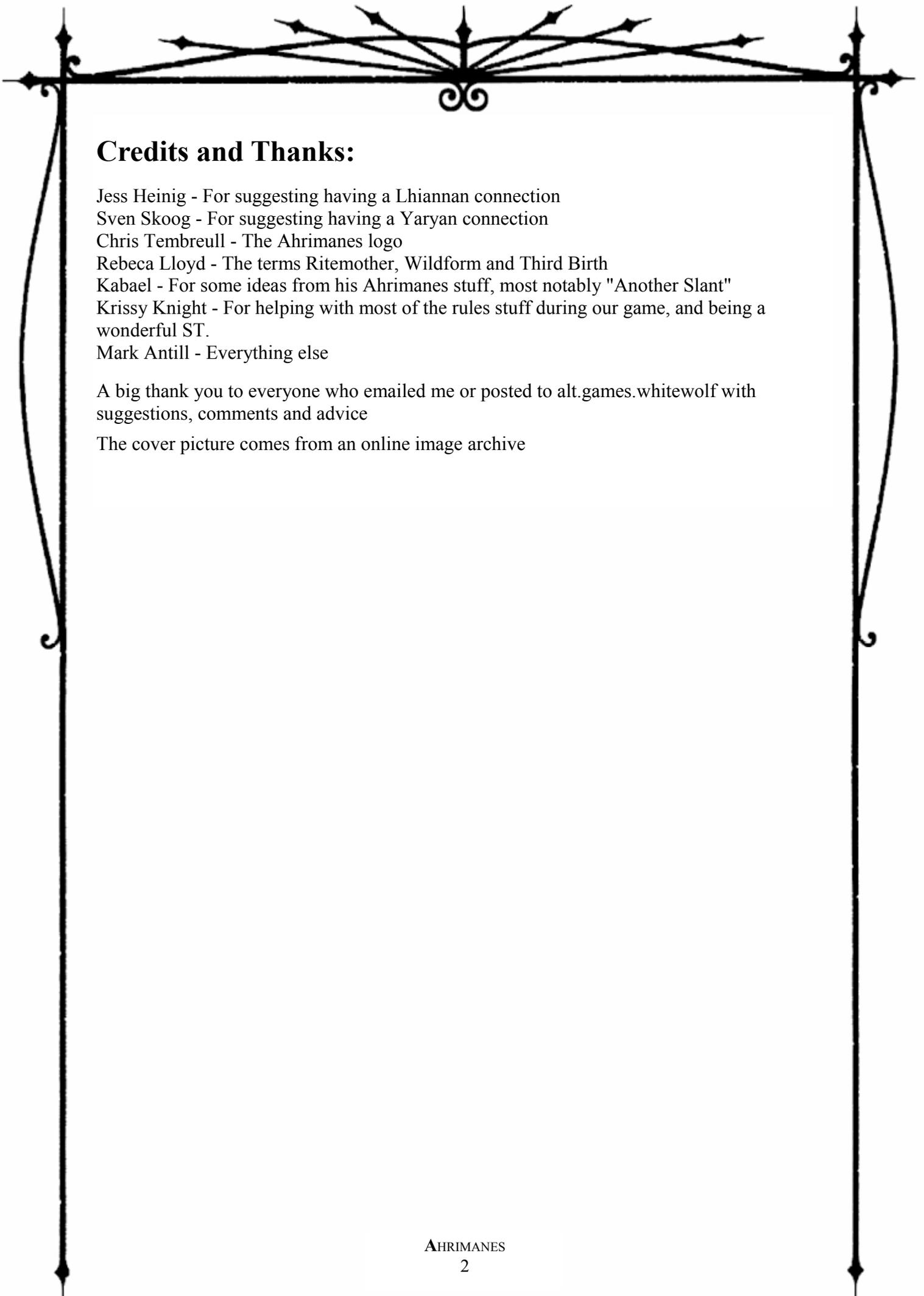


Bloodline-Book:
Abri-munes



A Net Sourcebook for
Vampire: the Masquerade
by Mark Antill



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The cover picture comes from an online image archive

Introduction

The Ahrimanes are a small Bloodline, an all female offshoot of the Sabbat Gangrel first introduced in the **Storytellers Handbook to the Sabbat**, and getting a very brief mention in the **Vampire Storyteller's Handbook**. You do not need either book to use this work as all the information required here. The purpose of this book is to expand on the given information there, to give some depth, purpose and hopefully interest to the Bloodline by updating and expanding on the original 2nd edition information.

