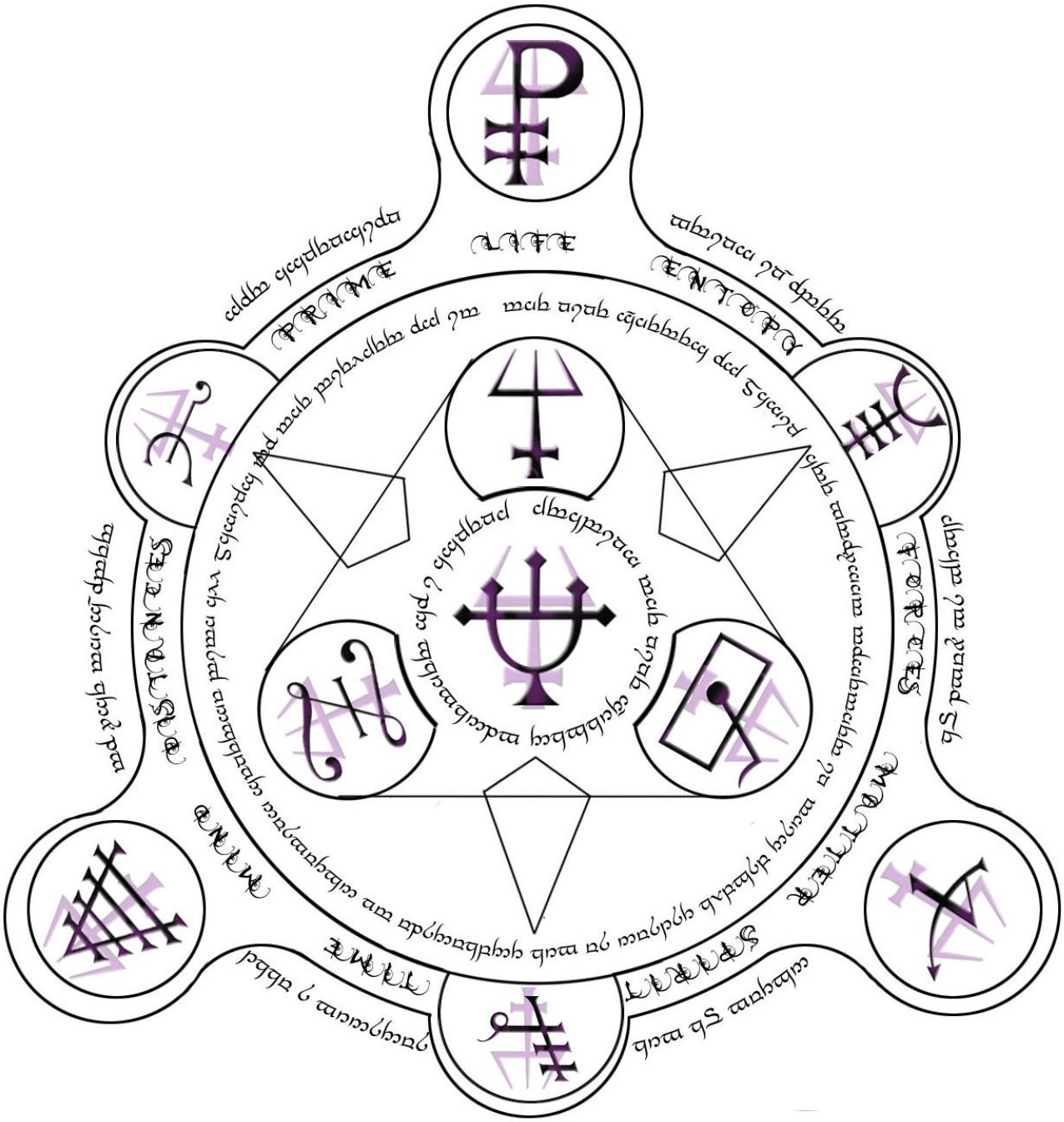
One World By Night
Mage Packet, 2020



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OWBN Mage Packet 2020

Introduction 3
Table of Contents 3
Section 1 - Mage Setting / Genre 3
Mage Thematics 3
Themes 3
Paradigm 4
Friends & Foes 4
The Traditions 4
Technocracy 5
Nephandi 8
Infernalists 10
Marauders 11
Umbra / Spirits 12
High vs. Middle vs. Low 12
Vidare 13
Spirit Power Levels 13
Avatar Storm 15
Mage Mechanics 15
Errata / Clarifications 15
Sphere Levels 16
Conjunctional Effect Difficulty 16
The Arete Challenge 17
Targeting Effects 17
Foci 17
Optional Rules 18
Attributes / Traits 19
Fast Casting / Dynamic Magic 19
"Success enhancement" Optional Rules 20
Limitations and Power Levels 20
General Principles & Philosophy 20
Matching Power Levels 20
Overlooked Limitations 21
"Problem" effects 22
Past Alteration 22
Polyappearance / Co-Location 24
Curse of Luck 24
Experience/Sheet Changes 25
Friction Curse 25
Activate Next Clone 25
Enchant Life/Blessing 26
Suggested General Rules 26
Grades of Success 27
Trait Bonuses 27
Magical initiative 28
Damage Reduction 28
Retests 28
Bombs/Ties 29
Challenge Requirement 29
Sensory effects vs Stealth 30
Range 30
Contingent/Hung effects 31
Creative attacks 31
Arete 32
Prime & Node Rules 32
Quintessence 32
Gaining Quintessence 33
Quintessence Usage 34

Other types of Supernatural energy 35
Quintessence availability 36
Nodes 36
Caerns vs Nodes 38
Resonance 38
Types of Resonance 38
Resonance Effects 39
Acquiring and Removing 40
Jhor 40
External Resonance 41
Paradox 41
Accumulation 42
Testing for Backlash 42
Backlash Results 42
Bleeding off Paradox 44
Wonders 44
Prime-based items 44
Spirit based items 45
Pattern-Sphere based items 46
Section 2 - Cross-Genre Interaction 47
General Genre Concerns 47
General Cross Genre Mechanics 47
Effect based Countermagic (Mage) 47
Requirements 48
System 48
Unweaving 48
Effect based Countermagic (other Supernaturals) 49
Vampire 50
Vampire Thematics 50
Order of Hermes 50
Euthanatos 50
Verbena 50
Technocracy 51
Vampire Mechanics 51
Interacting Magically 51
Hermetic Thaumaturgy & Countermagic 51
Werewolf 51
Werewolf Thematics 51
Dreamspeakers 52
Verbena 52
Euthanatos 52
Akashic Brotherhood 52
Technocracy 52
Werewolf Mechanics 53
Interacting Magically 53
Delirium 53
Paradox Spirits 53
Changeling 53
Changeling Thematics 53
Verbena 53
Dreamspeakers 53
Order of Hermes 54
Marauders 54
Changeling Mechanics 54
Interacting Magically 54
Banality 54
Mists .....- 55 -
The Dreaming .....- 55 -
Wraith .....- 1 -
Wraith Thematics .....- 1 -

Euthanatos ..... - 1 -
Dreamspeakers ..... - 1 -
Wraith Mechanics ..... - 1 -
Interacting Magically ..... - 1 -
Low Umbra / Dark Umbra / Shadowlands Travel ..... - 2 -
Others ..... - 2 -
Section 3 - Hedge Magic ..... - 2 -
Mages teaching Hedge Magic ..... - 2 -
Dealing with Enchantment & Alchemy ..... - 3 -
Section 4 - Binding Rules and Restrictions ..... - 4 -
World-changing effects ..... - 4 -
"Fixing" Supernaturals ..... - 4 -
Supernaturals with Hedge Magic/Numina - 5 -
Avatar Enslavement ..... - 5 -
This Old Umbra (Changing Umbral Realms) - 5 -
Grimoires and Primers ..... - 6 -
Section 5 - Legalities ..... - 6 -
Section 6 - Extras ..... - 6 -
Casting Cheat Sheet ..... - 6 -

Introduction

The purpose of this packet is to create a standard background and baseline for mages in One World by Night. As the most dynamic system out of all the World of Darkness games, Mage presents a number of challenges. After all, arguments about rules are common even when powers such as disciplines and gifts are spelled out in detail. What is presented here is intended as a baseline for Storytellers to work from, so that mechanical issues between games are minimized. If everyone starts on the same page, there will hopefully be less overall divergence.

As such, most of this packet consists of rules suggestions and guidelines. The only portion of this packet that shall be considered binding in OWBN is the section titled "Binding Rules and Restrictions." Everything else should be considered an optional resource.

This 2019 packet has been edited for clarity and introduces several new sections to assist STs in maintaining an appropriate power level for their game and giving guidelines to some of the more muddled areas of Mage such as paradigm magical items, familiars, quintessence availability, etc.

Table of Contents

Section 1 - Mage Setting / Genre

Mage Thematics

Themes

Mage is different from many of the WoD games in that one of the central elements of the genre is hope. That is not to say that the theme of mage must be happy - indeed, it is also laced with elements of hubris, existential horror, and morality (or lack thereof) in the face of power. But among it all, there is still a core of hope - that human beings can learn to perceive and to rise above how they currently exist. The tagline of many of the other WoD games is bleak or manipulative - the Apocalypse, the Oblivion, the Masquerade. But Mage's tagline is 'the Ascension,' and to ignore that is to miss a large part of the subtext of the genre as a whole.

Apart from that, as mentioned, there are numerous themes available for Mage. A chronicle can focus on more local, "street level" problems, or it can focus on Umbral jaunts and visiting other realms and planets. In organized play, however, it is recommended that STs make sure that something ties characters back to the 'real world' and keeps them invested in it. Not only is disconnecting from the world a danger for higher powered characters, it is also a danger for a chronicle as a whole. A spacefaring Mage-trek the Next Ascension game where the PCs spend months or years in outer space might be great fun with a small troupe or tabletop, but in the end such a game has little purpose in networked play.

Paradigm

Paradigm is one of the most critical aspects of Mage. Fundamentally, if you look at how a mage practices magic, their paradigm will shape what they do and how they do so.

To create a holistic whole, we recommend looking at the Mage 20th Anniversary edition "Focus" rules. These rules, even if not used mechanically, offer a good framework that allows players and STs alike to clearly understand the skeleton of the character's paradigm. It is essentially laid out as three questions.

Why does magic work? Perhaps you have the blood of the gods in your veins, perhaps the universe is actually a giant mechanism and you understand how the secret gears work. Perhaps everything is actually an illusion projected from the truth, the universe is a 'holographic' projection. The answer to this question sets the basic worldview of the mage in respect to magic.

How does your mage tap into that magic? These practices are outlined in M20, but are not limited. Alchemy, Witchcraft, Mathematics, Prayer, Yoga - all of these are practices by which a mage may tap into the forces outlined by the first question. Typically a mage will have 2-4 practices. We advise starting characters to have no more than 3, to allow room for growth down the road.

What tools does your mage use in those practices? These instruments are what would traditionally be referred to as "foci," and might include chant, potions, wands, dancing, or any other item or specific activity one might associate with a given practice.

By planning out that path from the most basic element ("magic exists") to the most specific ("I often use cauldrons when doing spells"), a player can more easily get their head around the paradigm of their character.

Friends & Foes

The Traditions

In OWbN, the Traditions reformed in 2019 under the relatively progressive New Horizon Council. Tradition representatives were elected, and set forth a basic structure. While young, the Tradition council is once again formally assembled and active for the first time since the turn of the millennium.

For detail on the Traditions in OWbN beyond what is presented here, please see the upcoming Tradition Council packet.

Organization

Mage is also somewhat unique in that there is little structure for most of them, at least on the local scale, beyond what characters themselves create. The local structures of other supernaturals tends to have a set format - Vampires in a city usually have Princes who have Primogen who have clan member (or Archbishops who have Bishops who have packs, or any of the variations of the independents). Garou have septs who have elders who have packs. Changelings have Kings and Barons and Dukes and so on. There are some variations in style, but the basic building blocks are the same, and there is a clear chain from the local level to higher levels.

Mages on the other hand may have chantries (sometimes). But each chantry is essentially founded on its own charter. Unlike the aforementioned supernaturals, there are few set roles in local chantries, though there are some traditional ones that may or may not exist. And unlike the aforementioned supernaturals, there is generally nothing binding a mage to a chantry. Membership is voluntary, and there is no overarching law enforcing "membership" of all mages to a national or local structure.

While there are some specific exceptions (notably the Technocracy), mages as a whole simply have no single set standard for how they organize at the local level.

Technocracy

Organization

With its influence, mastery of technology, and anti-supernatural agenda, the Technocracy is often a potential antagonist for many games. However, it's easy to forget that they are not omniscient, omnipotent, nor do they have unlimited resources.

The Union's resources are extensive, but they are also spread wide. Think of them in some ways like the military – they can bring incredible force to bear if given sufficient reason, but it takes quite a bit to justify such a mobilization and expenditure of resources. The admonishment "Do not wake the sleeping giant," applies quite well to the Technocracy.

The basic organization of the Technocracy consists of the following, from the top down:

Control

This is a group mind made up of the highest ranking Technocrats. Any technocrat of Master rank may access this group mind. In recent years, Control took quite a blow, losing a large number of its more powerful minds. In some ways, however, this has actually benefitted the Union. While much of the sheer experience available to Control was lost, those remaining and those assuming new places have led to a quicker, more nimble thought process. In many cases, this process has been more suited to the recent times of even more limited resources and a need for rapid and decisive action.

Masters

Technocratic Masters, on the individual level, often become involved in their own projects and passions, wheeling through the politics of the Union to acquire the necessary funding and other resources. Those that prefer field work or seek to establish themselves in a better position for the future often assume responsibility for regional operations. Several Masters may operate in the same region, each representing the interests of a different Convention (the equivalent of a Tradition).

Experts

Experts are supervisors, and will often be responsible for constructs (Technocratic chantries) or for directly supervising a number of amalgams (Technocratic cabals). Often, the Experts of an area will be the most immediate leadership that Technocratic agents ever directly interact with.

The Enlightened

Also called Agents or Operatives, these are the bread and butter of Technocracy ground operations. They are the trained and Awakened hands of the Union. These operatives are the ones shouldering much of the delicate field work. Typically, three to six agents are assigned into a working team called an amalgam, and are used as a response team to address situations that fit the skills of the group.

Minor Agents

Also called "employees," these are recently Enlightened members who have not yet undergone the degree of training necessary to allow them to work reliably in the field. Much of their time is spent training and learning more advanced Procedures, and will be assigned to work with a local construct until they are ready to progress up the ladder.

Citizens

The foundation of the Union rests on its un-Enlightened brethren. There are quite a large number of otherwise normal people who serve as the eyes and ears, and occasionally the hands of the Technocracy. While rarely in a place of obvious power, they are often well regarded wherever they are placed. Most universities have at least one or two professors, librarians, or guidance counselors who keep an ear out for anything of interest to the Union. Police dispatchers are a favorite target for recruitment, as are content editors for media outlets and telephone company engineers. Not all of them are completely "in the know," but a surprising number of them have a fairly complete perspective on what is going on, albeit from the perspective of the Union.

It is highly recommended that Storytellers consult with the Mage Coord if things reach a point where a Supervisor has to report some disturbing news up the command chain, or regional assets or better become involved (Master level intervention, large Constructs, or the requisition of force in the form of troops, Devices, or other similar things).

Use in Non-Mage Games

There are some basic guidelines to dealing with the Technocracy in games without a strong mage presence. Reading the source material would be ideal, but for non-mage storytellers here is a brief synopsis.

1. ***The Technocracy does not play well with others.***
   Any long term interaction with non-mage supernaturals of any sort is going to be long distance and of extremely limited parameters, and most likely at the Amalgam level or below. Even more so than any other group in the World of Darkness, the Technocracy will not share secrets with, establish treaties with, or otherwise ally with any other supernatural group except on the smallest scale and the most controlled situations.
2. ***Keep your head down, and you'll be fine.***
   While any sort of alliance with the Technocracy is pretty much impossible, it is possible to get on their good side, if by good side you mean the side the plasma cannon is not pointing. Vampires maintaining the Masquerade will generally be left alone. Garou killing banes in the city will

likely be given tacit approval. As far as the Union is concerned, it has enough slavering monsters to deal with. Well behaved monsters or monsters that kill other monsters without creating a fuss can be left alone until last.

3. ***Resources are limited.***
   While the Union does have things such as HIT Marks, Void Engineer ships, and plasma cannons, these things are in limited supply. Only a truly extraordinary threat should warrant such an extravagant response. (And as a side note, HIT Marks should not be deployed against non-mage supernaturals. They are designed to resist True Magic, and are too valuable to waste sending against enemies they were not designed to combat).
4. ***Subtle and simple is better***
   This goes hand in hand with item 3. The odds are that if the Union has its attention drawn to a particularly flagrant vampire (or werewolf) and believe that he needs to be eliminated, they are not going to airdrop troops on him in the middle of the night. They are much more likely to continue watching him until they locate his haven, and then take him out during the day with a single infiltrator and a can of lighter fluid. They can also attack a vampire's influence, possibly detain herd, and otherwise undercut a target before or instead of eliminating him.

Use in Mage Games

Mage games obviously give Storytellers an opportunity for deeper interaction with the Technocracy (assuming the game is not Technocracy based to begin with). The points above still hold true for mages, except that the Technocracy is much more willing to interact and talk with fellow Awakened humans. Indeed, with the pullback of the pogrom, there are some incidents of the Technocracy and the Traditions working together on a limited basis, especially when facing an outside threat.

That said, with the Tradition Council rebuilt, it remains to be seen what position they will take on further cooperation with the Union.

