitted before the 31st March 2002. It will be sent as a file in rtf or doc format (see the writer's guidelines on the website for your text organization).
- You can send as many entries as you wish.

Prize

- Authors of scenarios selected for publication will receive without charge a copy of the issue containing their scenario and will be paid as if they had submitted a regular article.
- One author will receive a complete set of the late *Redcap* fanzine (issues #1 to #7, including the two versions of issue #2).



Perfumery in Western Europe around the 13th century

by Sheila Thomas

Background details

The use of native aromatic herbs and flowers to sweeten the air had been known for a very long time. The Romans had introduced many species of aromatic plants to the fringes of the Empire where they were still cultivated. It was common for people to wear a garland of flowers, to hang fragrant plants indoors and to add aromatic plants to sweet-smelling rushes when these were spread on a floor (this last probably started as a Norman custom).

In the making of perfumed preparations, plants were usually used as dried flowers, dried leaves, dried and crushed roots, or extracts in water (by maceration or digestion), oils or fats (and later alcohol). An association between pleasant smells and good health was very widespread so there was considerable overlap between perfumery and healing.

From the 9th century, there was great trade between Byzantium and Venice bringing perfumes into Europe. There was much trade within Arabia, bringing perfumes from Baghdad to Muslim Spain. Arabian perfume arts were very highly developed; having learnt much from the Persians, they used ingredients from China, India and Africa, producing perfumes on a large scale. They had been using distillation since before the 9th century.

Al-Hawi, a book by Rhazes, who lived in the late 9th or early 10th century, contained a chapter on cosmetics. It was translated into Latin in France in the late 12th century.

Musk and floral perfumes were brought to north west Europe in the 11th and 12th centuries from Arabia, through trade with the Islamic world and with the returning Crusaders. Those who traded for these were most often also involved in trade for spices and dyestuffs. There are records of the Peppercorers Guild of London which go back to 1179; their activities include trade in spices, perfume ingredients and dyes. There are records from the reign of Edward I to show that spices and other aromatic exotic materials were traded in England.

Use of alcohol in perfumery was known in north west Europe in the 12th century but was not widespread until later. A variant of distilled alcohol, rather than alcohol mixed with water, was known in France in the 13th century, prepared by using quicklime in the mix to remove much of the water. Alcohol-based perfume was well known in



parts of mainland Europe and came into use in England in the 14th century.

A common technique was to extract essential oil into fat and use it like that or then to remove the essential oil from the fat with alcohol. Another was to heat the plant material in water. Beeswax was sometimes used as a base instead of fats and oils. Pot Pourri was originally made and used wet; it started as the residue of the perfume-making process.

Plants likely to have been available for collection or cultivation

Scented Agrimony: perennial herb; dried flowers and leaves.

Angelica: biennial herb; reputed to be effective against evil spirits and infectious disease; fragrant oil extracted from the seeds and root for use in perfumery, seed and root used dry in pot pourri.

Apple: blossom and fruit used- fresh, dried or extract.

Avens (Geum): dried rhizomes and leaves used.

Birch: essential oil from leaf buds used.

Blackcurrant: essential oil from flower buds used.

Broom: flowers used.

Calamint: several species used dried or as essential oil.

Camomile: used as a herbal medicine, for strewing, as dried flowers or oil extracted from flowers.

Clover: dried flowers used.

Cyperus (Sedge roots): rhizomes yield a violet-like fragrance; used dried and powdered.

Elder flower: used as oil extracted from flowers, or dried flowers.

Fennel: essential oil from seeds; also has culinary and medical uses; reputed to ward off evil spirits and witches.

Fern: oil extracted from rhizomes of Common Male Fern had medical and perfume uses.

Feverfew: perennial plant; extract from flowers and leaves used in medicine and, less frequently, in perfume.

Hawthorn: fragrant flowers.

Hyssop: extracted oil or dried leaves.

Lavender: extracts and dried flowers and leaves.

Lemon balm: oil from leaves and dried leaves.

Lily of the Valley: flowers.

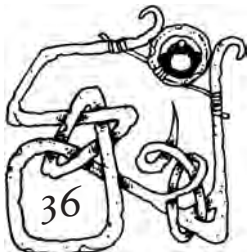
Melilot: dried flowers and leaves.