In the end, use this like any supplement, take the bits from it you like and incorporate it into your game world in the way that suits you best. If some people find some things they like and use here, I'll consider this work a success.

Lexicon

As a rather culturally isolated group, its not unsurprising the Ahrimanes have developed some terms of their own.

Big Chief: Muricia, the Bloodline's founder. Used by younger Ahrimanes and *never* in her presence.

Cat: An Ahrimane, not considered derogatory.

Chief: Informal term for an Ahrimane pack leader.

Den: A place where a founded Ahrimane pack dwells, rationally a remote estate in southern USA but that has been changing recently.

First Birth: Being born a mortal

Indulging: Spending most of the time in or around just one of the Three Worlds. Some Ahrimanes do this to better understand a world, others believe it is a loss of control and balance.

Kingdom: Another term for one of the three worlds. So, for example, the World of Beasts is sometimes referred to as the Kingdom of Beasts.

Manitou: A spirit.

Medicine: Magical power including but not limited to Disciplines. Younger Ahrimanes sometimes call it Mojo.

Mentor: An older Ahrimane who is training up a Gangrel as a potential member. Sometimes called a Mother as well.

Ritemother: A Mentor who has successfully lead their charge through the Third Birth is now that Ahrimane's Ritemother.

Second Birth: The Embrace.

Shaman, Shamaness: An Ahrimane pack priest, both terms apply to females.

Third Birth: The ritual that transforms a female Gangrel into an Ahrimane.

Wildform: The Cat-woman form granted by the fifth level of Spiritus.

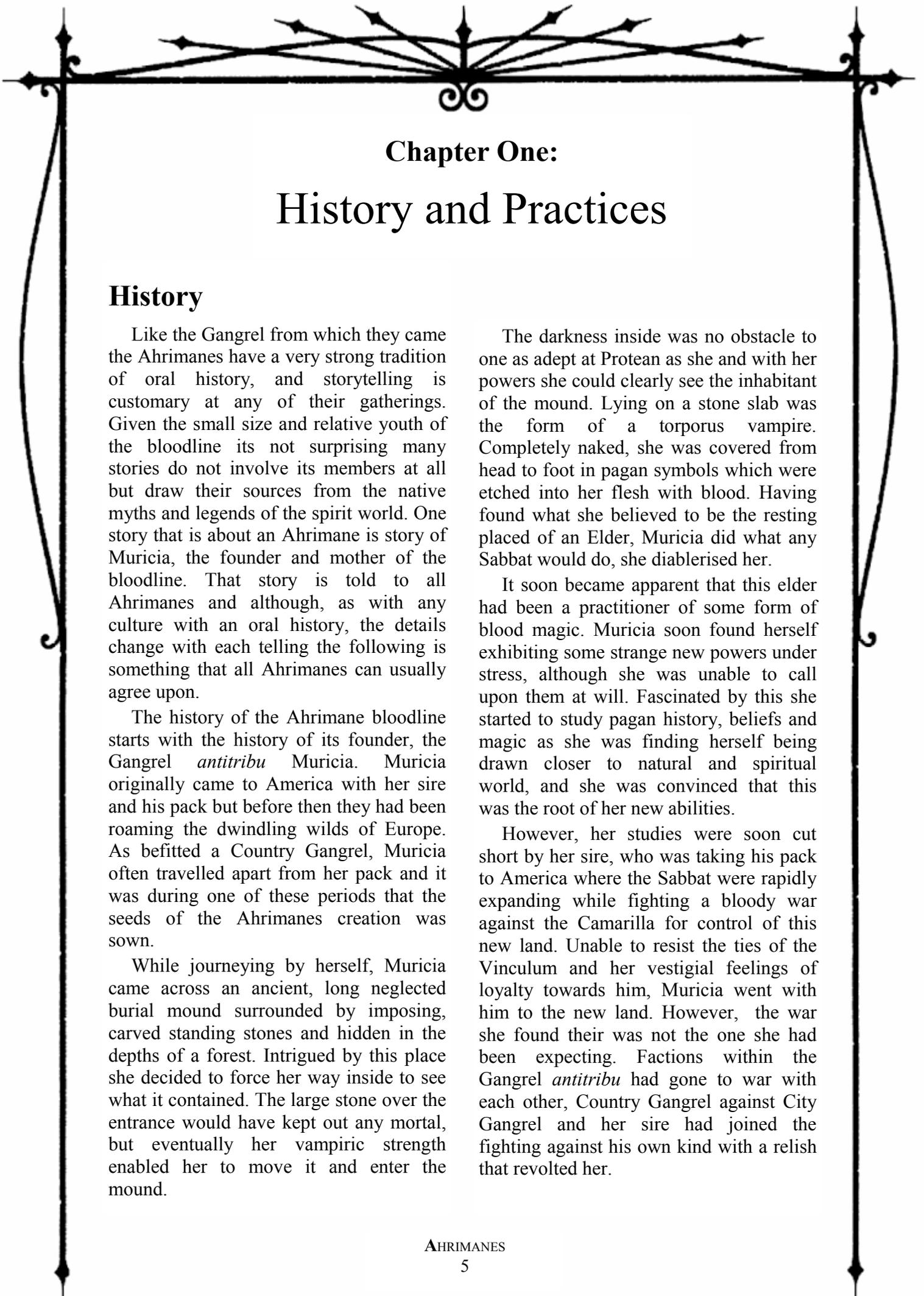
Witch: Someone who calls upon evil or malevolent spirits. Doing such things is considered witchcraft.