A full write up of the interaction between the Technocracy and the Traditions is beyond the scope of this document, but keep in mind that the heated war of the past has cooled down considerably. For more information, two good books to consult are The Guide to the Technocracy and The Guide to the Traditions.

Running a Technocracy Game

Running a Technocracy game is a particular challenge in a networked organization. It is certainly possible, but STs should be aware of the challenges. Technocracy characters are to a degree inherently hostile toward other supernaturals (Reality Deviants), and only recently have they pulled back from what was essentially a shoot-on-sight policy (the Pogrom) for non-Union mages. As such, cross-game interaction with any other chronicle except the occasional other Technocracy game becomes very difficult.

In addition, the more regimented structure of the Technocracy and the fact that higher level operatives are generally put in either regional or research positions makes it more difficult for a game to operate

"independently" since the ST does not necessarily have the authority to create/portray regional officers or other such NPCs that would hold influence outside a single chronicle's area.

As such, it is recommended that any chronicle wishing to run a Technocracy game consult with the Mage Coordinator's office before doing so.

Nephandi

Types of Nephandi

Nephandi are perhaps the premiere "bad guys" of mage. A full exposition about them is beyond the scope of this document, but a there are a few key items of which Storytellers should be aware.

There are three main "types" of Nephandi. There are those that serve the Wyrm, those that serve the strange powers of the Deep Umbra that wait beyond the second Horizon, and Infernal Nephandi. They do not necessarily get along, but all seek the same goal – the destruction of everything that exists, including themselves.

Infernal Nephandi are a bit of an oxymoron. Despite their professed subservience to demons and devils, the beings that they worship are only a mask meant to hide things that no human mind could ever understand. Other, "true" Infernalists, assuming they know the motives of the Infernal Nephandi, look at them with a mix of disgust, fear, and pity. This should not be construed as some sort of redeeming quality in Infernalists – instead, compare it to the way a prison full of killers and rapists will loathe a child molester.

They are, however, the most structured of the three groups. They have the best recruiting rate of other Awakened, and their field teams are professional and smooth. But for all their outer shine and organization, they are fiercely competitive with one another, a fact that hampers them despite the organization of their ranks. This competitive streak is usually abandoned if an external threat appears, but it does much to undermine their day to day operations.

Malfean Nephandi are those that serve the Wyrm. They worship the Maeljin Incarna, embodiments of dark archetypes like Corruption, Defilement, Seduction, etc. Their caul is to walk the Black Spiral itself. In many ways, Malfean Nephandi are about as polar opposite to Infernal Nephandi as you can get, as far as methodology of evil is concerned. They envision a future of formless chaos, destruction personified unleashed upon the world. Tensions between the Infernal and Malfean Nephandi is quite high.

Malfean Nephandi are the ones most likely to utilize banes and formori. In fact, formori slipping the leash and wreaking havoc is one of the most frequent ways that others can be alerted to the Malfean Nephandi's presence. Their worship is the most perverse of the three factions, and their lairs are often poorly hidden, almost a challenge to the rest of the Awakened world. While not stupid or incapable of cunning, the Malfeans are less subtle and manipulative than their Infernal brethren.

Finally, you have the K'llashaa. They are the smallest group, and the most alien. They do not view themselves as human but rather as tools, extensions of the will of the Lords of Outer Dark, or Those

Who Wait Outside, among other names. They commit murder, torture, and other such acts not from personal enjoyment, but from a solemn sense of duty, believing that once they have unleashed enough pain the doors to the Outer Dark will swing open and admit their masters into this world once again. This agenda has led to the K'llashaa being the faction of Nephandi most frequently flushed out into the open and thus the stereotypical image of the Nephandi, despite their comparatively low population.

The K'llashaa rarely work in groups of more than three, and often relocate every few months in order to avoid pursuit. They spend a great deal of time in worship and study, and many rarely leave their homes. These can range from festering holes in tunnels and sewers to vast estates and mansions. All of them, however, stink of horrid Resonance that can often be detected from miles away (if the Nephandus does not take precautions). These lairs are often outfitted with torture chambers, labyrinthine gardens, and booby traps for unwelcome visitors. The K'llashaa would rather flee than face most intruders directly, fearing not death but rather the consequences of reporting failure to their masters. They are also the faction that most frequently dwells off Earth, where they gather in larger groups and show even less restraint than on Earth. Even other Nephandi sometimes find visiting their Horizon realms distasteful.

These are not the only Nephandi, only the most typical. For further information, we recommend the Mage 20th Anniversary Book of the Fallen.

Using Nephandi

There are two primary ways to utilize Nephandi: the seductive and the unspeakable. Which you focus on depends on your goals and your players.

The unspeakable aspect of Nephandi is perhaps the easier of the two. Nephandi take their place as villains of the worst stripe, with ghastly rituals and vile acts. Resist the temptation to turn things into a B-movie gore fest, however. Such things rapidly lose their shock value if overused. That said, Nephandi as villains are interesting precisely because they are so despised – proof of Nephandic involvement in an area is one of the few things that will nearly always lead to mutual cooperation between Technocracy and Tradition mages in an area. This can roll well into an "unlikely bedfellows" sort of plot. With non-mage games, Nephandi can still be useful, but you might want to forgo them in favor of generically "evil" mages. Not every evil bastard in the mage community is a Nephandus, and it may be easier to forgo the detailed ties of these particular bad guys unless you have a specific reason for wanting them (i.e., Malfean Nephandi working with BSDs, etc.).

The seductive aspect of Nephandi is much more difficult and in many ways more rewarding. Slowly tricking a character into making bad decisions and backing them into a corner where they will choose to join the Nephandi can be a daunting prospect. For hints about how to go about it IC, consult The Book of Madness (Revised). On an OOC level, however, keep two things in mind. First, pick a player that you know will roll with the punches and enjoy the story no matter how it goes. Second, keep in mind that if the seduction goes beyond the initial "feelers" without the Nephandus being rebuffed by the target, the situation is likely to end in one of two ways - the death or the fall of the target. If you start a plotline like this, you should be completely prepared to kill the PC. The Nephandi do not play nice or fair, and in the

unlikely event that they can't get to the target they will move on to family, friends, associates, and so on. Letting a PC "off the hook" if he's taken the bait at all cheapens the horror that the Nephandi represent.

On a final note, it's often particularly rewarding, from a plot point of view, to seduce a PC to the Nephandi AFTER you've already run them as horrid adversaries. If you can keep the lid on until after the PC has made major concessions and is "on the hook," then the horror as he realizes where he is heading and not being able to do anything about it is intense. Again, be sure that you're dealing with the sort of player who will be OK with that sort of thing, but it makes for a great dark story.

All this being said, we do not recommend Nephandi PCs - although if a character is turned, the STs may wish to allow a responsible player to continue portraying the Nephandus, now an NPC, on a limited basis. Extreme care should be taken, however, as this is the sort of situation that can easily cross boundaries, and should require consent where appropriate. For suggestions on the challenges and responsibilities of portraying Nephandi, we once again recommend the Mage 20th Anniversary Book of the Fallen.

Infernalists

The Devil You Know

True Infernalists are unusual but not unheard of among mages. To put it simply, most mages who seek out dark entities for power are usually caught in the nets of the Nephandi. Infernalists are slightly more common among hedge mages.

When dealing with demons, remember that most of the time, mages are dealing with High Umbral spirits of one sort or another. These can take the forms of demons in the traditional Christian sense, or they can be dark reflections of other notable forces such as Ishtar, Tezcatlipoca, or Ares. This does not mean that all mages who deal with Ares, for example, are infernal – but those who view him as a bloodthirsty, sadistic warmonger without honor or restraint likely are. It is possible for mages to deal with the Fallen (as presented in Demon: the Fallen), but such is rare.

There are varying degrees with which a mage may interact with the infernal. The first is demonology – the study of demons and dark spirits. This does not make the mage an Infernalist per se – while the practice is dangerous and viewed with some suspicion, it is not forbidden or inherently harmful. This practice is most common among Choristers, Dreamspeakers, the Order of Hermes, and a few other smaller groups. The important dividing line here is that most of these mages are focusing on how to contain and combat demons, and even those that use them for various tasks are commanding them and receiving nothing but simple service in return. Using a demon for such tasks is viewed as appropriate by some paradigms – after all, why enslave a good spirit if you can enslave an evil one? Mechanically, there is no real benefit to utilizing a demon in such a way over any other spirit.

A mage can be truly considered an infernalist when he begins to barter with demons. These bargains are diverse, but are not always inherently evil. Trade in information, Wonders in exchange for tomes of lore, and other such things are examples. Still, such trade serves to inure the mage to deals with the

devil, so to speak, and often position him so that he will make the final step down the road. The important thing to note here is that the mage is not acquiring power directly from the demon at this point – tomes and Wonders are theoretically accessible without the demon, the demon is just a shortcut.

Soul Trade is the point at which the mage truly becomes a servant of evil. He gives up at least part of his soul – either literally, through magic, or symbolically through acts of evil such as the sacrifice of innocents. Either way, the mage becomes bound to his demonic patron and is given Investments and the like.

Infernalism Regulation

OWBN regulates Infernalism in order to keep it from becoming too common or too "easy." Please consult the Infernalism packet for full details, but the following guidelines apply to mages:

- Infernal Nephandi, i.e., those dealing with the powers that want to end existence, are just Nephandi dealing with dark powers wearing a more familiar mask. The Demon Coord is not needed to utilize these characters, though standard Nephandi R&U rules apply.
- Infernal mages & hedge mages who are dealing with demons but are only gaining "standard" benefits must be notified to the Demon coord. This applies to any barter with demons that gives the mage access to resources he could theoretically access normally, without a demonic patron – tomes of knowledge, Wonders, mundane tutelage in normal sphere magic or hedge magic paths, etc.
- Mages & hedge mages who begin to involve themselves in Soul Trade and Investments fall fully under the purview of the Demon Coord. Consult the OWBN Infernalism packet for details.

Marauders

Marauders are unusual in the fact that they are not necessarily directly antagonistic. Indeed, considering that they attack Nephandi on sight and by their very existence often reinforce the mystic paradigm, some Tradition mages have very little problem with them, philosophically. The danger Marauders present is that they are very much like a force of nature in the damage they cause – indiscriminate, unpredictable, and often extensive.

When using a Marauder, remember that they are not simply "kooky." Each of them is deluded in one way or another, but not all to the same degree. The mildest of Marauders might simply believe that one of their friends is actually a legendary hero from the past. Another might believe that it is the year 1237 and the Mongolians are invading Europe. The important point is to remember that a Marauder's delusions are usually logical within their own framework. It might make no sense to the observing Tradition mage why a number of horsemen appear and start attacking, but it makes perfect sense to the Marauder who flees the armies of the Khan on a daily basis.

Further exploration of Marauders is beyond the scope of this text, but please consult The Book of Madness if you wish to include them as a significant part of your chronicle.

Umbra / Spirits

High vs. Middle vs. Low

One of the potentially confusing aspects about mage is that unlike most other creatures in the World of Darkness, they potentially have access to all three “levels” of the Umbra. First, you have the Realm. The realm is the normal world. Surrounding the Realm are three "layers" so to speak - the Low, Middle, and High Umbras.

Each of these has a "borderland" with the realm where it (for the most part) shares topography, etc. For the Low Umbra, this is the Shadowlands. For the Middle Umbra, it is the Penumbra. For the High Umbra, it is called the Periphery. Sometimes these are collectively referred to as the Penumbra, which is technically correct, but most of the time that term is reserved for the Middle Umbra.

In the Low Umbra, things fall toward death/decay/entropy. So the Shadowlands are a decayed version of the real world. As you get deeper into the Shadowlands, you find Stygia (or the Jade Empire, if you're in the East). Deeper in is the Labyrinth, the Tempest, and finally Oblivion itself. The spirits here are wraiths, spectres, ferrymen, and so on.

In the Penumbra, things are an exaggerated version of their true nature. In a healthy forest, the trees are bigger, the air crisper, the flowers brighter. On the same token, even a secret toxic waste dump with canisters buried is foul, corrupted, and generally not a nice place. As you move deeper into the Middle Umbra, you encounter a number of realms, all aligned with certain principles - the Battleground shows past conflict, the Flux realm is the raw stuff of creation, etc.

In the Periphery, things actually appear fairly normal. This is where astrally projecting characters go. However, as you move further into the High Umbra, things change. The High Umbra is the realm of concepts and ideas. Because of the nature of the place, a person tends to see what they expect, even if they don't understand it. For example, if two characters travelling together met a spirit embodying the concept of 'green,' one might see it as a large frog; the other might see it as a ball made out of ferns. Each is simply seeing what they would expect 'green' personified to look like. The 'lower' you are, the more basic and universal the idea. As you move higher into the High Umbra, ideas get more rarified. Instead of talking to a spirit of 'hunger' or 'language' or what have you, you are talking to a spirit embodying the concept of quantum relativity. There are realms here too, from the River of Language to the Well of Souls to Victoria Station.

Spirits from the Middle Umbra are centered around either natural forces, or basic human concepts that might as well be natural forces (although these latter tend to ride the line between high and middle umbral spirits). The distinction for the latter is whether or not they embody the fact of the thing or the concept of the thing. So you will see your usual collection of typical shamanic animals and plants, technological spirits, spirits of confusion, war, love, hate, corruption, and so on.

High Umbral spirits are, for lack of a better term, more refined. Most angels, demons, and gods are specialized High Umbral spirits (Demon: the Fallen notwithstanding). They tend to be more on the

brainy side than the instinctual side, compared to Middle Umbral spirits. You're more likely to get anthropomorphic versions of concepts if the spirit is relate-able. So for example, summoning a Middle Umbral owl spirit will probably get you an owl. Summoning a High Umbral owl spirit might get you a scholarly man with an owl-cloak. Basically, the idea of an owl expands in the High Umbral, and brings along parts of concurrent concepts.

A good example is elementals - they're prominent in both the Middle and High Umbras. In the Middle Umbra, a fire elemental is pretty much relegated to burning things. It might have overtones of renewal, purification, and similar base concepts, but that's about it. In the High Umbra, a fire elemental also brings along the ideas of creativity, passion, lust, temper, and so on. Basically, the Middle Umbra focuses on the physical/base nature of the spirit, where the High Umbra focuses on the conceptual/associative nature of the spirit.

TERMINOLOGY NOTE: Mage and Werewolf use overlapping terminology. What mages call the High Umbra, garou call the Deep Umbra. To mages, the Deep Umbra is breaking through the first Horizon (basically, another gauntlet that surrounds Earth) and traveling to the Umbras of the other planets, to Shard/Shade Realms, and so on.

Vidare

Vidare is a term used in the 20th Anniversary edition of Mage to encompass a concept that had not been named prior. It is the spiritual 'viewpoint' a mage naturally has as a product of both their nature, paradigm, and training.

Each mage tends to be drawn to a particular 'level' of the umbra. Primal mystics like the Verbena and Dreamspeakers are typically drawn to the Middle Umbra, the Euthanatos are typically drawn to the Low Umbra, and most other Tradition mages tend to have an affinity for the High Umbra. When first learning and using the Spirit sphere, this determines the area of the umbra that they will naturally gravitate to, which type of spirits they will begin conversing with, and as a whole shapes their initial experience with the Spirit sphere.

Mages can learn to move beyond this to interact with and enter levels of the Umbra other than that which their Vidare would normally indicate. STs should allow this, but the process should require research, trial, and introspection. It is also appropriate for STs to require the character to purchase at least a couple of specific rotes related to dealing with these unfamiliar spirits and umbral landscapes before they are able to effectively use dynamic magic related to them. For example, a Euthanatos might need to learn or develop a rote to see Middle Umbral spirits and another to be able to enter the Middle Umbra before the ST feels they now 'understand' the Middle Umbra enough to use dynamic magic related to it or its denizens.

Spirit Power Levels

In Mage, spirits are categorized as follows, from highest to lowest power level. Werewolf terms are included here, so that those familiar with Werewolf can draw the appropriate parallels.

Mage Term:	**Werewolf Term:**
Divinity	Triat
Avatar/Aeon	Celestine
Sovereign/Lord	Incarna
Majordomo/Preceptor	Jaggling
Subordinate/Epiphling	Gaffling

TERMINOLOGY NOTE: Mage also occasionally uses the term "Incarna," but applies it to the "Celestine/Avatar" level. For the sake of clarity, that term has not been utilized here, but be aware of the discrepancy when utilizing mage sourcebooks.

Divinity/Triat

This does not refer to "gods" attached to a given religion, but rather beings of such scope and power as to effectively be omnipotent. They are of such relative importance to the Umbra that their sway, in some ways, crosses all levels, realms, and pocket realities. For all this power, however, their very existence hamstrings them and they cannot act directly, but must instead use proxies and servants. It may be more accurate to think of these beings as the concepts that make up reality itself. They comprise reality – the Realm being an amalgam of the "bodies" of all divinities, and different Umbral realms being sections where one or more divinity holds greater sway.

Examples of beings at this level are The One, Gaia, the Weaver/Wyld/Wyrm, etc. Functionally there is no way to truly differentiate these beings from reality itself, interact with them, or help/hinder them in any way except by means of interaction with their proxies.

Avatar/Aeon/Celestine

More distinct than a divinity, this type of spirit encompasses beings which themselves represent the direct connection of a divinity to the affectation of reality itself. Where divinities thread themselves throughout the universe, Celestines are tied to specific concepts and spheres of influence governed by their patron divinity. These beings are often the face of a given divinity in monotheistic religions where there is a single, all-powerful deity; the Christian God, Allah, and Jehovah are all avatars of the divinity known as The One, for example. Similarly, there is often a Celestine that serves as an amalgamation of gods tied to very powerful concepts – the Sun is a Celestine, but can be served by/can manifest as Helios, Ra, or any number of powerful Sun gods.