Milfoil (Yarrow): dried flowers; diabolical associations.

Mint: medical, culinary, strewing and perfume use.

Oak moss (lichen): powdered, used as a fixative.

Orris (Iris rhizome): dried iris rhizomes; fixative with violet fragrance.



Rose: extracts from petals and fresh or dried petals.

Rosemary: strewing herb; dried leaves.

Rue: oil from leaves; medical and perfume use; reputed to guard against witches.

Sage: dried leaves.

Tansy: strewing herb; dried leaves.

Violet: oil from flowers.

Ingredients possibly available by trading

Aloewood: Introduced into Europe by Arabs in 8th century and spread rapidly.

Aromatic heartwood from an evergreen tree obtained by the Arabs from China, Assam, Malaysia which produces a fragrant oil when diseased. Important ingredient of pomanders (as oil) and pot pourri (dried).

Alpine rose: Oil obtained from the roots

Ambergris: Sperm whale excretion (though this origin was unknown for a very long time) found on the Indian Ocean coast. Used since early Arabian times (6th century) in alcohol

Ammoniacum: Juice from a North African plant. Used as incense.

Anise: Cultivated through Europe and in England during Middle Ages; medical and culinary use; dried seeds and oil extracted from them used in perfumery.

Apricot kernels: oil extract frequently used in early Arabian perfumes.

Basil: culinary and perfume use; essential oil and dried leaves.

Ben Oil: from seeds of the Moringa tree native to North India frequently used as a base in early Arabian perfumes.

Bitter almond: essential oil from the fruit used as a base.

Camphor: crystals formed from oil extracted from wood; very frequently used in early Arabian perfumes.

Caraway: oil extracted from fruit and leaves; culinary and perfume use.

Cassia bark: culinary use of dried buds; oil used in perfume; dried bark used. N.B. there is some confusion in old texts between cassia, cinnamon and other unidentified fragrant barks.

Cedar wood: dried twigs and roots used in incense; oil extract used in perfume.

Cinnamon: dried bark used as perfumed beads and in pomanders; oil from leaves used in perfume and unguents. N.B. there is some confusion in old texts between cassia, cinnamon and other unidentified fragrant barks.

Civet: glandular secretion from civet cat from Africa, used in very small quantities; became popular in Arabia in the 10th century.

Clary sage (Salvia): fragrant oil and dried leaves; also used for eye problems.

Cumin: oil from dried seeds; also had medical and culinary uses.

Dill: oil extracted from plant; culinary, medical and perfume use; reputed to be good against witchcraft.

Frankincense: gum resin extruded from wood of certain trees; often used in incense.

Gum arabic: gum extruded by Acacia trees; dried and used in incense; used in early Arabian perfumes.

Jasmine: leaves, flowers and oils; commonly used in early Arabian perfumes.

Labdanum: resin secreted by Cistus (Rock Rose) species popularly collected by combing it from the beards of goats; used in early Arabian perfumes and in European pomanders.

Lovage: dried leaves and roots.

Marjoram: oil from seeds and leaves and dried leaves; medical, culinary and perfumes uses.

Mignonette (Reseda): essential oil from flowers.

Musk: glandular secretion from musk deer; very frequently used in early Arabian perfumes.

Myrrh (includes Opoponax): gum resin from trees; used in perfumes and incense.

Myrtle: oil or dried flowers and leaves; used as berries and fresh leaves in early Arabian perfumes.

Rosewater (also Attar of Roses): made by a distillation process from rose petals in water. Attar (essential oil) obtained by redistillation of rosewater. Very popular in Arabia.

Saffron: dried stigmas of crocus and oil from these; culinary and perfume use; very important in Arabian perfumery.

Sandalwood: oil from the heartwood of a tree; fragrance and fixative.

Savory: dried leaves and flowers; culinary and perfume uses.

Storax: resin from bark used in incense and pomanders.

Sweet orange: essential oil from the fruit peel; peel also used dried.

Terebinth: oil and gum resin; used in pomanders.

Thyme: oil from leaves; leaves used in incense.

Valerian: oil, leaves and roots; medical, culinary and perfume use.