World of Beasts: The world of animals and also the vampire's Beast, also called the Beastworld.

World of Man: The world of humankind, of mortals, also sometimes called Mansworld. Some Ahrimanes insist on the term 'humans' rather than 'man'.

World of Spirits: The place the spirits dwell in, also called the Spiritworld, the Otherworld and the Umbra.

It is also probably worth noting that Ahrimanes do not go around using Lupine and Mage terminology. No Cat talks about the 'Umbra', 'Gafflings', 'Preceptors' and other such terms. Very few of them would have the slightest idea what such terms mean, even if they are familiar with the concepts.



Chapter One:

History and Practices

History

Like the Gangrel from which they came the Ahrimanes have a very strong tradition of oral history, and storytelling is customary at any of their gatherings. Given the small size and relative youth of the bloodline its not surprising many stories do not involve its members at all but draw their sources from the native myths and legends of the spirit world. One story that is about an Ahrimane is story of Muricia, the founder and mother of the bloodline. That story is told to all Ahrimanes and although, as with any culture with an oral history, the details change with each telling the following is something that all Ahrimanes can usually agree upon.

The history of the Ahrimane bloodline starts with the history of its founder, the Gangrel *antitribu* Muricia. Muricia originally came to America with her sire and his pack but before then they had been roaming the dwindling wilds of Europe. As befitted a Country Gangrel, Muricia often travelled apart from her pack and it was during one of these periods that the seeds of the Ahrimanes creation was sown.

While journeying by herself, Muricia came across an ancient, long neglected burial mound surrounded by imposing, carved standing stones and hidden in the depths of a forest. Intrigued by this place she decided to force her way inside to see what it contained. The large stone over the entrance would have kept out any mortal, but eventually her vampiric strength enabled her to move it and enter the mound.

The darkness inside was no obstacle to one as adept at Protean as she and with her powers she could clearly see the inhabitant of the mound. Lying on a stone slab was the form of a torporus vampire. Completely naked, she was covered from head to foot in pagan symbols which were etched into her flesh with blood. Having found what she believed to be the resting place of an Elder, Muricia did what any Sabbat would do, she diablerised her.

It soon became apparent that this elder had been a practitioner of some form of blood magic. Muricia soon found herself exhibiting some strange new powers under stress, although she was unable to call upon them at will. Fascinated by this she started to study pagan history, beliefs and magic as she was finding herself being drawn closer to natural and spiritual world, and she was convinced that this was the root of her new abilities.

However, her studies were soon cut short by her sire, who was taking his pack to America where the Sabbat were rapidly expanding while fighting a bloody war against the Camarilla for control of this new land. Unable to resist the ties of the Vinculum and her vestigial feelings of loyalty towards him, Muricia went with him to the new land. However, the war she found their was not the one she had been expecting. Factions within the Gangrel *antitribu* had gone to war with each other, Country Gangrel against City Gangrel and her sire had joined the fighting against his own kind with a relish that revolted her.