How close the tie is between a given god and the Celestine it represents/shares a concept with is a matter of debate. Indeed, whether or not a Celestine can directly affect things is a matter of debate as well – in many ways, they may be too "close" to divinity to influence things directly. A common interpretation is that the Celestine must wear a given mask (an Incarna-level servitor or manifestation) in order to take direct action.

Sovereign/Lord/Incarna

These spirits are the most powerful "rank" of spirits that can truly exert any kind of direct control on their surroundings, or be interacted with directly by lesser beings. This includes what would be considered gods in the pantheistic, limited gods type of view – Thor, Isis, some powerful Chinese dragons, etc. It also encompasses totem avatars (Falcon, Stag, etc.), and all other beings of roughly equivalent scope. At this level of power, there are few beings that can rival them, singly or in a group, except other beings of equal station.

As an example, the Storm Eater was an Incarna, and required the sacrifice of 13 Legendary (rank 6) garou at 13 different caerns in order to bind it. A Legendary garou or an Archmage might, depending on circumstances, be able to successfully confront a being of this rank, but it is far from certain. For anyone of lesser power, refer to the Werewolf rule of "Incarna wins."

Majordomo/Preceptor/Jaggling

This is the most diverse category as far as range of power is concerned, and the one that causes the most trouble mechanically. It covers from the most sedate glade child that is self-aware but has little actual power, all the way up to nexus crawlers, caern totems, and so on. Obviously, it is hard to make generalizations about such a vast range, but the major deciding factor on whether or not a spirit is a Jaggling or not is whether or not it is truly sentient.

Subordinate/Epiphling/Gaffling

These are the smallest spirits, the figurative insects of the spirit world, those that are not intelligent enough to possess true sentience. They are either weak embodiments of a concept, or tools created by a larger spirit in order to serve a specific purpose. They may or may not be able to converse, but if they can it is only within the scope of their nature that they might be able to provide information. Most of these spirits will not have the Materialize charm. In any given area, it is typically these spirits that make up the majority of spirit activity.

Avatar Storm

The Avatar Storm deserves special mention. In OWBN, the Maelstrom in the Shadowlands has subsided a bit, and is sporadic in both time and geography. This allows each individual game to determine if the Maelstrom is in effect in their game.

The Avatar Storm, which is linked in origin to the Maelstrom, has also subsided. It is absent in some locations, present in others, and occasionally shifts without pattern or reason. This means that each chronicle can determine if and when the Avatar Storm affects their game while still providing In Character reasoning for the discrepancy between games.

Mage Mechanics

Errata / Clarifications

This section addresses some of the discrepancies in the published materials.

Sphere Levels

There are many discrepancies in the sphere descriptions as listed in Laws of Ascension. For example, the description listed under Forces 3 states that an effect at this level can deal three levels of damage. However the damage listed at Forces 4 is two, and the damage listed at Forces 5 is once again back to three. Therefore it is suggested that for most effects the following chart be used for base sphere effects (before grades of success). "Levels of Damage" can be used to measure relative power for other purposes, not just inflicting damage (healing, area of effect, etc.). Note that ST discretion should be exercised at all times – these guidelines are only to establish a baseline, not meant to restrict what is designed to be a dynamic system. For example, the Prime 2 rote Holy Stroke can inflict direct damage despite being a level 2 sphere effect – mostly because that advantage is balanced by the cost (1 quintessence per shot) and the vulgarity of the effect.

- **Level 1 (Apprentice)** – Can inflict no damage, only provide sensory effects. Note that sensory effects can be bestowed upon another person.

- **Level 2 (Initiate)** – Can inflict no direct damage, but can cause harm (hindrance or one level of damage) by manipulating the surroundings. Forces could be used to pull electricity from a power line, or Matter could be used to weaken a safety railing and cause a spill.

- **Level 3 (Disciple)** – Can cause direct harm to a target, inflicting up to two levels of damage.

- **Level 4 (Adept)** – Can cause direct harm on a larger scale, inflicting up to two levels of damage to a number of targets in a small area (ST discretion, but as a rule of thumb, five paces across is generally reasonable).

- **Level 5 (Master)** – Can cause up to three levels of damage on a large scale (ST discretion).

When used for direct damage, Forces effects do an extra level of damage (provided any damage could be done in the first place). Mind effects do one less level of direct damage, and inflict bashing damage only. Entropy cannot inflict direct damage until level 4 (Adept). Area effects are not always feasible. Use Storyteller discretion.

Conjunctional Effect Difficulty

While the MET rules assign a +1 difficulty per sphere beyond the highest, this rapidly becomes unwieldy and unreasonable even when considering other MET sources (LoA companion), and does not fit with the spirit of the system. It is recommended that the Storytellers assign a +1 difficulty modifier to conjunctional effects, period. This still makes them slightly more difficult, but does not penalize the player or make some of the published rotes ridiculously impossible. In exchange, however, the Storytellers should be stricter in requiring diverse spheres. Throwing a lightning bolt without an electrical substation or thunderstorm nearby, for example, should require Forces 3 and Prime 2 (you need to get the base energy from somewhere).

The Arete Challenge

Note that unlike most MET challenges, the player wins on numerical trait ties in the Arete challenge to cast an effect. That is, if his Arete is greater than or equal to the casting difficulty, he will succeed in the effect.

Targeting Effects

The rules surrounding this are muddled, but in general, a successful Arete challenge only means that the magic happens - it doesn't mean that the magic "hits" the target, so to speak. In any case where the ST feels that the target could actively resist in some way (dodging, soaking, resisting with the power of their will, etc), an appropriate challenge should take place between the mage and the target. This challenge should happen reflexively on the same turn that the Arete challenge was successful. Some common examples:

- A Mental vs Physical challenge to hit a target with a physical effect like a fireball or lightning blast, or to target an environmental effect precisely enough to affect a target ("I open a portal under your feet so you fall in" and similar effects).
- A contested Willpower challenge in order to affect a target with a mental compulsion or curse of some sort.
- A Social challenge to subtly alter the mood of a target or multiple targets.

We suggest that this should be the default assumption for affecting other characters - only in unusual circumstances should the static Arete challenge be enough to inflict an effect on another character without a "targeting" challenge.

Foci

Foci are one of the more misunderstood portions of mage. The following is simply a clarification of the published rules.

First, a mage may use any focus appropriate to their tradition in any effect. This has no benefits except for fulfilling the requirement for a focus and allowing the use of an appropriate ability to retest the effect. For example, Linguistics can be used to retest an effect that uses chanting in a foreign language as the focus, and Medicine could be used as the retest for an effect relying on blood as a focus.

A mage also picks a specialty focus for each of his spheres. If he can manage to work a specialty focus into an effect of the appropriate sphere, the mage gains a +1 trait bonus on the casting challenge.

A mage may choose to make any of his specialty foci a unique focus. This gives an additional +1 bonus, but any effect that uses the sphere tied to the unique focus MUST use the unique focus or suffer the penalty for surpassing a needed focus (spend a willpower and +3 difficulty). Buying off or replacing a unique focus requires experience points equal to the level in the sphere.

A mage can grow beyond the need of foci. If a mage has abandoned focus for a given sphere, but chooses to use one anyway, he gains a +1 bonus on the effect. This bonus is NOT cumulative with the

bonus for specialty foci. There are two systems that a storyteller can use to allow characters to surpass foci:

1. As printed in Laws of Ascension, characters may abandon foci for two spheres per point of Arete above 5.
2. Some Storytellers may prefer the second edition method. In this system, mages with a mystical paradigm may abandon foci for one sphere at every Arete above 1. This represents their belief in magic and the awakened will. Mages whose paradigm is based on science (Technocrats, Virtual Adepts, Sons of Ether, etc.) instead abandon foci for two spheres per point of Arete above 5. The fact that their paradigm is much more acceptable to the consensus is balanced by the fact that they are more reliant on tools and in many cases do not consider what they do to be "magic" at all.

When making judgment calls about whether or not a specialty focus gives its bonus to a conjunctional effect using more than one sphere, usually the highest or one of the highest spheres (if tied) should match the focus.

When determining Foci for a character, many players are tempted to choose a focus based on the character concept, and then try to link it to the paradigm. For example, imagine a Cult of Ecstasy drag racer. He is addicted to the adrenaline rush of the race, loves the feel of the engine, and so on. Sticking with the character's theme of "race car driver," he asks if he can use mechanical work (Repair/Technology) as his focus for Matter. Now, while the concept of a race car driver can fit within the philosophy of the Cult, that does not mean that all aspects of being a race car driver mesh with the paradigm. The adrenaline rush, the idea of getting into the "zone," and the concept of tiny split second decisions having large repercussions all fit into the Cultist paradigm. Fixing a car engine does not.

Instead, one should start from the paradigm and move outward toward the character concept. For example, meditation is one of the foci for the Cult of Ecstasy. The player could select meditation as his specialty focus for Matter, and then describe to the GM how the character uses the process of rebuilding an engine as a form of meditation. The ability retest for any effects using that focus would still be Meditation rather than Repair or Technology. In this way, a mage can find new ways for his paradigm to express itself, while still maintaining the core attributes that define it.

Please see the Paradigm section above for more information on tying a character's foci/instruments into their paradigm.

Optional Rules

There are a number of optional rules listed in Laws of Ascension and the Laws of Ascension companion. As addressed on pg 14 of LoA, the "base" set of rules is considered to be the most basic rules, designed so that will someone with no prior gaming experience can still run a Laws of Ascension based LARP. As also mentioned on that page, however, those "base" rules can be overly restrictive, and they do not reflect the true fluidity of Mage: the Ascension. As such, some of these rules in particular should be addressed.

Attributes / Traits

The base rule of LoA is to allow mages to have a cap of 10 traits. This is, however, a rule written without consideration for being a part of either a networked LARP organization or for the fact that other newer materials would later be released. As such, we strongly recommend that ST use the optional rule to allow mages a trait cap of 10 + Arete.

This puts a newly Master level mage (Arete 5) about on par with an 8th generation vampire, and even at the extreme of Arete 10 (trait cap of 20), a Mage would be in the same ballpark as an Elder Garou (trait cap of 18).

Fast Casting / Dynamic Magic

These are two closely related rules. Fast-casting does not refer to the speed at which one casts an effect, but rather describes the act of casting an effect without having the earned/purchased rote on the character's sheet. Dynamic magic is by necessity a form of fast-casting, but it allows the mage to create an entirely new effect, rather than simply duplicating an already existing rote.

While these are two optional rules, in many ways they together represent the fluid nature of Sphere magic. As such, it is highly recommended that these rules be utilized whenever possible. That said, using the full dynamic magic system does require more attention and judgement from Storytellers, so if an ST team is either unfamiliar with Mage or does not feel they have the staff bandwidth to deal with these rules, there are a few options available:

- Do not allow either rule. This is the most severe restriction and in some ways it will discourage players from portraying their mage characters in your game. That is not necessarily a bad thing if you do wish to allow some such interaction, but only a bit.
- Allow the use of fast-casting, but not dynamic magic. This means that only effects that are already published, or at least that are written out and approved, are allowed. This greatly reduces the on-the-spot judgement calls needed, but still allows mage characters some flexibility outside their purchased rotes.
- Allow the use of both, but limit dynamic magic in some way. This could take the form of requiring a limited resource for each dynamic magic casting (perhaps a willpower, or a quintessence per sphere level used, or some other limitation that is significant). Alternately, it could just be a set limit per scene or per session - perhaps once per scene or three times per session for each character. This allows mage characters to have the full range of their abilities in at least some fashion and in important circumstances, but discourages the use of dynamic magic for trivial matters.

As long as players are made aware of which (if any) limitations will be imposed on sphere magic before signing in, we emphatically support STs who choose to impose any of these limitations, especially in a cross-genre setting. Running Mage with dynamic sphere magic is one of the most complex of the WoD genres, requiring as much or more attention per player compared to any other genre. While we certainly encourage STs (especially those running Mage as a primary genre) to stretch and explore the

dynamic magic system of Mage, STs should not feel pressured by players to expand past what they feel is appropriate for their chronicle.

"Success enhancement" Optional Rules

The rules on pg 138 of LoA discuss adding Grades of Success to effects. In general, these rules are appropriate to use, although STs may wish to impose a limit on the total number of grades of success that can be added, especially when it comes to group workings ("Acting in Concert" optional rule) and similar situations. See the "Grades of Success" section of the suggested rules below for more on this.

Limitations and Power Levels

One of the more problematic issues with running mage is the fact that the open-ended rules and various interpretations can lead to Mage PCs (and to a degree, NPCs) getting "out of control" and being damaging to the game as a whole, especially in cross-genre play. These suggestions are an attempt to provide a reasonable framework for STs (especially those not running Mage as a primary genre) to make judgement calls as to how mages will operate in their chronicle.

General Principles & Philosophy

Overall, a mage ST should approach things from a conservative standpoint. While in many genres, if a player can point an appropriate rulebook and say "It says I can do X," in Mage things are so open ended that nearly anything can be justified with clever/selective interpretation. Any improvisation needs to come from a holistic understanding both of the Mage rules and of the local game in which the character will be played. It is much better to have your default reaction as an ST be "No," and then loosen up gradually from there, as opposed to starting out fast and loose and trying to bring things back down to a more reasonable level.

Matching Power Levels

When deciding how to handle mages in a chronicle that is not normally Mage-focused, I advocate looking at the game's current rules to determine what mechanical effects are available to Mages. If you are playing in a game where the PCs generally have access to powers that grant "Win on ties" at Advanced, then Mages with an appropriate Sphere at the Advanced level should theoretically have access to "win on ties" as well. If your game has a stacking limit on supernatural bonuses, then those same limits should apply to sphere effects.

Note that this does not always apply in a 1-to-1 fashion. Mages may be able to theoretically duplicate most effects of other supernaturals, but it should not always be the case, nor should it always be practical.

As an example, look at the Garou gift "Paws of the Newborn Cub," which effectively removes all magical abilities from a target for a period of time. While Mages are certainly capable of countering the effects of other supernaturals, it is normally done in a discrete manner, stopping a single specific effect. Allowing a mage with Advanced spheres to duplicate this advanced gift would not be reasonable - at best, the mage should be able to use grades of success to suppress a specific number of effects ("You can't call spirits or throw fire or erase memories for the duration of this effect.") In these sorts of

situations, the number of grades of success needed to effectively duplicate the gift should be immense and full of potential loopholes. It is in focused, narrow areas like these that "linear" magics (such as Gifts, Disciplines, Arcanoi, etc) can be more efficient/effective than Sphere magic.

Overlooked Limitations

Mages have a number of limitations that are frequently overlooked/glossed over, but are important to keep in mind.

Paradigm Limits

Perhaps the most significant limitation on Mages is their paradigm. Regardless of what Spheres a character knows, all the magic they generate should be within their paradigm. As an example, if my Verbena is in a plane and wants to hide it from radar, even with Forces 5, the Storyteller should probably say "no, that's not in your paradigm." Witches, druids, and pagan mystics didn't have a whole lot to say about radar. Similarly, unless the Virtual Adept sitting in the next seat over has prepared a weather control satellite ahead of time, they probably can't whip up a thunderstorm to deter anyone giving chase. At best, if the ST allows anything, it should be imprecise sledgehammer solutions. The Verbena could create a large enough electric storm to mask a small plane from radar, but that comes with its own ensuing complications.

Now, if the character takes the time to research how their magic might interact with such a thing, develops a rote for it that does fit their paradigm in approach, and purchases the rote, then that is a possibility. But such expansions of paradigm should be done sparingly and carefully to make sure that it does not move from the territory of "a few unusual tricks" into an all-encompassing paradigm that is effectively without limits.

A special note on those with Dual Paradigms (Dual Traditions) - This is a powerful merit for just this reason, but similarly an ST should make doubly sure that the character does not use the merit to overly justify being able to 'do anything' or even worse, avoid paradox while doing so. Players should have a very clear idea of where their character could not effectively use their magic - if they cannot come up with such a situation that is at least relatively common, then the paradigm is too wide. Vulgar effects are still vulgar effects, and even technomancy won't make a lightning bolt coincidental if it's coming from a handheld weapon.

Maintained and 'Hung' Effects

These will be addressed in more detail in the suggested rules section, but there are a few things to keep in mind. First, do not forget the penalty for maintained effects - for every 2 existing effects, the Mage is down 1 trait in Arete challenges. This means that compared to an experienced Garou or Vampire who might commonly have eight or more "buffs" of some sort going on at any one time, even a Master mage would be crippling his use of further magic by maintaining so many effects on himself.

Second, contingent/hung effects are being cast at the time they are hung - that means that the target of the effect must be decided at the time the effect is hung. Thus, you can't hang a fireball or a curse to cast "at whomever I am pointing toward." You can, however, hang effects that will affect you (buffs,

emergency healing, etc), the area around you (blast of fire 10 feet around me), and similar things. Effectively, this prohibits most forms of directly offensive and debuffing magic from being hung, while leaving defensive and utility options mostly available.