References:

The Perfume Handbook, Nigel Groom, Chapman & Hall; London SE1 8HN; 1992. ISBN 0 412 46320 2

A-Z plus recipes

History of Perfume, Frances Kennett, George G Harrap & Co; London WC1V 7AX; 1975. ISBN 0 245 52135 6

Qoustantin avec sa mere hyrene comença lan de mes^z viij^e m. et iii. et regnerent ensemble p. ans. et plus cōstantin pua sa mere de l'empire et ipeu tout seul vii. ans. Et quant hyrene qui estoit moult courroucée se trouua aprie vne fois en l'airant son filz; constantin elle lestrangla. et demora toute seule. et ipeu m. ans.

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





Sword, Shield and Lens

by Niall Christie

I have noticed that in sagas there are certain magic items which players almost always have their magi invent, in order to provide them with certain basic protections. It occurred to me that this actually fitted in rather well with the game background, in that there might be magic items which magi regarded as being an essential part of their basic equipment. It was from this notion that the inspiration for the following came.

The Sword, Shield and Lens are three magical items which are often found in the stores of covenants. Each takes the form of a gold signet ring, engraved with a sword, shield or lens as appropriate. Each ring is intended to provide the carrier with a set of useful spells which may be used in the course of expeditions, with each having a different emphasis in the spells it carries. In some ways they are the Mythic equivalent of the Swiss Army penknife. They are often given to younger magi to take with them on errands for the older magi, usually with stern instructions to bring them back again unharmed! House Verditius has made these items part of its standard repertoire, and is happy to sell them to magi from other houses, provided the price is right. Other variants of these rings undoubtedly exist, with different emphases, but the three described here are the most common versions.

The Sword

The Sword is intended for use in combat. It can be used to cast the following spells:

- *Pilum of Fire* (CrIg 20), unlimited use. Triggered by pointing at the target with the forefinger extended.
- *Hands of the Grasping Earth* (Re(Mu)Te 15), 24 times per day. For use with targets which are too tough to be harmed by the *Pilum of Fire*, or to take targets alive. Triggered by pointing a clenched fist at the target.
- *Snap of Awakening* (ReMe 10), once per day. Useful for waking the nearest shield grog in a hurry! Triggered by snapping the fingers.

On the Road to Adventure

by Niall Christie

One of the main strengths of the Ars Magica game is the rich background of the Order of Hermes. The system of Houses provides many opportunities for exciting plots concerning themselves with intra-Order relations. In addition, the Order itself has variable relations with the mundanes, which

- *Mystic Shield* (ReTe 35, R: Reach, D: Diameter, T: Group (to cover all weapons which come in range), Requisite: Herbam — deflects all attacks by wood, stone and metal weapons away from the caster), 24 times per day. Triggered by touching the sword engraving to the wearer's forehead.

The Shield

The Shield is intended to provide useful indirect aid and protection. It can be used to cast the following:

- *The Chirurgeon's Healing Touch* (CrCo 20), 50 times per day. Duration may be extended using raw vis. Triggered by touching the engraving of the shield to the target's wounds.
- *The Seven-League Stride* (ReCo 35), 24 times per day. Triggered by touching the shield engraving to the wearer's forehead (possibly a little icky if you've just been using the ring to heal wounds!).
- *Winds of Mundane Silence* (PeVi 25), 24 times per day. Used primarily to remove the magic effects of enemies around the wearer, most particularly invisibility. Triggered by holding out the hand with the palm up, and blowing across it, as if blowing away a leaf.

The Lens

The Lens is intended to provide insight and wisdom for investigations. It can be used to cast the following:

- *Posing the Silent Question* (InMe 20), unlimited use. Triggered by clenching the fist whilst looking into the eyes of the target.
- *Opening the Tome of the Animal's Mind* (InAn 25, Range changed to Eye), 24 times per day. Triggered by touching the lens engraving to the wearer's forehead.
- *Converse with Plant and Tree* (InHe 25), 24 times per day. Triggered by touching the lens engraving to the wearer's lips.
- *Whispers through the Black Gate* (InCo(Me) 10, Range reduced to Touch), once per day. Triggered by touching the lens engraving to the corpse (then wash the ring before talking to plants and trees!).

also can lead to fascinating stories. Another strength of the game is the way that sagas are normally based on the life of a covenant, which in some ways is the most important character, even more so than the individual magi, companions and grogs. A third strength is the troupe style of play, which gives players the opportunity to play a variety of characters, from powerful magi to lowly grogs.