Taking the first opportunity she could to separate herself from her sire Muricia journeyed south among the native peoples and renewed her studies, this time into the magic and powers of the Shamans. It took her time to win over a few of the native magic workers, but her closeness to animal world and her protection of their tribe from its enemies eventually won them over. One of the first applications of their magic that Muricia used was a variation of a native cleansing ritual which she used to break the Vinculum with her sire. This, and possibly the other rituals that she practised, had wholly unexpected side-effects and the very nature of her blood seemed to be altered by them. She found her powers taking on a new direction, what once had been a tie with the animals and the land became a tie with the animal spirits. Where before she spoke to the animals, and they would answer her call, now she could speak to their spirit brethren as well, and they too, would come when she asked.

Her joy at this new power soon turned to frustration however as she found herself unable to teach it other vampires and indeed incapable of even siring other vampires. After several abortive attempts at both she came up with a new solution. She would adapt the ritual she had used upon herself and perform it on other willing Gangrel who she thought were worthy.

Muricia found a few others that she considered worthy and together they formed the first pack of Ahrimanes. As their numbers grew Muricia taught her most trusted companions the rituals that she had learned and they began travels of their own, finding others who were worthy and eventually founding packs and havens of their own. Slowly they claimed several territories for themselves, where possible removed from too many mortals, and set

themselves up in control of them.

Organisation

As befits their origins the Ahrimanes' organisation is loose with no formal ranks or titles. While many Sabbat use the terms 'Brother' and 'Sister', Ahrimanes tend to reserve such things just for the members of their own Bloodline. They own several large estates in the deep south, some of which are far from civilisation. All the Ahrimanes at one estate make up a founded pack, with the estate as a communal haven and temple. A certain area around the estate is considered by the Ahrimanes to be their territory and members of the pack move around it freely, often staying away from the estate itself.

Members of the bloodline frequently travel to other estates to maintain contact or exchange news, and every member of the bloodline knows every other member, if not by sight then at least by name and reputation.

Unusually for Sabbat the Ahrimanes maintain a tight grip on any mortals of influence within their territory. Although they cannot use the Blood Bond, they make heavy use of Presence and some of the older ones also employ Dominate or spirits. Their influence is often limited to keeping others out of their areas, providing for their need and insuring they are not disturbed, although in more recent times their interference in mortal affairs has increased.

In addition to their control of mortals, the Ahrimanes have a strong knowledge of, and influence over, both the animals and the spirits within their territory. This means that almost nothing happens of which they are not aware, and the power they have within their territory is immense.