Paradox

While everyone is aware of Paradox, there is always a scramble to find ways to mitigate or ignore it. The following should be kept in mind:

- Some effects are always Paradoxical regardless of consensus, sanctum, or any other factors. Pulling quintessence from the surroundings with Prime 5, rewinding time (if allowed), and similar effects will always be considered Vulgar with witnesses, period, and may even have additional increases to the amount of paradox incurred.
- Once paradox has been obtained, manipulating it requires Archmastery of Prime. There are some effects such as Paradox Ward (Prime 5) that will reduce the amount of Paradox generated from the next effect cast, but that is the limit of what can be achieved.
- Paradox damage, flaws, and detriments cannot be cured or mitigated by Sphere magic. In most cases, the ST may wish to enforce this on other types of magic too - you made your bed, you have to lay in it even if you have a werewolf/vampire/whatever friend with magical healing abilities.
- If a mage is in a "paradox-safe" place such as a sanctum or the Umbra, they can still take paradox if their effects reach outside that safe area. If you're in your sanctum and throw a fireball out the window (and thus outside the sanctum) at an attacking technocrat, you are still subject to paradox as normal. This applies to distance-cast magic using Correspondence as well.
- In general, if a mage is doing vulgar magic with any frequency, the STs should do whatever they need to do in order to make sure that Paradox is a constant concern. No Mage, no matter the clever effects they know, Wonders they possess, or friends they have at their side should ever be able to trivialize Paradox.

One effect per turn

Mages can only cast one magical effect per turn, period. If they have extra actions, they may use a magical effect on any of their actions, but only once per turn. This cannot be circumvented.

"Problem" effects

There are a number of effects that present special challenges, and STs frequently ask if they are 'legit' and how to handle them.

Past Alteration

Manipulating the past is all but forbidden in Mage. There are three distinct published effects that need to be addressed.

Scene Rewind

In this effect, a mage “rewinds” a scene for a number of turns, effectively undoing what just happened and giving himself a chance to act differently. This effect is always considered vulgar with witnesses, period. It also accrues more paradox per normal - for every turn rewound, the mage gains the full paradox of the effect. So if the effect would normally be giving four paradox, rewinding five turns would grant 20 paradox. This effect explicitly affects only the scene the Mage is currently involved in, starting with the turn it is cast and working back from there. Attempting to rewind more than a few turns should cause the effect to collapse under the weight of the accrued Paradox, backlashing immediately.

It is suggested that STs either disallow this effect entirely, or severely limit its application. Under no circumstances is it appropriate for a mage character to toss off an effect and force everyone to redo the one or more rounds of a combat that it just took twenty or more minutes to get through. Especially as it would also mean everyone’s traits and expenditures for those rounds would have to be remembered and refunded. If an IC rationale is needed, simply say that the vastly increased probability branching in fast-paced, high risk situations like combat make rewinding time effectively impossible due to the 'inertia' of the situation.

If STs do want to allow this rote, only allow it for very simple situations. For example, an infiltration team rounds a corner and finds that there's a guard on his smoke break and not in his scheduled position. Rewinding one turn and deciding not to turn the corner, in this instance, does not add a huge amount of complexity and is not necessarily overpowered. That said, such a wide-ranging "undo button" can be very tricky to handle, and STs are being perfectly reasonable if they wish to shut it down entirely.

Past Time Travel

Outside the specific “time rewind” effect as outlined above, mages cannot alter the past. As per the descriptions in Mage: Revised, Laws of Ascension, and M20, any attempts to do so fail. Even if a character makes the necessary effect chops, the best possible outcome for them is that they end up stuck in an alternate timeline, and thus are not part of the OWBN universe anymore. Even supposedly 'undetectable' ways of altering it are not allowed ("Just as the magic artifact was vaporized 20 years ago, I teleport it to the present instead, and no one notices!") with only one limited, minor exception (see below). Observing the past is fair game, but any sort of alteration is effectively banned.

Quantum Temporal Travel

As outlined in the Son of Ether: Revised Tradition book, it is theoretically possible to travel to an alternate timeline and temporarily bring items/creatures from that timeline back. This is inherently limited - any objects that have a real-world duplicate erode and fade away. As mentioned in the rote description, even with limitations this rote can easily wreak havoc on even a troupe chronicle, and the issues are compounded in an organization.

If you as an ST choose to allow the use of this rote, please remember that its existence does not trump such concerns as the resurrection bylaws or territory bylaws. Limit the use of it to fairly simple scenarios

- "Last month, in our chronicle, the bad guy destroyed the macguffin that can defeat him. We need to borrow it from an alternate timeline for one session before it disintegrates." Attempting to bring back characters (even temporarily) or touch on events that happened in other chronicles will likely be a bylaw violation and should be strenuously avoided.

Polyappearance / Co-Location

This Correspondence effect allows a mage to exist in more than one location at a time (also requiring Life and Mind if each 'projection' is allowed to act independently). This effect is extremely hard to manage in a LARP as compared to tabletop, and Storytellers may reasonably ban the effect entirely. The reason that it is attractive to PCs is that when the effect ends, the mage chooses one of the projections. That projection continues to exist as the 'real' character, while all the others fade away. This means Polyappearance can effectively become a chop-free, unblockable fair escape free action if interpreted in the most generous light.

If the STs wish to allow the use of polyappearance, the following guidelines are suggested:

- The character may not end the effect as a free action. They must take a standard action on their turn to end the effect. This prevents them from having a risk-free escape ready at all times.
- Any sort of barrier that would impede teleportation or scrying also effectively blocks the PC from entering an area. They may continue past the barrier only by ending the polyappearance effect.
- Players should not be allowed to participate in more than one active scene at a time. It is reasonable to leave one or more projections in a safe place with a relatively routine task ("I am going to have one of me transcribe this book in my study while the other me goes and explores the murder cave.") It is not reasonable to distract STs and other players by attempting to engage in multiple active social or combat scenes.
- Remember the base rules still apply - a mage may still take only one magical action per turn (not one per projection per turn).

Curse of Luck

This effect is one of the most potent debuffs available in MET. The following guidelines help make sure it is not overbearing:

- Use the Grades of Success as listed in the rote only. Do not allow the effect to become multi-target per cast, affect an area, or similar things
- Consider using the "one extra turn per grade of success" time scale that is common among very powerful effects. Thus, instead of two grades of success toward duration meaning the effect lasts for a scene, it means the effect lasts for three rounds total. This prevents the curse from locking down a person for an entire scene, and hitting a foe for an entire combat becomes difficult unless the combat is very quick (3 or fewer rounds).
- Consider allowing the "effect based countermagic" rules (see below).

Experience/Sheet Changes

Any sort of effect that changes the earning of experience points or the experience cost of an item is not appropriate to a networked LARP organization, and is likely a violation of the bylaws. Similarly, if there are restrictions such as learning times or other prerequisites to purchasing a OWBN regulated bylaw, sphere effects cannot mitigate that in any way. A PC may not step into an accelerated time bubble to study for 10 years and suddenly step out a week later in "real time" with 10 years of XP and/or 10 years' worth of learning time restricted items on their sheet.

It is also inappropriate, though perhaps not a bylaw violation, to allow the use of similar effects to shorten sphere learning times or other such published learning restrictions.

Friction Curse

This rote and similar effects that deny an opponent actions can be overbearing depending on the situation. Mechanically, someone under the effect of friction curse must win a Simple test (i.e., win or tie on a single rock-paper-scissors throw) in order to take a physical action. This is generally understood to mean anything requiring a physical challenge and possibly movement - talking, breathing, normal gesturing, etc. are not affected. This means that for the duration of the curse, a subject has a flat 1 in 3 chance of any such overt physical action being effectively cancelled.

On one hand, the duration can be much longer than other "stun" like debuffs. On the other, it is also more unpredictable thus less valuable to the casting mage. Chronicles should evaluate this rote in the same way that they evaluate other powers that negate a player's actions - stun effects, gifts like True Fear or Falling Touch, and even such powers as Dread Gaze (which effectively removes someone from combat for the scene). All of these powers share a commonality in that they restrict the choices of a PC, so a game should attempt to balance them in consideration to each other.

If Friction curse seems to powerful, there are a couple of easy options to reduce its effectiveness:

- Remove the ability to affect multiple targets with grades of success
- Instead of a set duration, have the effect create a "pool" of cancelled actions, a base of 3 plus one per extra grade of success spent on it. This means that a target (especially one with multiple actions) can 'burn' through the effect to get free of it.
- Change the simple challenge to a static physical challenge (retest Athletics) against either the Mage's mental total or double the Mage's willpower.

Activate Next Clone

This rote effectively "downloads" a Mage's consciousness immediately before depth, and puts it in a new body (along with some mental damage). Storytellers should evaluate this effect in the same light as any other "contingent" fair escape. If such things are not allowed in the game, then this rote should not be allowed. If the rote is allowed, the following limitations are also suggested:

- No more than one clone can be maintained at a time, ever. Because of the nature of having to have the clone active, this rote cannot be "hung" with Time 4.

- Remember that while a clone exists, this rote counts against the mage's total number of maintained effects.
- As the clone is only viable for a month at a time and requires significant upkeep, it is suggested that this rote not be usable across chronicle borders. Both the clone and the mage must be present in the same chronicle for this rote to work. This is problematic for travel, as the clone usually requires a lab or other very sophisticated setup in order to keep viable. In addition, this ensures that enemies have at least a theoretical chance to chase down the clone and finish the job.
- Any sort of ward or protection against teleportation or scrying also blocks the link between the mage and the clone, preventing this rote from functioning.
- Use of this rote should take the character out of play for a minimum of a few days. This is a last ditch effort, and a significant setback to the character's ability to interact with plot is appropriate. The character may not have died, but they can't just jump right back into the action and go after the target that almost killed them.

Enchant Life/Blessing

A Mage with Prime 5 can theoretically enchant another being, granting them magical powers. In game terms, this grants the "Blessing" background to the target. This effectively changes the target into a living magical item. Obviously, this can become extremely unbalanced if not done carefully.

For game balance purposes, we recommend that this effect simply not work on other supernaturals. It is absolutely reasonable for an ST to declare that the sphere magic simply conflicts too much with the innate magic of the other supernatural to function.

In the case of Mages giving themselves, hedge mages, or normal humans powers, remember to balance the effect as you would any other Wonder. See the Wonders section below for more details, but in summary, the Blessing must be a specific sphere effect that the mage can perform, and must conform to the Wonder rules.

Even if a game does not usually charge experience for magical items, we also advise requiring the target to spend experience points as outlined in the Wonder section. Blessing / Enchant Life is fundamentally different as it effectively gives the character a power that (in general) cannot be lost, stolen, or destroyed as a normal magical item.

Suggested General Rules

In order to attempt to give some baseline parameters for how powerful sphere effects can be, the following section will give some "standard" rulings for different topics. We will also present some alternative rules for those who wish to adjust the power level up or down.

Grades of Success

Applicability

Grades of success can, in general, do one of three things. Increase the power of an effect, increase the effect duration, or add an additional target with the same casting. However, looking at the example rotes, not all of these are available for all effects. This is purely for game balance. Storytellers should feel free to restrict or deny how grades of success can be applied to any given effect.

Example: See the effect "Curse of Luck" from the Laws of Ascension Companion, pg 143. Mechanically, this effect causes the target to lose on ties, and also prevents them from using abilities as retests. This is an extremely potent effect. Grades of success can increase the duration so that it lasts longer than a turn, but allowing this to target multiple targets per casting would be unbalancing.

Time

Grades of Success can be gathered by adding extra time to an effect. Normally this is not an issue, but with respect to hung effects and other effects prepared in advance, this can be abused so that a mage has numerous extremely powerful effects available. The following rules are suggested for gathering extra grades of success by taking extra time, based upon the total number of grades of success desired.

> *When a mage begins an effect, they must declare how many grades of success they are attempting to obtain by taking extra time.*
>
> - *1-2: These take an extra round and an extra full minute, respectively.*
> - *3-5: Each grade (including the 1st and 2nd) requires at least a full hour. Therefore, attempting to gain 3 grades of success from taking extra time will add a minimum of 3 hours to the casting time.*
> - *6+ : Each grade requires at least 5 hours. Thus, an effect that gains 6 grades from extra time takes a minimum of 30 hours.*

Total

Storytellers should feel free to limit the total number of grades of success added to any given effect. I suggest that any effect done without extensive preparation/ritual/time should be limited to no more than 5 grades of success from any standard source (spending willpower, having assistance, extra time, Prime 4 boosting with quintessence, etc). Effects done in a ritual manner should be allowed to exceed this, but the STs should still feel free to place an upper limit depending on the nature of the effect and the power level of their game.

Trait Bonuses

Sustained buffs that increase traits should be limited by the Mage's sphere level (though the effect itself must still be of appropriate level to grant traits - Mind 1 can grant mental traits, but Life 1 cannot grant physical traits).

- Apprentice: 3
- Initiate: 4

- Disciple: 5
- Adept: 6
- Master: 7

Buffs should not stack in the same category. Duration should generally start at one minute/combat. A character cannot have more than 15 traits in bonuses total, across all trait categories.

Example: A character with Adept Mind and Disciple Life wishes to gain more mental and physical traits. They can gain up to 6 mental traits, and up to 5 physical traits. These will not stack with any other magical buff. If the Mage was a Master of Spirit and also had a Spirit effect that would boost social traits, they would be limited to 4 bonus traits instead of the normal 7 (since 11 traits are already taken up by the mental and physical buffs).

Buffs with a very short duration (measured in a small number of rounds at most) may surpass these limits at ST discretion, but utilizing such an effect will "burn off" all other trait buffs except for the effect that surpasses these limits.

Magical initiative

We suggest that a mage casting an effect should go on an initiative equal to Arete x 3.

Damage Reduction

The following rules are suggested. Again, this is still limited by spheres - most Apprentice level spheres will not be able to create a damage prevention effect at all.

- Basic effects can grant up to 1 Damage Reduction (yes, a Forces 2 shield is an exception).
- Intermediate Effects can grant up to 2 damage reduction.
- Advanced effects can grant up to 3 damage reduction.

Any effect that provides "general" damage reduction as opposed to DR against a certain type of damage should be one lower. So for example, an advanced Forces effect could give 3 damage reduction against radiation, or 2 DR against all incoming damage (or at least all incoming damage that Forces can hinder in some way, it still would not protect against a mental blast or similar things).

Grades of success can increase duration, or add additional types of damage absorbed, but not the amount of DR. A non-exhaustive list of damage categories includes: Kinetic, heat/fire, electricity, cold, radiation, light/laser, sonic, chemical, raw magic, mental.

Damage reduction of any sort does not stack. Only the highest applicable amount applies.

Retests

Unless the game has common sources of free retests accessible to most PCs, allowing Mages to use spheres to gain "Free retest on X" is often overpowered. The following limits are suggested:

Anything that grants retests on certain challenges will grant a pool of retests. These pools should generally be tied to a specific ability or some other similarly narrow scope.

Time and Entropy specifically can grant the broader "foreknowledge / luck" style retests, but such pools cannot exceed 1 retest, and cannot be refreshed mid-scene (if such a retest is used in a scene, the effect cannot be re-cast until the next scene).

- Apprentice Spheres: 1 base retest, base duration minute/conflict.
- Initiate Spheres: 1 base retest, may spend grades to raise up to 3, base duration minute/conflict.
- Disciple Spheres: 2 base retests, may spend grades to raise up to 5, base duration minute/conflict.
- Adept Spheres: 2 base retests, may spend grades to raise up to 5, base duration scene/hour.
- Master: 3 base retests, may spend grades to raise up to 7, base duration scene/hour.

Retest pools do not stack, even if generated from different spheres.

Bombs/Ties

Mages should not have access to effects that allow them to “throw the bomb” or “win on ties” unless such powers are common in the chronicle in question. If they are allowed, the following guidelines are suggested:

- Disciple level magic (level 3) is required to grant the use of Bomb.
- Master level magic (level 5) is required to grant the ability to win on ties.
- At any given time, Ties should be limited to no more than a single broad category (Physical/Social/Mental) or a couple of more narrow categories (speed related physical challenges and defensive challenges against mental/emotional manipulation). This is a hard limit, not a limit per effect. This mimics the most common example of Ties, vampires who can access ties on both strength and speed related tasks simultaneously.
- Storytellers may impose additional limitations, especially in the case of ties being granted to an entire category. Much like vampires must spend blood per turn in order to receive the “speed” Ties of Celerity, a storyteller may rule that winning all mental Ties requires a willpower per turn, fueling supernatural strength that grants Ties on strength challenges requires a quintessence per turn, or anything else that seems appropriate.

Challenge Requirement

As mentioned above in “Targeting Effects,” it is highly suggested that no magical effect can directly affect a target without some form of challenge against that target. This challenge is sometimes obvious (Physical or Mental vs. Physical to throw a lightning bolt and hit you), but other times is less obvious. In situations involving curses, unwilling teleportation, and similar effects, often a contested willpower or contested Mental challenge is most appropriate.

Occasionally, a static challenge against a value set by the opponent's traits is appropriate. For example, a static willpower challenge against the opponent's willpower. However, STs should take care that this does not make powerful effects too unbalanced - in general, if the Mage is allowed a retest, the target should be allowed a retest as well.

Sensory effects vs Stealth

With the wide array of sensory effects available to Mages, contesting someone else's attempt to remain hidden is sometimes difficult. We suggest the following rules:

If the "invisibility" effect hides a particular sense, it can be bypassed with an appropriate Sphere effect looking for something else. As an example, the discipline Quietus 1 (causing silence) or the gift Scent of Running Water (hides scent) would not in any way hinder someone using Mind to look for nearby sentient beings, and no contested challenge should be required to "pierce" the stealth magic.

In other cases, the challenge to penetrate an invisible character's stealth with magical senses should be a contested mental challenge unless deemed otherwise by the ST.

In all cases, grant a bonus to both the seeker and the hider depending on their power level. For Mages and Garou, use Arete/Rank. For Vampires or Changelings, use their discipline/art level. Extrapolate for others. As a note: use the level of the power the PC possesses, even if the specific power is lower. As an example, even if a vampire is using Obfuscate 2 to hide, use the entry for Obfuscate 5 if they know the full discipline.