In this article I am proposing to tread dangerous ground and deliberately disregard these strengths. I would like to hark back to an older



time, a simpler time, when every player had a single character, and they formed a group that roamed the world, righting wrongs and gaining renown through their heroic deeds. I would like to present some suggestions as to how the *Ars Magica* rules might be adapted to allow a more old-fashioned game, in which the characters form a traditional adventuring party that travels together on a quest for fame and fortune. In such a context the rules require some modification, in order to balance the party. The following are my suggestions as to how this might be done, and would be suitable for games set either still in the Mythic Europe setting, or in a saga set in another world. No doubt other players of the game will think some of them are twaddle and have their own suggestions, but to me they seem to be the most appropriate changes to make.

Background

For a game involving adventuring parties, the strictly organised Order of Hermes seems inappropriate. Hence it is suggested that it should not exist. In a Mythic European setting, Hermetic magic is an extension of Graeco-Roman mysticism, and has been passed down through the ages via Classical texts, which are now studied by scholars of the more esoteric arts. In an alternative world setting, it would be easiest to assume that the *Ars Magica* system is either the way magic works, and is the way that it has always worked, or that it originated in either the works of a famous sage (call him Bonisagus if you wish!), or the gift of a god. The exact background will vary according to the setting.

Character Creation

In the party-based game, players play either magi or companions. Character creation requires some changes, in order to give balanced parties of adventurers. In particular, the following changes should be made.

Virtues and Flaws

Magus characters receive 10 points of Virtues and Flaws, as usual. There are no House templates or starting Virtues and Flaws. Virtues and Flaws relating to the Order are not available. However, *all* magi automatically have the Non-Spontaneous Flaw. They can only cast the spells they know. Companion characters receive 15 points of Virtues and 10 points of Flaws. In a Mythic European setting, they are still required to choose a social class Virtue or Flaw. In an alternative world setting, they may or may not depending on the background.

Abilities

Magi always start the game with Speak Own Language 5 and Magic Theory 3. They receive an additional amount of experience points to spend equal to age + 34. They may choose freely from the Abilities listed in *ArsM4*, p. 53. However, it is suggested that Certamen and Parma Magica

should no longer exist, unless the Storyguide wants them to. Companions choose their Abilities as normal, starting with a score of 5 in Speak Own Language and receiving $2 \times$ age in experience points with which to buy Abilities.

Magical Training

Magi choose Arts and spells as normal. However, as magi may not use spontaneous magic, lower level spells become more useful again.

Magic

In the party-based game, spontaneous magic is not used. In regular sagas, much of the aid given to magi by companions can be replicated through magic, which sometimes leaves the companions with little to do. However, in the party-based game these characters come to the fore again, as magi can only cast the spells they know. This results in a more balanced party, more suited to an old-fashioned campaign.

Lab Activities, Study and Training

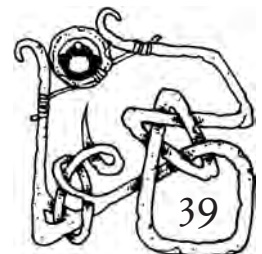
Magi may still engage in normal lab activities and study, if they can gain access to appropriate labs, texts or trainers. However, in a world without the Order of Hermes, they are less likely to have opportunities to do so. They will not have their own labs, and texts and trainers will be harder to find. Storyguides may wish to counterbalance this slightly by incorporating a Mages' Guild into the game background. At guild houses in large towns magi might be able to gain access to labs, libraries and trainers, although such access is likely to be more limited than it is in the regular game. Alternatively, characters might gain access to labs or texts through plundering the possessions of whatever dire sorcerers they slay, or in return for services or payment rendered to non-player characters, such as patrons or scholars. Knowledge might also be gained in more unusual ways, for example from magical items or places.