Recently some of the younger and more

Another Slant

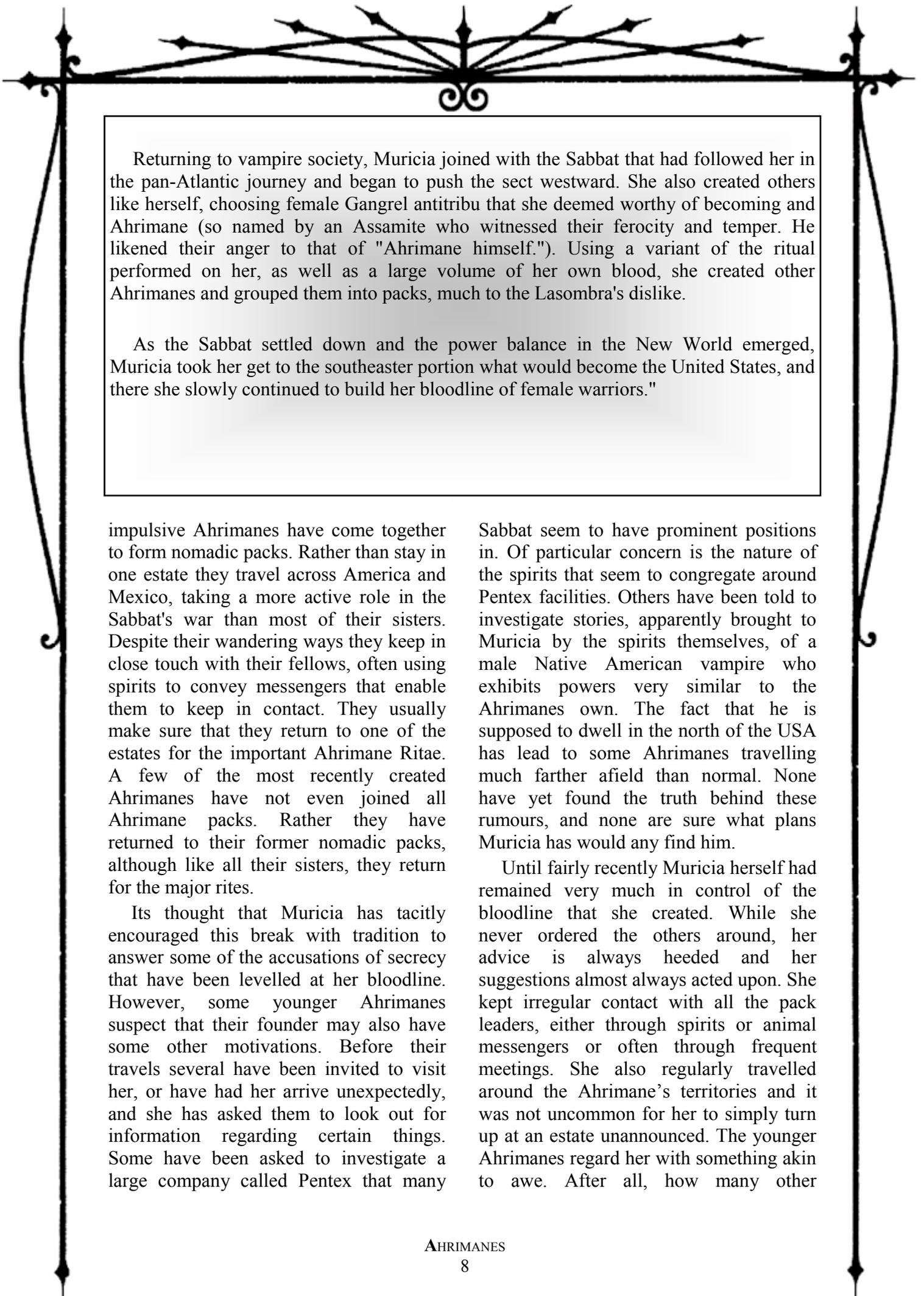
History is never a certain thing, and vampiric oral history even less so. Some Ahrimanes tell a slightly different version of their history. Some tell both. As always in the World of Darkness the truth of the matter is unknown.

"Near the end of the Anarch Revolt, a Gangrel Anarch by the name of Muricia found herself with her small pack and their few allies in the northern reaches of Germany, fleeing from the warriors of the newly-formed Camarilla. Unfortunately, they were outmanoeuvred and trapped between two Camarilla contingents. The forces smashed the pack between them like an anvil and a hammer, destroying nearly all of the Anarchs. Instead of fighting, Muricia fled, using her skill at Obfuscate to elude the Ventrue knights and Brujah gangs that pursued. Desperate for a haven to hide in for the day, both from the sun and from the Camarilla army, she scrambled through the forest, deeper and deeper. Cursing her lack of training in Protean, she stumbled across an old pagan burial mound. As the sky brightened, she forced herself in, clawing at the dirt and punching through the stones to the chamber within. Tumbling inside, she was shocked to discover a torporous vampire lying peacefully inside. Lying peacefully dressed in a simple robe with blood runes carved all over her body, the Kindred was the only thing within the small mound. Muricia, recovering from her initial shock, fell upon the vampire, needing to fill her belly after the flight from the Camarilla. Muricia drank all she needed, and more.

Later, Muricia joined up with the newly formed Sabbat and continued the fight against the Camarilla, not really wanting anything but peace. After the discovery of the New World, she was among the first to call for an exodus of Europe, as she saw the futility of the Sabbat-Camarilla War. Few supported her, however, and eventually, as the Sabbat was pushed further and further north, she simply joined those few who agreed with her (mainly some disorganised Gangrel antitribu) in the arduous travel across the Atlantic. Once there, left empty after the long years of war, Muricia disappeared into the wilds of North America, to live among nature.

Eventually she decided that she had to return to humanity again, and she approached a few native settlements. Surprised at the warm welcome she got, she stayed and eventually participated in some native rituals. The natives knew of her true nature, however, and the shaman tried to perform a rite of destruction to kill her. Unfortunately for him, it did not work out the way she had intended.