Character's Power Level			Bonus
Mage Arete 1-2	Garou Rank 1-2	Vampire Discipline 1-2	+1
Mage Arete 3-4	Garou Rank 3-4	Vampire Discipline 3-4	+2
Mage Arete 5	Garou Rank 5	Vampire Discipline 5	+3

As an example, if a mage with Arete 3 was trying to spot a vampire with Obfuscate 5, the mage would gain +2 traits to the challenge, and the vampire would gain +3, giving the vampire a net +1 trait advantage because of his skill at Obfuscate.

Range

The normal range of magic is line of sight. If a mage has Correspondence, they may also be able to use that to affect a target at a distance based upon their familiarity with or connection to the target. There are some possible limitations here for Storytellers to choose from:

- Least restrictive - A mage with Correspondence 2 who can successfully scry a target may cast any effect through that scrying link as if it was line of sight. (This is the default Revised rule)
- More restrictive - A Mage must have at least Correspondence 2 to successfully scry a target. In order to cast an effect through that scrying link, they must expend an additional grade of success for each level by which the effect exceeds their level of Correspondence. For

example, a mage with Initiate Correspondence (level 2) must spend two extra grades of success in order to cast an Adept (level 4) effect from a distance.

- Most restrictive - A mage must have at least Correspondence 2 to successfully scry a target. In order to cast an effect through that scrying link, they must have Correspondence equal to the level of the effect they wish to cast. For example, you must have Adept Correspondence to cast an Adept effect from a distance. (This is the default M20 rule)

Contingent/Hung effects

While thematically appropriate and useful, it is very easy to allow effects that are "hung" with Time 4 to get out of control. It is suggested that storytellers limit both the number of hung effects a given mage can have as well as the total number of grades of success that the mage can divide between those hung effects. This prevents mages from having a ton of "challenge free" effects ready on their person waiting to go, and also prevents them from stocking up on several extremely powerful effects using downtime ("I did four one week rituals to hang these rotes!") because downtime is relatively "safe."

A suggested baseline for this is that a Mage may have up to their Arete in hung effects, with up to their Arete in extra grades of success divided among all the hung effects. As an example, a mage with Arete 5 may have 5 contingent effects ready, with three extra grades of success dedicated to the first one and the second and fourth effects each having a single extra grade of success applied to them.

As touched upon earlier, remember that the target of a hung effect should be present both when the effect is first hung and when it is triggered. So a mage could make a contingent effect that unleashes a blast of fire around himself if he goes unconscious, but he could not make a contingent effect to set the person who punched him unconscious on fire directly.

STs should also disallow blatant use of contingency to overcome the magical actions per turn limit. The easiest way to do this is to state that if the trigger of the contingency is under the mage's control ("When I say the word 'foible'"), triggering a hung effect counts as a magical action. If the effect is not under the mage's control ("When I hit first wounded") it is usually appropriate to allow the hung effect to trigger even if the mage took another magical action in the round. As always, use ST discretion to maintain balance with these edge cases.

Creative attacks

In general, storytellers should restrict or disallow any effect that circumvents the mechanical standards of the system. For example, the system requires Life 3 to inflict damage to another person using the Life sphere - one cannot circumvent this by saying "I'm using Life 2 to create flesh-eating bacteria" or something similar. In such a case, similar to how exotic and radioactive materials are governed by Matter 5 rather than Matter 2, the ST is justified in requiring Life 3 to make said flesh-eating bacteria. Similarly, one should not be able to simply "teleport a foe into the sun" with Correspondence to instantly kill them. At best, a foe should be able to be transported into a dangerous situation which then allows them a chance to overcome/survive the danger.

For other less clear-cut situations, evaluate it as you would with a non-Sphere effect. For example, one could use Movement of the Mind to lift a foe into the air and drop them from a great height. A Mage using Forces could do the same thing, but should fundamentally be subject to the same limitations, allowing the target to attempt to break free of the effect each turn, etc.

Arete

While the rules for spending experience do not limit the purchase of Arete, there are a few considerations that STs should keep in mind. First, under no circumstances should Arete become a "spend and done" sort of situation. Seekings are an integral part of being a mage. Please consult the Seekings section below for a more complete overview of them.

Second, STs should consider implementing some sort of "minimum requirement" in order to advance in Arete. In general, a "minimum earned XP" requirement works well - it makes sure that a character is well-rounded before advancing, and it means that a character must be active and in play in order to qualify for such advancement. "Earned XP" in this case should only apply to experience earned after character creation, and not include any starting XP either from rollover or ST awarded bonuses. We suggest the following scale, which requires the character to earn a bit more XP at every interval:

Arete	Minimum Earned XP
1 to 3	No requirement
4	100
5	200
6	325
7	475
8	650
9	850
10	1075

Prime & Node Rules

Despite being critical to Mage, the systems surrounding Prime, Nodes and Quintessence are often contradictory or nebulous. This system is suggested to provide a stable framework for Prime rules and Nodes.

Quintessence

Quintessence is the basic building block of reality, but that does not mean it always manifests the same way.

Raw quintessence is that which is currently "locked" into a pattern of some sort. An apple, a door, and a bonfire are all made up at the most basic levels of quintessence. Raw quintessence is not easily manipulated or extracted - doing so generally requires Prime 4+.

Free quintessence is that which flows naturally through the universe, and accumulates in certain places (Nodes), people (Supernatural beings), and things (Tass). This is what is usually meant when someone says "quintessence" with no other explanation, and is represented by the quintessence rating on your character sheet. Note that free quintessence is free as in speech, not as in beer.

Gaining Quintessence

A mage may naturally hold an amount of quintessence equal to their Avatar rating. This represents the natural amount of power that their pattern accumulates over time. This font of power can be recharged by meditating at a node, or by simple passage of time. As a rule of thumb, a point per month is average due to 'natural regeneration,' but this can increase or decrease based on the ambient energy wherever your mage is spending most of his time. Also, a mage cannot spend more quintessence per turn than his Avatar rating.

If your mage does not have Prime, this natural pool of quintessence is the limit. Also, note that a mage with up to his avatar in quintessence does NOT show up to a mage scanning an area for magical energies, aura perception, or similar effects. The capacity to hold that much energy is simply built into his nature. Assuming the caster already knows a person is Awakened, a targeted effect specific enough to reveal exactly how much quintessence someone holds will reveal this "natural" reservoir of power. An important note - this quintessence pool is absolutely inviolate to anything short of Archmage level Prime or the direct intercession of an Incarna or better. The amount of power there can be 'read,' but it cannot be stolen, burned, destroyed, or otherwise manipulated against the mage's will.

If your mage has Prime 1, they can attempt to utilize effects to increase their natural quintessence regeneration. As the regeneration is a long term process, it usually requires maintaining an effect at least half the day, every day, but the investment can be worth it. Prime 1 alone is usually not enough, but conjunctional effects can have a wide enough scope. Examples would include Entropy 2/Prime 1 to make it so your mage "by chance" is always standing in the best reasonably accessible energy flows of the areas he visits, Mind 1/Prime 1 to make himself subconsciously move to those same areas, etc. These effects can double a mage's natural regeneration rate if maintained for long periods, but because free quintessence is so scarce in most of the world, even numerous grades of success will not improve the rate past double.

If your mage has Prime 1, he can suffuse his pattern with extra quintessence. This allows a mage to hold up to (20 - Paradox) quintessence. If you go over your Avatar rating, you can show up to Prime scans unless you utilize specific effects to disguise the excess energy.

Finally, a Prime 1 effect allows you to sublimate your own raw quintessence into free quintessence. This allows you to sacrifice a health level (as aggravated damage) for one quintessence.

Prime 2 is the generic "fueling" sphere for evocations and similar. Technically, in order to throw a fireball, you still need to get the energy from somewhere. You could transmute it from existing energy in the area, or you could do a conjunctional effect with Matter to consume some sort of "fuel" to create

the fire. But if you want fire out of "nowhere," you essentially first have to create the Platonic ideal of said fireball using Prime 2, and then turn that ideal into reality with Forces.

If your mage has Prime 3, he can utilize free quintessence that has solidified - Tass. Tass generally shows up either around nodes or other supernatural phenomena, and always has some sort of resonance tied to it. For example, a ring of "fairy mushrooms" in Britain might produce a few mushrooms a year that hold quintessence, with the Dynamic resonance "Whimsical." The resonance of Tass is useful, sometimes necessary, in certain circumstances - more on that in a moment.

Although Prime 4 allows one to forcibly sublimate prime from any pattern, it does so in an uncontrolled fashion. The mage does not have sufficient control to harness the released quintessence.

Prime 5 allows sublimation from the surrounding environment, drawing quintessence from everything around. This is always vulgar outside of the umbra, and is accompanied by effects such as sudden drops in temperature, mirrors breaking, flames burning blue, and possibly other effects depending on the mage's resonance.

Quintessence Usage

First and foremost, any effect may be given a difficulty modifier of -1 per quintessence spent, up to -3. Note that if you have an Avatar of 1 or 2, this means it may take a multiple turns to "power up" the effect, as you can only spend a limited amount of quintessence per turn. This use of quintessence is entirely optional, and the cost is charged separately from any mandatory quintessence costs of the effect.

In general, quintessence is required anytime that a pattern has to be "added to" or made "more real," or in which pure quintessence is used as an effect in and of itself. Some specific examples:

- Any Life effect that heals aggravated damage requires 1 quintessence (per effect, not per health level). This is because aggravated damage represents damage that was egregious enough to deal damage to the pattern of the victim, shredding parts of it to bits. The quintessence is required to reweave new parts of the life pattern, like using a new piece of cloth to patch a tear in clothing. Remember that any extensive damage is aggravated - cutting an arm off with a normal sword is still aggravated, even though a "normal" sword stroke only does lethal. Finally, note that attempting to sacrifice multiple health levels via Prime 1 for quintessence, and then healing them all using only 1 quintessence, is a surefire way to get Paradox pissed off at you.
- The Prime 2 Holy Weapon effect essentially concentrates quintessence in a weapon, making it more "real" and thus more damaging. This normally only lasts a short time (a combat or a scene), but enough grades of success can make it permanent. This same principle could be used to enhance armor as well as a weapon.
- Prime 2 can also be used for the Holy Stroke effect, which is just a blast of pure, free quintessence. It's not necessarily the most powerful of damaging effects, but it has one large advantage - it deals aggravated damage to anything, period. Only countermagic or prime effects

can prevent the damage. This even goes through Fortitude. Of course, it's also one of the most obviously vulgar effects and simultaneously one of the most expensive. Everything has its price.

- Making an Artifact of some sort with Prime 4 requires a substantial amount of quintessence, depending upon the exact nature of the Artifact and the level of the effect(s) it provides. This can be as little as one quintessence for a handful of extremely minor charms to dozens of points of quintessence for the most powerful Talismans. In addition, certain resonance qualities are often required for the more powerful Artifacts, which can necessitate some fevered searching for appropriate Tass.
- Creating and maintaining a Horizon Realm is a feat that takes a steady supply of quintessence. Even the smallest Horizon Realm tends to take at least a couple dozen quintessence per month or thereabouts. The largest could take hundreds.
- A familiar requires an upkeep in quintessence depending upon its rating.

There are a number of other uses, but these should provide the general idea.

All this being said, a mage doesn't require quintessence for the majority of their day-to-day effects. A smart mage who knows his limits and how to work efficiently within them can get by without spending quintessence for vast stretches of time. Quintessence tends to be used for either extremely important effects in tight situations, that simply CANNOT be allowed to fail, or for large, permanent effects of substantial power. If a mage can avoid the type of do or die, back against the wall situations that require the first, and can live without the second, then he can get along without it.

Other types of Supernatural energy

Most other forms of supernatural energy (gnosis, yugen, blood points, glamour, etc) are all specialized forms of free quintessence that have been infused so thoroughly with a given resonance that they behave somewhat differently. From a mage's point of view, those power sources are somewhere between free quintessence and Tass. Some are closer to one extreme than the other - Blood points can be treated as Tass, for the most part, down to having a physical representation. Gnosis, on the other hand, is much more ephemeral.

When it comes to affecting these power sources, Blood points are the exception to the rule and may be manipulated with Prime alone, as if it were tass with Entropic resonance.

- For Gnosis/Rage, you must have at least Spirit 1 in addition to the appropriate level of Prime. Figure the level of prime required is the same that would be needed to duplicate the effect if it were dealing with normal free quintessence.
- Pathos requires Spirit 1 in addition to the appropriate level of Prime.
- Glamour and Yugen require Spirit 1 AND Mind 1 in addition to the appropriate level of Prime.
- Yin Chi requires Entropy 1 or Matter 1 in addition to the appropriate level of Prime. Yang Chi requires Life 1 or Forces 1 in addition to the appropriate level of Prime.

In all cases, manipulating these powers beyond clumsy blocking or channeling requires an understanding of their nature, either through in-game research or Lore. With the appropriate lore, a Prime 3 effect with appropriate conjunctional spheres can be used to convert the power to usable free quintessence, albeit quintessence that is flavored with the appropriate resonance.

Quintessence availability

"How much quintessence can/should a mage have" is a difficult question. Because a mage does not require quintessence for the majority of effects, it is much more of a luxury than a required resource such as Gnosis or blood pool. However, it does offer significant mechanical advantages if used. As such, STs should aim for a quintessence level that allows mages to spend quintessence on a somewhat regular basis without worrying that they are going to run dry, but simultaneously have it rare enough that they truly consider whether or not doing so is worth it.

To establish a baseline for OWbN, at any given time it is appropriate for mages to have a maximum quintessence of about 25. This represents their own personal store of quintessence (up to 20 depending on their Paradox), and perhaps another 10-20 readily accessible in Tass, a periapt, or some other external source. Quintessence should generally not be readily enough available for a mage to regularly exceed this amount. STs should keep accessible quintessence sources to an appropriate level so that their game falls somewhere near this guideline. As for regaining quintessence, regardless of method, a character should likely not be gaining more than 5-10 per month.

If characters want to take on large scale projects or permanent, quintessence-guzzling effects such as chantry wards or horizon realms, STs may wish to allow them to "bank" quintessence or seek out new quintessence sources for these projects so that personal quintessence stores are not greatly affected, at least not long term. But if the project collapses, it is highly advised that the power sources dedicated to it do not suddenly go to filling the local mages' pockets with tass and free quintessence beyond the aforementioned guidelines.

Nodes

Unfortunately, there is contradictory information in many White Wolf books about exactly how much quintessence a node actually produces (Book of Chantries, I'm looking at you). In addition, there are other sources which present an option - "low fantasy" mage games have nodes that produce a tenth of the quintessence that the same level Node might produce in a "high fantasy" game.

If you attempt to directly correlate the Node background to node level (see below), you run into problems. If a level 3 Node produces 3 quintessence per month, your moderately established Chantry with 8 mages and their apprentices on that node is going to be starved for quintessence. Even the most powerful nodes would be insufficient for the most part.

If you look at the Node background as described in Laws of Ascension, you can effectively gain unlimited Quintessence by meditation, at a rate of 1 hour per point. The node background rating simply determines how much Tass the node produces. However, it notes that your node is only powerful

enough to support one person, and if you lend it to anyone, you cannot use it. This does not make sense - if a mage with Avatar 5 can essentially get an unlimited refill from his Node 5, he loses all access to it if he lets a guy with Avatar 1 use it a couple times during the month?

For this reason, it is suggested to handle Node as follows:

The concept of a node's level reflects the relative power of that node. For those familiar with Werewolf, this is analogous to a Caern's level. A level 1 node might be a small intersection of ley energies in an old cemetery crypt, while a level 5 node would be a huge confluence of power, such as Stonehenge.

Note that even within each node level, there are degrees of power. These do not have to be specified unless the need arises, but it is important to be aware that each node level is a range of power rather than an exact level. The aforementioned Stonehenge is incredibly powerful, even compared to other level 5 nodes.

Now, Node background does not equal Node level. This is because the Node background represents essentially solitary control over a node. To put it bluntly, no starting level mage is going to have the resources to hide or defend a node with a level greater than 1. Thus, it is assumed that any node held personally by any single mage is going to be level 1. If a mage manages to gain sole access to a higher level node at some point during play, it will be reflected by a node background rating of 6+.

If a mage does not want sole access to a node, the node background can represent his "share" of access granted to him by whoever is in control of it.

The Node background gives you a node that provides an amount of quintessence per month equal to twice the background. This is the quintessence that is accessible through meditation, and at extremely advanced levels is funneled out of the node to fuel Horizon Realms, etc. In addition to this, the node produces a random amount of Tass each month - make a number of tests equal to your Node background rating. Each win (not tie) generates a single unit of Tass appropriate to the nature of the node.

With Prime 2, you can directly channel energy from a node without spending time on meditation. This is also the only way to gain quintessence from a node that exceeds your Avatar background. Quintessence channeled out still counts against your normal budget.

With Prime 4, you can force a node to give more energy, but it is dangerous. For every 2 quintessence (or fraction thereof) beyond the node's limit you go, the node becomes useless - to anyone who uses it - for a month. For every month beyond the first that a node is useless, make a simple test. On a loss, the node's Level drops by one, permanently. If it drops to 0, the node is destroyed. The energies that sustained it might allow it to be rebuilt eventually, but it will require years at least to be opened again, and strong nodes could easily take decades to return to their former strength.

Needless to say, squeezing extra out of a node is risky, and with a shared node is often considered a crime carrying penalties up to and including death, depending on the circumstances.

For a rough guideline of node levels, you can use the following.

- Level 1 Node - Produces 1-10 quintessence per month, plus tass.
- Level 2 Node - Produces 11-25 quintessence per month, plus tass.
- Level 3 Node - Produces 25-45 quintessence per month, plus tass.
- Level 4 Node - Produces 46-70 quintessence per month, plus tass.
- Level 5 Node - Produces 71-100 quintessence per month, plus tass.