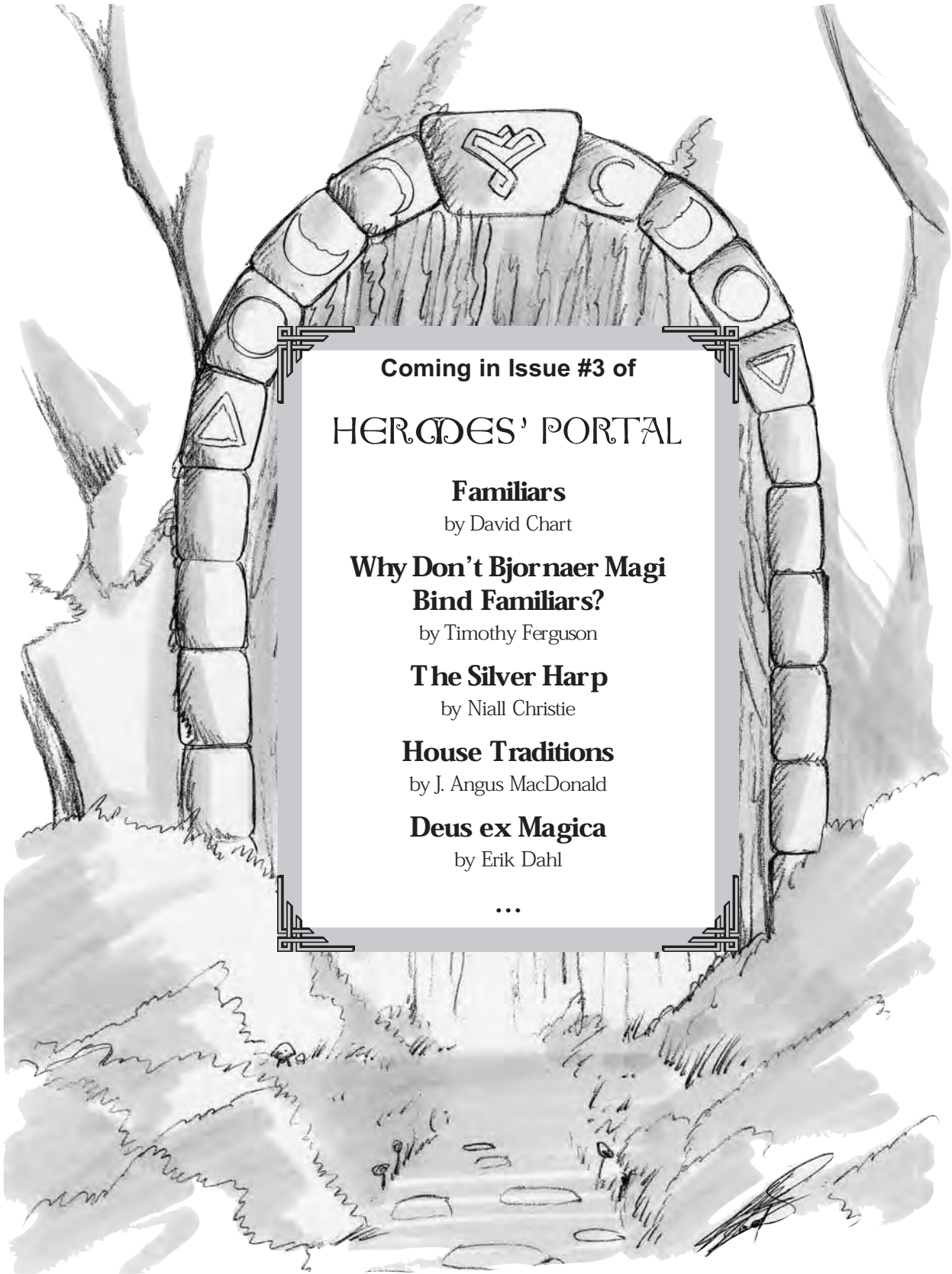
Companion characters will also want to study or train from time to time. Once again, such opportunities may come available through services rendered to a non-player character, or from magical items or texts found while on quests.

The party-based game does not lend itself to 'down-time' in the same way as does the regular game. Due to the lack of a covenant, any down-time that is available is most likely to be spent on practice, rather than other forms of study. However, the more intense concentration on stories is likely to give a faster rate of experience gain. It is suggested that magi be allowed to spend this story experience on Techniques and Forms, if they wish.



MECENAS ATAVIS FORTI REGIBUS.
 & presidium - & dulce decus meum.
 Sunt quos curricula puluerem olympicum
 Collegium huc. metaq. ferunt. DENIUM





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