What happened then is obscure. Some say that Muricia frenzied and drank the entire village dry, and so gained the knowledge of the shaman and his people. Some say that she used powerful Presence abilities to sway the natives to her side, and she learned from them how to make others like herself and then discarded them. Others claim that she simply stood, walked over to the shaman, and beat the knowledge of the ritual out of him. A few brave souls claim that something Awoke in Muricia, something far older than herself. Either way, it is agreed that Muricia left the village changed, and she left in it ruin.



Returning to vampire society, Muricia joined with the Sabbat that had followed her in the pan-Atlantic journey and began to push the sect westward. She also created others like herself, choosing female Gangrel antitribu that she deemed worthy of becoming and Ahrimane (so named by an Assamite who witnessed their ferocity and temper. He likened their anger to that of "Ahrimane himself."). Using a variant of the ritual performed on her, as well as a large volume of her own blood, she created other Ahrimanes and grouped them into packs, much to the Lasombra's dislike.

As the Sabbat settled down and the power balance in the New World emerged, Muricia took her get to the southeaster portion what would become the United States, and there she slowly continued to build her bloodline of female warriors."

impulsive Ahrimanes have come together to form nomadic packs. Rather than stay in one estate they travel across America and Mexico, taking a more active role in the Sabbat's war than most of their sisters. Despite their wandering ways they keep in close touch with their fellows, often using spirits to convey messengers that enable them to keep in contact. They usually make sure that they return to one of the estates for the important Ahrimane Rite. A few of the most recently created Ahrimanes have not even joined all Ahrimane packs. Rather they have returned to their former nomadic packs, although like all their sisters, they return for the major rites.

It is thought that Muricia has tacitly encouraged this break with tradition to answer some of the accusations of secrecy that have been levelled at her bloodline. However, some younger Ahrimanes suspect that their founder may also have some other motivations. Before their travels several have been invited to visit her, or have had her arrive unexpectedly, and she has asked them to look out for information regarding certain things. Some have been asked to investigate a large company called Pentex that many

Sabbat seem to have prominent positions in. Of particular concern is the nature of the spirits that seem to congregate around Pentex facilities. Others have been told to investigate stories, apparently brought to Muricia by the spirits themselves, of a male Native American vampire who exhibits powers very similar to the Ahrimanes own. The fact that he is supposed to dwell in the north of the USA has lead to some Ahrimanes travelling much farther afield than normal. None have yet found the truth behind these rumours, and none are sure what plans Muricia has would any find him.

Until fairly recently Muricia herself had remained very much in control of the bloodline that she created. While she never ordered the others around, her advice is always heeded and her suggestions almost always acted upon. She kept irregular contact with all the pack leaders, either through spirits or animal messengers or often through frequent meetings. She also regularly travelled around the Ahrimane's territories and it was not uncommon for her to simply turn up at an estate unannounced. The younger Ahrimanes regard her with something akin to awe. After all, how many other

vampires get to meet the founder of their line in person?

All this makes the fact that nobody has recently heard from her recently all the more disturbing to her Bloodline.

Recruitment

The choosing of a new member is a long and careful process. The first step is when an Ahrimane see a female Gangrel who she thinks may be suitable. The potential recruit is usually quite young, so that she will be open minded enough to learn, she must also be a competent fighter and above all a survivor. Attitude is also important, respect must be shown for the world around her and all living things.

The Ahrimane then spends time observing the potential recruit, sometimes through personal contact, other times by using animals and spirits to observe her. If after the observation the Ahrimane still thinks she has found a worthy candidate she will frequently go to a more senior member of the bloodline, most often her own Ritemother. This elder will also observe, and if she too believes the candidate is worthy, they will approach her with the offer to join the bloodline. Not all candidates accept, for some the ties with their pack are too strong for them to wish to leave.

Historically Ahrimanes have mostly been Hispanic or Amerind in origin, although that has started to change. Recently a number of Ahrimanes have been created who have not been members of other Sabbat packs first. All of these have been Mentored by older Ahrimanes who are close comrades of Muricia, members of the original Ahrimanes pack. The rumour among some of the younger Cats is that Muricia has obtained a source of potent Gangrel blood from somewhere and is choosing people to embrace with this blood, then transforming the worthy ones into Ahrimanes. Rumour does not

say what happens to the unworthy, although there is of course some speculation.