Caerns vs Nodes

A canny werewolf player might point out that a sept of garou on a level 2 caern is going to consume far more than 25 Gnosis per month, just by having them sit around and regain gnosis. What gives?

The easy answer to this is that all Caerns are Nodes, but not all Nodes are Caerns. A caern has two things going for it that allow it to sustain a higher energy output as long as that output is specifically to fuel Garou. The first is the caern's totem, which helps regulate and distribute the power. The second is the Moot Rite, where garou actually return gnosis to the caern. This regular infusion and the intercession of the totem create a flow of power that is greater than normal.

This is also why mages draining power directly from a caern tend to damage it. A mage can gain quintessence from a caern harmlessly by meditating, assuming the werewolves give him an hour of peace. But any Prime 2 attempt to directly channel energy out is blocked by the caern's Totem, as it would damage the caern. Circumventing the Totem, either by Spirit effects or other means is possible. If this is done, treat any power drawn as being drawn from a node past its limit. This negative effect cannot be avoided by any means short of simultaneously channeling back in an amount of energy equal to what was taken (which, admittedly, makes the entire act pointless for the most part). Similarly, if a mage physically takes Tass from a Caern, treat it as if they were draining an equal amount of quintessence from the caern past its limit. It's easy to see why garou don't like mages touching their caerns.

Resonance

Simply stated, Resonance is the "flavor" of your magic. It influences your magic's appearance. At higher levels, it also affects you more dramatically, adding traits and negative traits to your character.

Types of Resonance

This is kind of a two part question. You can think of Resonance as you would Physical/Social/ Mental traits, in the sense that there are three broad categories and individual traits under each. The broad categories are Dynamic, Static, and Entropic.

Dynamic Resonance reflects the pure creative force of the universe, the drive to make new and different things, action without thought to consequences and continuous motion and evolution. Many mages will find themselves with Dynamic Resonance, because they are by nature changers of the world; this is of course not always the case. Also keep in mind that a Dynamic Essence, while commonly carrying Dynamic Resonance, doesn’t have to. Sometimes, it’s far more interesting to do a clashing set. A mage

who carries Dynamic Resonance, though, is generally more likely to be an active individual then others, and a real force for change and creativity. Dynamic descriptive words describe things in motion, change, new ideas and action. Example traits include Quick, Flashy, Unique, Creative, Spinning, Whirling, Frantic, Fiery, Stormy, Frenzied, Intriguing, Liberating, Novel, and Nurturing.

Static Resonance shows up in patterns, constants and the solidification of Creation into permanent or semi-permanent forms and repeatable ideas. Static Resonance often falls to intellectuals, the organizing, or similarly stabilizing forces of the world. Obviously, one would tend to think the Technocracy when one thinks of Static Resonance, but this is definitely not an absolute by any stretch. Static Resonance ties into principles of definition and construction. Example traits include: Single-Minded, Focused, Intense, Stabilizing, Supporting, Patterned, Tiered, Enfolding, Encompassing, Defined, Programmed, Concealed, and Calming.

Entropic Resonance reflects the mage's tie to primordial energy, the bubbling morass that melts Creation back down into fluid emptiness and makes room for new birth. Entropy is the breakdown and decay that makes the cycle possible, and while many people associate Entropy with death (thanks, in no small part, to the Euthanatos), it's often a misconception. Death is an important part, but Entropy is as much a beginning as an end, and many old souls or those who seek the favor of old gods and ways find themselves giving off the aura of Entropy. Entropic Resonance covers destruction, death, decay, renewal and primordial energy. Example traits include: Seething, Bubbling, Destructive, Corrupting, Withering, Disintegrating, Chaotic, Subtle, Primal, Storming, or Ravaging...and the ever present Jhor, but we'll deal with that momentarily.

Note that particular adjectives may fit into more than one category, but the meaning is changed. For example, the trait Static: Arctic might be similar to Icy, cold, still and unchanging. But the trait Dynamic: Arctic, while still cold, would represent the fury of a blizzard howling around you, and the trait Entropic: Arctic would represent the leeching, draining effect of bitter cold.

Resonance Effects

If you cast a spell that fits with your highest resonance trait, then you get a 1 trait bonus to that spell. For example, if I have the traits Dynamic: Fiery x2 (and it is my highest resonance), I get a 1 trait bonus to throw fireballs and such.

Conversely, if I cast a spell that goes against my highest Resonance trait, then I have a 1 trait penalty. So if I have Entropic: Lethal x2 as my highest resonance and I try to cast a healing spell, I take a penalty.

If/when a category of Resonance totals 3 or more, you get a bonus trait and a negative trait. This bonus trait can surpass trait caps. You become so in tune to that force of creation that it suffuses your being. If a category gets to 5 traits total, then you can gain another trait and another negative trait. Check Laws of Ascension pg 120 for details, and ignore the horrible formatting of the table there.

Acquiring and Removing

Resonance is gained in a number of ways. First is through personal experience and exposure. A mage who works as a coroner may over time pick up a bit of Entropic resonance. One who spends every free moment programming might pick up some static resonance. In general, this should never happen more than once or twice over a lifetime, and only if the day-to-day activity suffuses the character's goals and personality.

Any sort of strong magical event or any sort of event that profoundly affects the psyche of the mage can also grant Resonance. Examples include entering Quiet, finishing a Seeking (successful or not), losing permanent Willpower, learning a Master level sphere, changing one's Nature, etc.

Losing Resonance typically isn't possible. However, in some circumstances, it IS possible to negate an old Resonance trait. For example, someone with the Resonance trait Static: Constructive goes through a major life crisis and begins tearing down everything he spent his life building, and a few things that aren't his as well. He begins to see his role not as constructing good things, but as tearing down old, corrupt ones. He begins to learn magic centered around that. When he next becomes eligible for a Resonance (entering Quiet, finishing a Seeking, etc.), he could gain the trait Entropic: Destructive. Since this is directly opposed to his Static resonance trait, it is possible that the two of them will "cancel out," effectively removing the Static trait instead of granting him the Entropic one.

Note that this is a matter for ST discretion and discussion with the player. It is very possible to hold conflicting Resonance. The question is whether or not the character holds both principles to be important to his life/being/philosophy, or if he has moved on to focus on one rather than the other.

Jhor

Jhor is a special type of Entropic resonance. Jhor is the death-taint, the callous acceptance of destruction. Fundamentally, Jhor erodes one's empathy and leads one to focus on decay, death, and the end of things. It can affect anyone, but the Euthanatos are particularly susceptible. Indeed, they are the only Tradition where their starting Resonance is dictated, and this is the unfortunate burden they are given.

Jhor is also a type of Quiet that can afflict a mage with the Jhor resonance. These specific episodes of Quiet can manifest in a number of ways; cold, death-obsessed behavior, fits of rage, obsession with vengeance, or even self-centered brooding melancholy are all possibilities.

Jhor is not a moral position. It can arise from any excess of magic dealing with killing, necromancy, the dead, etc. Even "ethical" uses of such things - for example, summoning a ghost to talk to it and learn what it needs to be set at rest - can lead a mage to accumulate Jhor as well.

Jhor is not simply a reflection of the sphere of Entropy. Indeed, Spirit and Prime lead to Jhor almost as frequently. Spirit effects can deal with the dead and the Underworld, and Prime effects can disrupt the fundamental structures of the Tellurian. Effects that simply attack one Pattern with another (like attacks

with Forces) are far less likely to accumulate Jhor. The mage is usually (though not always) directly accessing the energy of decay when the death taint strikes.

In mechanical terms, having Jhor as a resonance trait means that it is possible for a Jhor-based Quiet to affect the mage. These Quiets are often even more destructive and debilitating than the norm. In addition, Jhor leads to callousness and a disregard for life; storytellers may impose mechanical penalties on social or empathy based challenges if they feel it is appropriate. Higher levels of Jhor tend to mean both broader and stronger penalties.

Finally, a mage with Jhor resonance shows up as Wyrm-tainted to any who know how to sense such things. A single point of Jhor means the mage will always smell slightly more of Wyrm than typical surroundings, and this slight tinge cannot be cleansed or removed short of getting rid of the Jhor resonance trait (see above, but note that Euthanatos cannot be rid of their initial point of Jhor). Two or more traits of Jhor begin showing up as moderately strong Wyrm-taint, usually strong enough to provoke attack rather than an attempt to cleanse from most shapeshifters. Three or more Jhor almost guarantees assault by shapeshifters, while four or five traits may actually lead them to consider the mage a priority target on par with BSDs and the like.

External Resonance

Magical effects, energy, and items can also have Resonance.

For magical effects, this usually happens only if the effect is very strongly aligned with a certain resonance or was performed by a mage with a high degree of a given resonance trait (3 or more, typically). This doesn't have any significant mechanical impact, but it can be detected and perhaps give a hint as to the nature of the magic or the mage who cast it.

For magical energy, this does have a significant impact. Raw "free" quintessence such as that drawn directly from a node will generally not have any such leanings, or at least not enough to affect magic. The Tass that such nodes produce, however, will. Using appropriately 'flavored' Tass can help with an effect more so than normal quintessence. Conversely, inappropriately aligned Tass can hinder an effect as much as it helps. Tass can be used to create magical items as well, and can lower the sphere requirement used to construct them (see Forged by Dragon's Fire).

Magical items tend to have a resonance that aligns with their effect. The main difference is that the resonance of an effect tends to fade quickly in most circumstances, while an item will always bear the appropriate resonance if either the effect is powerful/aligned enough or if the item was constructed with Tass.

Paradox

The Paradox rules as presented in Laws of Ascension are somewhat problematic from a mechanical standpoint. For example, a 10 point backlash will deliver five levels of bashing damage to the subject, while an 11 point backlash will deliver 1 level of lethal damage. While lethal damage is theoretically worse, most will tell you that dealing with a single level of lethal damage is nowhere near as dangerous

as dealing with five levels of bashing, especially if the backlash happens to hit in combat. For this reason, the following alternate Paradox system is presented for Storytellers who wish to make Paradox more unpredictable and dangerous.

Accumulation

The amount of Paradox gained from an effect remains unchanged. A mage may still spend Willpower to stave off Paradox until the end of the scene/hour. See Laws of Ascension, pg 172.

Testing for Backlash

Each time a mage gains Paradox, make a test. If the mage loses, the Paradox backlashes against him. If he wins or ties, the Paradox accumulates in his pattern. Note that this means mages will tend to suffer fewer backlashes than with the standard system, but those they do suffer will be more dangerous.

Backlash Results

When Paradox finally backlashes against the mage, his pool of Paradox points is reduced to zero. The results of the backlash are up to ST discretion, but can include the following.

- Damage – The mage suffers one level of aggravated damage for every three full points of Paradox in the backlash (minimum 1 level of damage). This damage cannot be healed by magic, only by natural recuperation. This effect tends to happen anywhere between a 1 to 15 point backlash. This will generally not take the mage past Mortally Wounded unless the Storyteller feels the mage has been particularly vulgar and careless, and in essence deserves it. However, excess levels of damage beyond Mortally Wounded may "overwrite" previous levels of bashing or lethal damage, making recovery time much longer. While dangerous, this is also the most boring way of Paradox manifesting, and should be used when things need to be resolved quickly or the Storyteller lacks any other inspiration.

- Paradox Flaws – The mage suffers some sort of flaw or negative effect, often based on the effect that triggered the backlash. For example, a botched scrying effect may blind the mage or switch his view so that he is always looking backwards. An attempt to conjure lightning may cause any electronics within ten feet of the mage to throw off sparks and possibly fry if he does not move away quickly, and could last a week or more. In general, Paradox flaws tend to happen anywhere up to 15 point backlashes, though larger ones are possible and should be epic in their scope. The larger the backlash, the worse the flaw and the longer the duration. Storytellers should feel free to be creative and appropriately mean – dealing with these flaws ICly should always be a trial of patience, and the serious ones should be a serious and spectacular hindrance to even mundane tasks. For suggested flaws, see Mage: the Ascension (Revised) pg 195.

- Quiet – Quiet is a broad effect that essentially represents "magical insanity." The victim's mind becomes so overwhelmed by the possibility inherent in the Awakened will that they have trouble distinguishing what may be from what is. Quiet can happen at any level of backlash, but tends to work best between 5 and 15 points. The rules presented in Laws of Ascension, pg 174

are a fairly good representation. Quiet works best when the Storyteller has time to prepare in advance and tailor the experience to the paradigm and mind of the character suffering the Quiet.

- Paradox Spirits – A spirit manifests to harass the mage, representing the will of the consensus. Paradox spirits are not normal spirits, and cannot be affected by Spirit effects less powerful than Master level, excepting those that cause damage. Non-damage causing Master level effects are twice as hard. Paradox spirits can show up at any level, but are most common with backlashes that are 10 points or more and are caused by a particularly vulgar effect, but they are absolutely relentless and get stronger based on the strength of the backlash. At 10 points, the spirit will likely be roughly twice as powerful as the mage. At 20 points, it could quadruple the mage's power and be nigh unstoppable. Most Paradox spirits won't kill outright, but they will happily inflict flaws, hinder the mage's effects, and in general make his life a living hell, especially anything involving his magic. Note for non-Mage storytellers; Paradox spirits cannot be summoned, controlled, or otherwise affected by the powers of non-Mage supernaturals. The one exception is the Viskr Ananasi, who have an Advanced gift and a rite, but even these do not command Paradox spirits so much as draw their attention to a target.

- Paradox Realms – If a mage truly outdoes himself, he may be thrown into a Paradox realm, a small pocket realm that seems custom designed to teach him a lesson about his last vulgar workings. Most magic will not work there, but nearly all of them are set up as a puzzle. "Solving" the puzzle represents acknowledgement from the mage that what he did was wrong and that he will correct it. For example, a mage who attempts to raise a huge thunderstorm and garners a large enough backlash may find himself in a realm where he is constantly falling through dark clouds, kept aloft by the winds of the storm and dodging lightning. His task may be to return the storm to calm and darkness, even though this means he may fall as the fury of the wind fails to lift him up. Paradox realms usually only show up for particularly nasty backlashes of 10 to 15 points or more, and can take a mage out of play for days or weeks. Some are known to have lasted years or even centuries, testaments to the sheer arrogance of their creators.

- Permanent Paradox – If a mage manages to accumulate more than 20 points of Paradox, the Storyteller may wish to grant them a permanent point of Paradox when the backlash occurs in exchange for making the backlash non-lethal (though still likely very damaging). For the purposes of backlash, permanent paradox counts as a temporary point of Paradox that adds to the total but is not discharged or otherwise gotten rid of in the process. Ridding oneself of permanent Paradox is difficult in the extreme, usually requiring Master level Prime or better, or trips to dangerous and difficult to find Umbral realms, and there is always a significant price to be paid for doing so.

Bleeding off Paradox

Getting rid of Paradox safely is a difficult venture. Short of Master level Prime effects or having the benefit of a Familiar, the only way for most mages to safely drain their Paradox is with time. If a mage performs no act that generates Paradox for a full month, he can shed a single point of temporary Paradox. Any act of vulgar magic or anything else that garners Paradox for the mage instantly resets the timer. This natural shedding of Paradox cannot be increased by any means. Familiars are valuable not only because they can divest a mage of Paradox, but also because they can do it regardless of whether or not he's "behaved."

Wonders

"Wonder" is the generic term for a mage-created magical item. They are broadly categorized both by power level and how they are made.

Prime-based items

- Created with Prime
- The mage must be able to cast an effect normally to place it in a prime-based wonder
- Activation requires an Arete challenge
- Level of the item is based on the total rating of the sphere effects imbued into it.
- Requires Prime 3 (charms), Prime 4 (Talismans and Artifacts) or Prime 5 (to create a living Wonder)

Talismans

A talisman is the most 'powerful' of the Prime based items, though the actual power of the effects that can be imbued is . This is the only type of Prime based item which can act 'independently,' as it has its own Arete rating and thus can make the required Arete challenge by itself. This is accomplished when the mage creating the item sacrifices a permanent point of willpower to create the item. This also means that Talismans are the just about the only type of prime-based magic item that a non-mage may use. Because of the permanent willpower sacrificed to create the item, a talisman is generally considered an excellent arcane link back to the creator, so most mages are reluctant to create a Talisman even for close allies, and it is virtually unheard of for them to be sold as a commodity.

Note that in order to act independently, a Talisman must have additional sphere effects placed within it to serve as a 'trigger'. As an example, a necklace could be imbued with a Life 1 Effect (Sense Red Hair) and a Forces 3 / Prime 2 effect (Create Fire). When someone with red hair puts on the necklace, it can then sense that someone who satisfies the 'trigger' condition is wearing the amulet, and then lights the person on fire.

In order to calculate the experience cost to create a talisman, we recommend STs total up the highest sphere level of each effect in the talisman and double it. The aforementioned amulet has two effects (Sense life, create fire) which have a highest sphere rating of 1 and 3 respectively. That is 4 in total, doubled, so a final result of 8 experience (plus the permanent willpower required).

Of special note are Grimoires/Primers. These magical texts can teach spheres in a certain paradigm, and Primers can awaken suitable humans who already have the proper strength of will and inclination (ie, ST discretion). These items are currently restricted in OWbN, please check the character bylaws for details.

Artifacts

Artifacts are similar to talismans, except that they do not have their own Arete, and thus require the wielder to make an Arete challenge for the effect. This means that they are virtually useless to non-mages. Their main advantage is that they can provide quick and reliable casting of a specific effect that is not hindered by distractions. These can also be given to other mages in order to allow them to accomplish effects they wouldn't have the spheres to accomplish themselves.

Artifacts may have 'trigger' effects built into them as well, but still require a mage to make the Arete challenge. So a mage could make the "anti-red hair" necklace as outlined above, but he would need to manually activate it, at which point the necklace would check for red hair once. At ST discretion, this might be extended somewhat - perhaps the necklace will continue checking for red hair for a minute before 'powering down' again. In general though, such things should only last for a few minutes, and under no circumstances longer than a scene.

In order to calculate the experience cost to create an artifact, we recommend STs total up the highest sphere level of each effect (without doubling it). So if a mage decided to make the artifact version of the necklace above, it would cost 4 experience.

Charms

Charms are essentially simple, one-use magic Artifacts. In general, they should have only a single effect placed in them, and as such cannot be quite as complicated or multi-function as artifacts or talismans sometimes become. Similar to Artifacts, their primary purpose is reliability and allowing mages other than the creator to perform a specific effect.

Charms are the only other time when non-mages can potentially use a prime-based item. However, it is very limited. A person whose paradigm is very close to the mage who created the item may, at ST discretion, activate a charm using Willpower instead of Arete. This is normally only applicable for Acolytes and similar specific individuals tied to the creator, however, and given the different worldview of most supernaturals, it is virtually impossible for other supernatural creatures to fulfill this requirement.

We do not recommend that STs charge experience for charms, but for balance purposes we do recommend that they adopt a limit as to how many charms a mage may have in existence at one time.

Spirit based items

- Created with Spirit
- Similar to fetishes created by Changing Breeds, Kuei-jin, Kindred with the path of Spirit Manipulation, and possibly other methods, making this probably the most common type of magical item in the WoD.

- Only rough guidelines for power level and capabilities, leaving much to ST discretion.
- Method of activation varies due to construction method and who is making it, but is usually a Gnosis, Arete, or Willpower challenge.
- Requires Spirit 3 (for Talens) or Spirit 4 (for Fetishes)

Fetishes

Unlike Prime-based items, there is no set formula for determining what a fetish can do or how much it should cost. However, there are some suggested guidelines.

While an Artifact can have a handful of unrelated effects placed in it, making it something of a swiss army knife of magical tools, fetishes should generally have only a single power or a very few closely related powers, all tied into the nature of the spirit inside. In order to determine the power level of a fetish, the only real recourse is to compare it to other published fetishes and attempt to balance from there.

When creating a fetish, a mage may elect for it to be activated by either Arete or Willpower. In most cases, choosing Arete is the safer option for tools they intend to use themselves, while Willpower allows them to create items for allies.

Cost is a difficult issue to adjudicate as well, but in order to maintain parity we recommend that STs determine what an artifact with the same powers would cost, and use that as the cost for the fetish.

Talens

Talens are one-use spirit items similar to charms. Again, comparison to published talens is the only real way to balance them mechanically. Like charms, we suggest that STs enforce a limit on the number of talens a mage may have in existence for game balance purposes.

Pattern-Sphere based items

Often called “trinkets,” these are items that are not inherently magical, but have been created or enhanced with magic in some way. Armor might be made lighter or tougher (or normal clothing into passable armor), a weapon might become sharper or more durable, the lenses of a telescope might be refined to an impossible level of focus.

Matter is by far the most typical sphere used in this process, but conceivably Life might be used to grow special wood for a weapon or something similar. While technically forces could create a “trinket,” the fact that there is no magic to sustain the energy-based item after the effect has been cast makes doing so effectively pointless.

The largest limitation on these items is that they should not create any new effect - they should only enhance what already exists. For example, a trinket could remove negative traits from armor (Heavy, Clumsy) or add health levels to the armor. But since normal armor in MET does not grant Damage Reduction, a trinket should never be able to make normal armor that does so.

For balance purposes, trinkets should be useful but not overwhelming. It should be possible to make normal clothing as protective as a flak jacket, or to make heavy riot gear as easy to move in as the same flak jacket, but normal clothing should never be the equivalent of the heavy riot gear in protection. In general, adding a trait or two, removing a negative trait or two, adding a couple of bonus traits, or adding a level of damage to a weapon are about the extent of what should be considered reasonable for this sort of item.

Under no circumstances should STs ever allow trinket bonuses to stack with any sort of permanent magical enchantment down the line, and they should carefully consider whether the trinket bonuses should stack with any sort of temporary magical enhancement.

Section 2 - Cross-Genre Interaction

Mages are perhaps the genre most thematically suited to interacting with others. That said, the nature of their abilities sometimes makes such interaction difficult. The following are suggestions for maintaining balance.

General Genre Concerns

While Mages may be the most suited to general interaction with the other denizens of the World of Darkness, that does not mean that things should be without tension. Not every mage is suited to interact with every other sort of supernatural.

We suggest an approach of "Interaction for some regularly - interaction for most infrequently." A small number of characters who are designed for cross-genre input should be able to do so on a regular basis. This is not limited to the obvious kinfolk/kinain mages and similar inherent ties. Social or situational concepts can align without the need of such. For example, you could have a Hermetic of House Ex Miscellanea who is studying the remnants of the lore of House Merinita who attempts to forge respectful alliances with the Fae. These are the characters who should have an opportunity at regular (though not necessarily constant) interaction with other genres, as well as a chance for both deeper trust and more heart-wrenching betrayal.

Other characters, as long as they are not inherently antagonistic, may occasionally have opportunity to interact with other supernaturals, but by necessity it should be more standoffish and cautious on both sides. Usually this will happen when groups share a goal and work together on that goal, but they generally won't mix casually or socially outside of that effort.

General Cross Genre Mechanics

Effect based Countermagic (Mage)

Mages are uniquely equipped to counter the magics of nearly any other supernatural in the World of Darkness. Unfortunately, the rules for doing so are somewhat lacking. As such, we suggest the following rules.

Requirements

In order to counter an effect, the mage must have the following:

- Knowledge of what is being countered. This should be reasonably specific, but does not have to be exact. For example, it would be reasonable for a mage to attempt to counter an effect that "calls up fire" or "manipulates emotions," without having to know the specific power is Lure of Flames or Presence.
    - Inherent powers cannot be countered directly in this fashion - countermagic cannot stop a Garou from shapechanging or a vampire from spending blood to heal, although specific other effects might do so at ST discretion.
    - More subtle powers, and especially powers that do not project outward from the user, should require much more knowledge and experience to counter. It should be fairly trivial, from a knowledge perspective, to counter a vampire throwing fire. It should be much more difficult, perhaps requiring high levels of lore and experimentation, to counter the supernatural strength of Potence or the resilience of Fortitude.
- Knowledge of an appropriate sphere to counter the effect. For example, the mage might use Forces to counter the aforementioned fire effect and Mind to counter the emotional manipulation.

System

In order to counter an effect, the mage must use a magical action and make an Arete challenge against the power level of the target. For changing breeds, this is usually the character's numeric rank. For other supernaturals, it is usually the character's level in the appropriate power. Willpower may be used to retest by either side.

A win counters the effect, a loss fails to do so. In the event of a tie, the storyteller has two options:

- Side with the defender, thus the effect is not countered.
- Engage in a "contest of wills" between the two sides. Both sides have the opportunity to cede victory to the other side - if they do not, they are locked in struggle over the effect. They both forfeit all other actions as long as they are engaged in the contest of wills, and the Arete vs power level challenge is repeated once per turn until one side prevails. Whichever side wins determines whether or not the effect has been countered. Either side can withdraw from the contest of wills at the beginning of a round with no penalty other than allowing the other side "victory" in regard to the effect in question.

Unweaving

Unweaving is the act of "countering" established, usually long term/permanent effects. The process is essentially the same as above, except for slight modifications.

Unweaving is generally a longer process than a casual effect, often ritualized. It should require a number of successful "counter" challenges as outlined above. The length of time required to make each

challenge is up to the ST, but it could range from a round to a day or more. Similarly, the number of successful challenges required to undo the effect varies based on ST discretion. As a suggestion of scale:

- Unweaving a short term effect (something lasting a scene or a day at most) is usually relatively trivial, requiring a round per challenge and between 1-5 successful challenges at ST discretion.
- Unweaving a longer term effect (anything longer than a day, but not permanent) is more difficult and will usually take a few minutes up to an hour per challenge, and require 5-10 successful challenges.
- Unweaving a permanent effect should take a minimum of an hour for each challenge and require in the neighborhood of 10 successful challenges to remove.

To the advantage of the unweaving mage, the person who created the effect is usually not present, and thus cannot spend willpower to resist the unweaving.

STs may wish to enforce a limit on the total number of challenges a mage may make, or may wish to impose a limitation on how many challenges in a row may be failed before the effect is considered beyond the mage's current ability. For example, an ST may rule that in order to dispel a permanent effect, the Mage must succeed at 10 challenges, but may not make more than 20 challenge attempts. Alternately, the ST might rule that failing two challenges in a row means the mage cannot unweave the effect. In either case, failure in such a way usually means that the mage cannot attempt to unweave the effect again without getting "better" in some way, usually reflected by an increase in Arete, an applicable sphere, or an applicable lore or other ability.

Finally, it is entirely appropriate for truly monolithic works of magic to require an utterly impractical number of successful challenges to unweave. For example, if a mage wanted to try to unweave the centuries-old, continually reinforced wards against magical scrying around a Tremere chantry in Vienna, they would likely be looking at hundreds or thousands of required successful challenges in order to break through.

Effect based Countermagic (other Supernaturals)

At storyteller discretion, other supernaturals may be able to use their own powers to counter Mage effects. This is a bit trickier, but mechanically works the same way. The challenge is determining if the PC has a power that can counter a specific rote.

For example, if a mage was attempting to use Forces to light something on fire, a Garou might use the Create Element gift to create a deluge of water to immediately counter the fire. A vampire with Dominate might use it to contest a mage who is attempting to mind-control a mortal. As long as the character's power has an effect that directly opposes the mage's specific use of a sphere effect, the effect may be countered.

Instantaneous effects are generally outright countered. Longer term effects might only be suppressed for a time, depending on ST discretion.

The character must pay any cost of the power as per normal, but rather than having its normal effect, the power instead cancels out the mage's effect. For example, a Fianna might use Fair Fortune to counter a mage's Curse of Luck rote, but she will not gain the normal retest in addition to cancelling the effect.

Unweaving is generally beyond the scope of what other supernaturals can accomplish with their less versatile powers. In addition, this should be limited to inherent powers - one can't use a fetish in this way, and while using a gift like Fair Fortune might make sense to counter a luck-based curse, using the Luck merit would not.

While it is beyond the scope of this packet, these rules are agnostic enough that at ST discretion they could be used for situations between other supernaturals (Create Water vs Lure of Flames, for example).

Vampire

Vampire Thematics

In general, mages are wary of Vampires for two reasons. The first is that the blood bond can cripple the Avatar of a mage (see the "Binding Rules" section below), the second being that the embrace can shred the Avatar. There are some specific instances that bear mention.

Order of Hermes

The Hermetics hate vampires in general, and the Tremere in particular. The conflict between the Order and the Tremere has already led to two full-out wars (the Masassa wars). To most of the Order of Hermes, interacting with vampires is looked upon with less favor than interacting with demons (at least of the high umbral Goetic variety).

Euthanatos

Though they may be 'death mages,' the Euthanatos are also very tied to the idea of the proper cycle of things. To them the very nature of vampiric existence is nothing short of blasphemous, a perversion of the cycle that should be destroyed. At best, individual Euthanatoi regard vampires with the same sort of mix of morbid fascination and disgust that a microbiologist might reserve for ebola. Euthanatos and vampires do not make good friends.

Verbena

Most Verbena hold similar views as the Euthanatos when it comes to vampires, but the less dogmatic structure of the tradition as a whole means that view is not quite as hard a line. There is a tie between the Bahari (Lilith-cultists) and the Verbena in earlier editions. From 2nd edition on, this is toned down in Mage references to be a morbid fascination on the part of a small minority of Verbena often tied to the legends of Lilith. A Verbena who associates regularly with vampires will often be viewed suspiciously by the rest of the Tradition.

Technocracy

The Technocracy, if anything, underestimates the political strength of vampires, though it does not tolerate fraternization with such dangerous reality deviants. If vampires behave themselves and the technocracy doesn't believe they have too much influence on the mortal world, there is no particular impetus to hunt them down. But unsubtle political manipulation, or frequent/flamboyant masquerade breaches may indeed lead to active antagonism. This usually does not start with an android invasion - rather, the vampire responsible may suddenly find that his political foes (vampire and otherwise) have acquired recordings of his secret meetings, documentation of his double-crossing plans, or maybe even the location of his secret haven. The Technocracy is more than willing to use cat's-paws and to let the monsters deal with each other rather than risking valuable personnel and resources.

Vampire Mechanics

Interacting Magically

- Using Life to affect a Vampire also requires Matter, as vampires straddle the line between life and death.
- Permanently breaking a blood bond through sphere magic requires a conjunctional Life 3 / Mind 4 / Spirit 4 / Prime 3 effect, and should require at least Vampire Lore 3+ and extensive dedicated study.

Hermetic Thaumaturgy & Countermagic

Thaumaturgy is an unusual situation, because it is a countermagic based on the Hermetic principles that the Tremere brought over from the Order of Hermes. As such, each is uniquely vulnerable to the other. A vampire who knows Hermetic Thaumaturgy may use his highest path of Thaumaturgy to attempt to counter any effect in the Hermetic Paradigm. Conversely, a Hermetic using Prime may counter any Hermetic Thaumaturgy effect.

Thaumaturgical Countermagic

As noted in the Laws of the Night Camarilla Guide (pg 92), this discipline works at reduced effectiveness against hedge magic, but cannot affect sphere magic at all.

Werewolf

Werewolf Thematics

It is a bit difficult to paint a broad picture of Garou/Mage interactions, because much of the source material (Garou sources especially) are contradictory, or at least selective. The main Garou books paint a picture of stark hatred. But a large number of tribebooks when discussing mages boil down to some variant of "All mages are trash EXCEPT these particular groups we kind of like."

As such, it is advised to try to keep both viewpoints present and keep the issue a matter of debate. If most PCs are in favor of interacting with mages on a friendly basis, STs should provide NPCs who hate the idea. These NPCs serve not only to make sure the opposite view is represented, but they also serve as support for PCs who may wish to take that viewpoint against the general trend of other PCs.

Conversely, if a game's PCs are largely hostile toward mages, STs are encouraged to provide NPC voices espousing at least limited cooperation. Again, this makes sure the issue is seen as debated, and provides NPC support for PCs who buck the trend.

There are some notable circumstances pertaining to specific groups:

Dreamspeakers

As the Tradition that encompasses the most shamanistic practitioners, the Dreamspeakers' paradigm meshes quite well with the inherently shamanistic bent of Werewolf cosmology. While true that the Dreamspeakers are perhaps the Tradition most likely to be able to interact peacefully with Garou, this shouldn't be a carte blanche alliance. At best, Dreamspeakers are more commonly viewed as the 'best' of the mages, but if the Garou in question doesn't have a high opinion of mages in the first place that may not mean much.

Verbena

Verbena are the second tradition most likely to associate with Garou. With a nature-focused bent and a generally compatible philosophy on a number of things, Verbena are also well suited to Garou interaction. There are canon references to small Verbena groups having official alliances with groups of Fianna and Black Furies. These are not Tradition/Tribe wide alliances, simply alliances between specific cabals and packs, or chantries and septs at best.

Euthanatos

Because of a quirk of LARP, Euthanatos are saddled with the Jhor resonance trait, which does show up as "wyrmy" to Garou. This tradition disadvantage does not exist in this way in tabletop, nor is Jhor a resonance trait in tabletop, but rather its own thing. Given that, it is recommended that a single trait of Jhor resonance not immediately designate a Euthanatos as showing up as wyrm tainted to Sense Wyrm and similar gifts. That said, most Euthanatos are not particularly suited to associating with Garou - the trappings of their practices is suspicious at best from a Garou point of view.

Akashic Brotherhood

The Akashics have close ties with the Stargazers, even to the point that there are canon instances of "timeshare" arrangements around the occasional caern/node. Apart from this tie, however, Akashics are neither particularly suited or unsuited to Garou interaction.

Technocracy

The Technocracy view of Garou is similar to their view of Vampires, but slanted a bit due to the activities of Black Spiral Dancers and the fact that the Technocracy really doesn't distinguish them as different. In general, BSDs are the Garou most likely to draw the ire of the Technocracy, followed closely by Red Talons and other Garou who have a penchant for attacking humans or human endeavors. Given the general loose ties that Garou have to society as compared to many vampires, the response tends to be more defensive while also being more overtly violent. The Union rarely sends a strike force into the woods after Garou, but if a pattern of attacks on people or power plants shows up the Garou may find some unpleasant surprises awaiting them at their next target.

Werewolf Mechanics

Interacting Magically

- Affecting a Garou (or most other changing breeds) with Life requires both Life and Spirit, as they are creatures physically made of both.
- Spirit can counter most gifts, although at ST discretion the mage may take a minor penalty on the countering challenge if the gift is not particularly related to spirits/the umbra in some way.

Delirium

Mages are inherently immune to the delirium, but most smart mages avoid going toe to toe with nine foot tall killing machines unless they are absolutely sure they are prepared and have the upper hand.

Paradox Spirits

Paradox spirits are not typical spirits. In many ways, they are the manifestation of sphere magic backlash. As such, they cannot be summoned, created, or otherwise manipulated by changing breeds characters unless they have a specific gift or rite that allows such. This is reinforced by the fact that both the Ananasi and the Stargazers have very high level gifts that allow them to accomplish what would otherwise be a trivial task if paradox spirits were just "normal" spirits.

Also note that the paradox spirit listed in the Book of the Weaver is the manifestation of the concept of a paradox, and only shares a name with the paradox spirits of Mage.