Training

Training most often takes place at one of the Ahrimanes' estates, as Mentors are most frequently members of founded packs.. Some of the training is physical, but since any candidate must be a strong fighter and survivor, they are already assumed to be competent in this. Most of the training is the teaching of spiritual knowledge, on the nature of the spirit world and the relationship the Ahrimanes have with it. Instruction in the path of Harmony is also commonly part of the training as it is tied closely to the Ahrimane beliefs about balance, although the Path is not forced on the new recruits.

During training the candidate's pack are allowed to stay nearby should they wish to, although the candidate herself is usually too busy to spend much time with them. Most packs choose to let their member go by herself for training, being told that she will be free to return once the training is over and the ritual performed.

The training is carried out by the Ahrimane who first found the candidate, and is known as her Mentor. The Mentor may call upon other Ahrimanes, spirits or even Shamans of the local tribes to help in the training, but it is ultimately her responsibility. During the training the student takes part in the Vaulderie between the Ahrimanes of the estate. This helps bring her closer to the other members and strengthens their ties. She does not however take part in most of the Ritae, although she is allowed to observe some of them as her training progresses.

Sometimes the training takes the recruit away from the estates. She may be sent out with some Ahrimanes running an

errand or spend some time with a nomadic pack. Even in these circumstances someone will always be keeping an eye on her.

If at any stage in the Training the student proves herself incapable or unworthy, she will be taken before the elder of the estate. Using Dominate, or calling upon the spirits, her memories of training and the Ahrimanes will be removed or altered and she will be returned to her pack. While she will not forget the Ahrimanes existence, many details will be lost.

The Mentor and Ritemother

The tie between the Mentor and her student is a close one. During the training they spend much of their time together and although sometimes the student believes she is on her own, the Mentor is almost always watching her through some power or intermediary.

During the Rite of the Third Birth the Mentor becomes something more else, she becomes the newly created Ahrimane's Ritemother, a sort of adoptive sire. Although now the Ahrimane is responsible for herself, the bond between her and her Ritemother always remains strong and the Ahrimanes often regard it as almost sacred. Even after years as an Ahrimane it is not uncommon for one to go to her Ritemother for help or advise. In many ways the Ritemother is a sort of foster sire, and the relationship reflects this.

Ahrimane Unlife

Ahrimanes prize freedom as much as any Sabbat, and while the Bloodline has no political views as whole, most lean to the Moderate faction of the Sabbat. After

all, few want the more centralised control that many of the other factions espouse. The Bloodline also does not have quite the same Elder/Neonate split that runs through many larger groups. Few, if any, Ahrimanes are truly ancient, and their small numbers and mutual familiarity blurs the dividing lines. While elders are treated with respect, they never attempt to enforce obedience.

Unusually for vampires, its the younger Ahrimanes who tend to be more politically active. Many have taken a hand in women's rights issues and movements, animal protection and welfare and the politics and concerns of the local Native American population. Their success has been mixed, but in the process they have acquired a large amount of influence in the areas around their estates. By contrast many of the older Cats tend to be more focused on the spirit world, spending more times in visionquests and communing with the spirits. Some of them seem positively 'spaced out' to the younger members, perpetually having conversations with the creatures that surround them in the spirit world and pay far more attention to it then the material world around them. When they do pay attention however, they frequently display an uncanny knowledge of many of its secrets.

Not all Cats spend their time in spiritual pursuits. Some of them choose to live in the lap of luxury using mortal pawns to acquire wealth and possessions and then making damn sure they enjoy themselves. While they may seem soft or lax compared to their more wild or spiritual sisters, they can be every bit as ferocious, especially if something interferes with their pleasures.

For the younger members, training and learning never really stops unless they want it to. The World of Spirits is a vast and complex place, and there is always

new things to learn about it, either from older Cats or the spirits themselves. Ahrimane will learn from several older members over time, frequently in return for doing small favours and running errands for them. The wiser Ahrimanes do not ask for much, indeed they often see it as their duty to help their sister's spiritual advancement.

Most Ahrimanes will join the pack of their Ritemother, and the estate will become their communal haven. Despite this it is rare for the whole pack to spend all its time together. Many roam the surrounding areas, sometimes having other havens or simply Earth Melding. Others take up residence in nearby human communities, all the better to extend their influence there. Every so often a few Ahrimanes from one estate decide to visit another estate, usually deciding to turn up unannounced, although the spirits frequently carry word of their immanent arrival to their sisters. Get togethers tend to happen around the time of important Ritae, but certainly are not restricted to it.