Changeling

Changeling Thematics

Mages tend to be particularly polarized when it comes to changelings. Much of it depends on the bent of a mage's paradigm and how that translates to banality.

Verbena

The Verbena are the tradition perhaps most commonly involved with the fae. There are references to Verbena offering aid to the Kithain in exchange for faerie blood or other magical substances that are useful to them. The ways of the Verbena are generally the closest to the Kithain - both European and Nunnehi - among all mages.

Dreamspeakers

Frequently interacting with spirits, and the tradition most at home interacting with Maya, the Dream Realm (which may or may not be part of the Dreaming but is at least in some ways similar), Dreamspeakers are among the least banal of mages. They more frequently have contact with the Nunnehi, but occasionally with European fae as well.

Order of Hermes

The Order of Hermes, through the now-defunct House Merinita, had formal agreements with the Sidhe dating back to the dark ages. These old pacts make the Order a surprisingly friendly organization to changelings (nobility in particular) than one might expect from a group so entrenched in logic and ritual.

Marauders

Marauders, insane as they are, are of particular interest. A Marauder's very presence can potentially warp the dreaming around them, with more drastic manifestations coinciding with deeper insanity on the part of the Marauder. They may not be malicious toward the Kithain, but in some ways they are like a wind storm - loud, impersonal, and potentially destructive.

Changeling Mechanics

Interacting Magically

- Effects that interact with glamour require a Spirit and/or Prime effect, and appropriate knowledge or Lore.
- Perceiving Fae and chimera ("enchanting" oneself) requires only Spirit and the necessary knowledge to do so. Note that the this is not true Enchantment, however, simply the ability to perceive elements of the Dreaming such as Chimera and fae meins. As such, the mage is not affected by the Mists, but may also have difficulty perceiving fine details at ST discretion.

Banality

Unfortunately, there are two separate canon charts for Banality in the source material, one of which is more general than the other. It is up to STs to determine which they wish to use. Both are presented here.

Group	Banality
Tradition Mages	5-7
Technocracy Mages	9-10

Group	Banality
Marauders	0-2
Mysticks (Verbena, Cult of Ecstasy, Hermetics, Dreamspeakers)	2-4
True Believers (Nephandi, Celestial Chorus, Akashic Brotherhood, Euthanatos, most Craft wizards)	4-6
Modern Cynics (Sons of Ether, Hollow Ones, Virtual Adepts, many Orphans)	6-8
Technocrats	8-10

Mists

Mages are not immune to the Mists, and if they encounter or detect a chimerical being or effect while not enchanted, their memory will tend to be glossed over just as anyone else, based on their Banality rating. However, mages (like other supernaturals) who are enchanted do not suffer from the Mists when their enchantment ends – they retain anything they experienced while enchanted. A Spirit/Mind effect could theoretically help prevent loss of memory to the Mists, but this should be limited to moving the character's effective Banality down a few points at most.

The Dreaming

Only shamanic mages, especially the Dreamspeakers, are noted as having the ability to enter the Dreaming on their own. This does not mean that doing so is necessarily a good idea.

The issue remains unclear in some ways because of the existence of Maya, the Dream Realm, which is in some ways portrayed as a separate Umbral realm and in other ways is portrayed as a region of the dreaming or perhaps the Near Dreaming itself.

If STs decide to allow Mages to interact with the Dreaming, it is highly advised that they be very familiar with Changeling and/or consult with the Changeling Coordinator's office. In general however, consider that mages change reality with their will - and that in the Dreaming, reality itself has a certain sort of sentience. A mage using magic in the Dreaming is prone to their magic spinning out of control, either far more potent than the intended, fizzling into nothing, or perhaps even backlashing against the mage depending on how the Dreaming reacts to the mage and the effect and how well a mage can hold the reins on his suddenly wild magic.

Wraith

Wraith Thematics

Wraith often suffers in cross-genre interaction, as most other denizens of the World of Darkness have little ability to see or interact with them, unless the wraiths themselves have powers that allow for interaction across the shroud. And those other supernatural groups who do have the power to see across the shroud are often the ones with specific powers to manipulate and deal with wraiths, often in an unfriendly way.

Mages in general are a slight exception to this. Any mage with the Spirit sphere has the potential (if not the actual ability) to at least see/hear across the shroud. While mages with higher level of Spirit have the potential to affect wraiths substantially, the fact that many magical traditions encourage ancestor reverence or otherwise incorporate the spirits of the dead in non hostile ways, mages are perhaps somewhat more likely not to come into conflict with wraiths who do not initiate hostilities themselves.

Most Traditions have at least some cursory interaction with the spirits of the dead, at least as a whole. Often, these are basic rituals of propitiation, protection, and exorcism and can take the form of a Verbena witch's laying hostile spirits to rest to an Akashic monk exorcising a spectre ('demon') from a child. There are two groups in particular who bear mention.

Euthanatos

The Euthanatos are perhaps the group most likely to deal with wraiths. Depending on the circumstances and the particular Euthanatos, a (non-spectre) wraith might be viewed as either a valuable source of wisdom worth of respect, or a lost soul who should be helped to pass along the wheel. Granted, many wraiths are not necessarily fans of the idea of "passing along the wheel," but in general a Euthanatos will restrict themselves to advice and counsel unless the wraith is actively harming others.

Dreamspeakers

Many of the individual shamanic traditions that get roped under the Dreamspeaker title incorporate various forms of ancestor veneration, and many do not actually substantially distinguish a difference between nature spirits and the spirits of former humans. While there is not room in this document to give any sort of accurate list of such traditions and how they deal with the spirits of the dead, keep this fact in mind and research the specific traditions of any such character you wish to portray.

Wraith Mechanics

Interacting Magically

- No effect can cross the shroud without the addition of the Spirit sphere, although Prime-enhanced weapons (see the Prime 2 rote) can strike a wraith across it.
- Spirit may counter Arcanoi, but might be at a minor penalty against Arcanoi that affect the mind or emotions of the target. In those cases, using Mind is the more appropriate (and penalty-free) counter.
- Life has no effect on Wraiths, but Spirit can be used in place of Life to have similar effects.

Low Umbra / Dark Umbra / Shadowlands Travel

Mage leaves us with a bit of difficulty when it comes to entering with the Shadowlands. The base books indicate that it is possible to enter by any mage with the requisite level of Spirit. Other books (Euthanatos: Revised) in particular, have separate requirements for being able to do so (Agama Rituals) which often requires additional spheres, notably Entropy.

To simplify matters, we advise that for mages whose Vidare pushes them toward the Low Umbra, they may step sideways with a normal Spirit 3 effect and enter the Dark Umbra. For those whose Vidare is tied to the Middle or High Umbra, it should require study and development of a specific Spirit 3 rote in order to do so. We do not recommend requiring additional spheres such as Entropy, simply research and experimentation.

See the Mage Setting/Genre section for more details on Vidare.

Others

As a whole, with mages being so diverse, for any supernatural in the WoD there is likely a subset of mages who would interact with them on some level. In these more niche circumstances, rely on the source material to see if there is any existing relationship or viewpoint between the groups in question, and proceed from there. Utilize the general cross-genre principles listed above, and always feel free to reach out to the Mage team for further assistance.

Section 3 - Hedge Magic

Mages teaching Hedge Magic

Some magical traditions, including many of the Traditions proper, include hedge mages as part of their organization and structure. This often includes Awakened mages sharing research and information with hedge mages. If the STs wish to integrate Hedge Magic, they can use the following list for true mages teaching Hedge Paths. As a general rule, assume a true mage can teach a given path up to his corresponding Sphere level +1. (I.E, a mage with Prime 4 could act as a teacher for up to Mana Manipulation 5).

Typically, Mages cannot “teach” psychic phenomena, though such powers might be able to be granted with a combination of Mind 5 and the Prime 5 “Enchant Life” effect, possibly with other spheres (Forces for Telekinesis, etc).

- Alchemy- Prime and Life
- Conjuration- Correspondence
- Conveyance- Correspondence
- Divination- Time
- Enchantment- Prime and Matter
- Fascination- Mind

- Fortune- Entropy
- Healing- Life
- Hellfire- Forces
- Mana Manipulation- Prime
- Oneiromancy- Mind
- Shadowcasting- Forces
- Shapeshifting- Life
- Summoning, Binding, and Warding- Spirit
- Weather Control – Forces

Dealing with Enchantment & Alchemy

Enchanting and Alchemy can become troublesome for game balance, as they effectively allow a character to "transfer" powers to others. However, it is problematic to limit the power of enchanted items without detracting from the personal utility of the power.

To combat this, first remember that each type of enchanted or alchemical item is essentially a separate ritual. Each time he wishes to make a new type of enchanted item, the hedge mage must purchase a new ritual of the appropriate level as outlined in Laws of the Hunt (Revised). Keeping track of exactly what the hedge mage is able to make is part and parcel of limiting the trouble these powers can cause.

Another way to help control this is to limit how much non-practitioners can use enchanted items and alchemy 'potions.' This can be done in a couple of ways.

1. Limit the number of items that a sorcerer can pass out. A number of items equal to permanent Willpower would be a good starting point. The disadvantage of this method is that it limits commerce in magical items, and can leave a hedge mage with little to exchange for favors and such. This rule is suggested for games that wish to keep tight control of hedge magic and its benefits.
2. Limit the number of items that any given character can use. A character must "attune" to any enchanted item he intends to use, a process taking an hour or two of concentration. A character may only be attuned to a number of levels of items equal to his permanent Willpower. So for example, a character with Willpower 7 could own a level 4 enchanted object and a level 3 enchanted object. Similarly, a character may use a number of levels of Alchemy potions equal to his permanent Willpower per month. Going beyond this limit should inflict some fairly nasty and possibly permanent side effects on the character.

Items that a character makes himself should be exempt from these rules. So an enchanter can use his own items, and an alchemist can drink his own potions, without concern. This rule requires a bit more book keeping overall, and allows for a bit more spread of power than the first rule, but does stop things from getting to the level of absurdity. It is suggested for most games.

Section 4 - Binding Rules and Restrictions

These rules set out limitations for both character based restrictions (which are also published in the Character bylaws) and for limitations on hedge and sphere magic in OWBN as a whole.

World-changing effects

Any truly world-changing effects are not possible, as consensual reality will only bend so far. Pulling the moon out of orbit, putting out the sun, rearranging continents and so on are all completely out of the question.

"Fixing" Supernaturals

Mages cannot turn humans into any other supernatural group, although they might turn them into a creature that superficially resembles a supernatural group. For instance, a mage could turn a human into a large, furry, half-wolf creature with enough time and use of the Life sphere, but the creature would not be Garou, have access to Gifts, etc..

The exceptions to the above are when a mage triggers an Awakening through Archmage level Spirit or the creation and use of a Primer (a magical tome designed to Awaken those with potential). A mage can potentially teach a normal human Hedge Magic, or bless them as per the "Enchant Life" Prime 5 effect/Blessing background. Finally, a mage with enough of the Spirit sphere can theoretically create Possessed character types such as Formori and Gorgons (though definitely not Kami, and Drones are debatable), though this comes with its own potential pitfalls and moral quandaries.

For the purposes of OWBN, mages cannot turn a member of a supernatural group back into a normal human. Assume that any attempt to do so immediately garners enough Paradox to destroy the effect and either knock out or kill the mage. Again, "counterfeits" may be possible – a mage with Life 5 and Spirit 4 could create a living body and bind a Wraith into it, making a creature that appears to be human, but is in fact not. A mage with appropriate spheres could suppress a shapeshifter's abilities, Rage, Gnosis, and Gifts, but the fundamental nature of the creature would remain.

An exception to the above is when a mage enacts Gilgul upon another mage. Also, the aforementioned Possessed character types may be an exception as well, though exorcising the spirit in those cases invariably leads to the death of the host (barring Archmage spheres, the intercession of a Celestine, or something equally impressive).

Finally, a mage cannot directly turn one supernatural type into another. The very few possible exceptions to this are those where the victim becomes a spirit of one type or another (you kill another mage and he becomes a wraith, you pull out someone's soul or sever their silver cord and they become a spirit, etc.). In these cases, however, the transformation is closer to a side effect rather than a direct result of transformative magic.

Though there are no published rules or Paths that would seem to be able to accomplish these feats, these guidelines limit Hedge Magic/Numina as well as Sphere magic.

Supernaturals with Hedge Magic/Numina

Unless part of a canon group that specifically allows the use of Hedge Magic/Numina, no major supernatural type (Vampire, Werewolf, Mage, Changeling, etc.) may possess Hedge Magic/Numina.

If the character is part of a group that is able to utilize these abilities (Uktena Path Dancers, Bubasti, Runewise Gangrel, etc) that character must obtain Coordinator approval from their appropriate Genre Coordinator unless more stringent R&U guidelines are already in place.

"Semi-supernatural" characters such as Kinfolk, Ghouls, Kinain, and so on may possess Hedge Magic/Numina, subject to any R&U regulations.

Avatar Enslavement

There are a small number of circumstances that can stunt the growth of a mage's avatar. Specifically, ghouled mages and mages involved in Soul Pact with demons.

Any mage who becomes ghouled must deal with the effects of avatar addiction. A mage may safely consume a number of blood points equal to his Avatar rating. This is a cumulative lifetime limit. A mage who drinks three blood points has still used up three of his "safe" points even decades later. After that point, the avatar becomes addicted. Mechanically, this means that the mage cannot advance in Arete or Spheres, and may not fuel his personal quintessence at all except through vampire blood. Even worse, the vampiric blood begins to destroy the avatar of the mage after a few years, effectively Gilguling the mage over time. These rules apply even to Mages with the Unbondable merit. For more details, see Blood Treachery, pg 77.

Any mage who enters into a Soul Pact with a demon risks enslaving his avatar. A mage may safely enter into Pacts (as outlined in the 2011 OWBN Infernalism packet) with a final rating equal to or less than his Avatar rating. Once the total of all Pacts exceeds this amount, his avatar is completely enslaved to his demonic patron. Mechanically, the mage may not increase his Arete rating. He can no longer gain Quintessence from nodes, save those that are consecrated to his demonic master. The mage is also incapable of learning any new Spheres except those learned from his demonic patron as part of another Soul Pact. Finally, over a period of years, the demon separates the avatar from the mage, leaving the infernalist with only his Investments. For more details, see the OWBN Infernalism Packet and the Book of Madness (Revised), pg 94.

This Old Umbra (Changing Umbral Realms)

Mages in canon Umbral realms cannot fundamentally alter the nature of those realms, although they can temporarily alter their immediate surroundings. For example, a mage in Pangaea could not create a modern building that lasts more than a short while (a few hours more than the duration of the mage's

presence at most). In addition, mages should not be able to access the few Garou-only realms: Wolfhome, Summer Country, and Erebus.

Grimoires and Primers

Grimoire is the general term for any sort of media – from books to traditional oral history chants to complex computer programs - designed to convey the complexities of spheres and/or enlightenment (Arete). There are a number of other names for them depending on faction, etc., but mechanically it is defined here as any creation that gives an experience discount on the purchase of spheres/Arete, and possibly allows the purchase of Arete without a seeking. Primers are a specific type of Grimoire that Awakens the reader if they have sufficient natural potential (usually at least a Willpower of 5 and ST discretion).

Because of the rarity of these items, the difficulty of their creation and the fact that their purpose is to give experience discounts, the existence and use of these tomes require Coord approval. Any such item must be outlined specifically with what it can teach, and the limitations of who can learn from it based on paradigm.

Section 5 - Legalities

This packet contains numerous references to, paraphrasing of, and the occasional quote from published Mage: the Ascension / Laws of Ascension books. Any reference herein is intended as fair use and is not a challenge to the copyright holder. All relevant elements are copyright of their respective holder (White Wolf, Paradox Interactive, Onyx Path Publishing, et al), hf, and all rights are reserved.

Section 6 - Extras

Casting Cheat Sheet

The following is a simple cheat sheet for calculating the final casting difficulty of an effect, and where you can obtain grades of success. Feel free to reproduce and pass out to your players.

Casting Difficulty Cheat Sheet
Base Difficulty = Highest Sphere Level

Vulgarity: +1 if vulgar, +2 w/ witnesses
Domino Effect: +1 per effect, up to +3
Opposed Resonance: +1
Surpassing Necessary Focus: +3
Conjunctional Effect: +1
Fast Casting: +1

Spend Quintessence: -1 per, up to -3
Spend Extra Time[1]: -1 per grade of time
In or near a Node: -1
Using Specialty or Surpassed Focus[2]: -1
Using Unique Focus: -1
Assisting Resonance Trait: -1

Total Difficult may not drop below the Base -3.

If the final difficulty is double your Arete or greater, failure is instead a botch.

1 - Each extra grade of time (round, minute, hour, day) spent requires an additional casting test (see Grades of Success Cheat sheet). Each grade of time may either be used to generate a grade of success or reduce difficulty, not both.

2 – These two difficulty reductions do not stack.

Grades of Success Cheat Sheet

Willpower: Spend a point of willpower to gain one grade.

Overbidding: If you can overbid the trait difficulty of the effect, you gain one grade of success.

Spending extra time: Each extra grade of time (round, minute, hour, day) spent requires an additional casting test, and provides one grade of success. If one of the tests fails, the mage may choose to continue at +1 trait difficulty, and must recast the unsuccessful portion of extra time. This continues until the difficulty equals twice the mage's arête, at which point another failure triggers a catastrophic botch which cannot be negated or suppressed via Willpower. Each time interval spent on an effect can either reduce difficulty or add a grade of success, not both.

Quintessence: A Prime 4 effect will allow you to spend up to 3 quintessence for a grade of success each on your next effect (which must be started within a scene). Any quintessence spent in this way counts toward the quintessence spending limit for the subsequent effect.