More recently younger Ahrimanes from several founded packs have decided to get together and form roaming packs of their own. These packs are not located in an estate and so are nomadic, frequently they wander a long way from the Ahrimanes traditional territory. Despite this they always end up back at one of the estates eventually, even if its just to visit some of their sisters for a while before moving on. Before embarking on their journey, and sometimes when they return, such packs have sometimes been visited by Muricia to give them "her blessing", although sometimes they have trouble remembering exactly what she *did* say to them afterwards.

From time to time other Sabbat request the Bloodline's help with some matter. Usually this means they need their special

talents for something. Unless the request is completely outrageous the Ahrimanes do their best to comply, even if this means joining up with a non-Ahrimane pack temporarily. It keeps things smooth with their parent Sect and means they get left alone.

Leaders and Priests

On the estates the pack leaders, sometimes half-jokingly called Chiefs by the younger Ahrimanes, are responsible for the safety of the estate and the pack. This often involves keeping an eye on the local mortals, delegating pack members, or using animals and spirits, to patrol the bounds of their territory and making sure they can contact the pack members should they need to.

Leaders of roaming packs obviously do not have a fixed territory, but have other responsibilities. Mostly this involves coordinating the scouting of the area the pack is moving to, and finding safe places to rest during the day. Unlike some nomadic packs, Ahrimanes do not just wander around the wilderness, but pay very close attention to the places they go, seeing what information they can get from the animal and spiritual residents.

While leadership tends to go to the most experienced and oldest pack member, its not always the case. Leaders often step down after a while of their own accord, although they frequently remain close at hand to advise their successor. If there is a real disagreement over with the pack leader, the Ahrimane may leave the pack and join another, if it will have her. She may also call a council of three pack leaders to judge over the dispute. Monomancy is unheard of among the Ahrimanes, there are just too few of them to waste lives on petty leadership squabbles.

In addition too their normal duties the pack priest, also called the Shaman or

Shamaness, is also responsible for keeping the local spirit world on good terms with the Ahrimanes. For a founded pack that often means making binding agreements with the local spirits. For nomadic packs such things are often more temporary in nature, and the priest does not have the luxury of knowing exactly which spirits she will have to deal with from night to night.

Priests have the authority to get other pack members, even the pack leader, to do tasks that she deems necessary to please the spirits or keep the Ahrimane's part of a spirit-pact. These tasks can be quite bizarre, and some priests seem to take a perverse pleasure in not telling their sisters exactly why they involved in some apparently senseless activity.

Final Nights

Things have been stirring in the Bloodline in these Final Nights. There has been something of an influx of new recruits, at least relative to the Bloodline's previous numbers. When the schism occurred amongst the Harmonists some of the Gangrel Harmonists who were considering leaving the Sabbat were given the offer of joining the Ahrimanes where they would be free from persecution.

More Gangrel have come from the recent defectors that have come in from the Camarilla. Some of them have barely had time to call themselves *antitribu* before becoming Ahrimanes. This has caused some resentment amongst some of the more established Cats who feel their new Sisters are there to bulk up the numbers rather than for their personal worth. Even those among the Sabbat that know of the Bloodline are generally ignorant of these new recruits.

Another change is that until her recent disappearance from view Muricia had become increasingly active. As well as encouraging more Ahrimanes to leave the

estates, frequently in pursuit of some mystic knowledge, she had recently organised a few War Parties. Such activity has been completely unheard of in the entire Bloodline's history. The expeditions were nominally also for some mystic knowledge that supposedly could "aid the entire Bloodline" but a few Elder's vitae has been claimed as well. Whatever the motivation the intelligence was apparently superb, as with careful planning and the aid of the spirits the Parties' casualties were extremely light.

Vanishing Act

By far the biggest event is the disappearance of those present at the one of the estates in West Virginia, including Muricia herself. The estate was one of the oldest and largest and other Sabbat wishing to contact the Ahrimanes often did so there.

As far as the remaining Ahrimanes can tell Muricia turned up without warning at the estate, with some companions. Some were definitely Ahrimanes, both long time companions of hers and newly created, but as far as they can tell some of them might not have been, at least one might have been male.

She asked many of those who dwelt there to depart, saying they could return later but must not disturb them that night. Her loyal daughters obeyed and when they did return they found... nothing. No trace of Muricia or her companions, none of those who had stayed. Not even any of the animals or spirits who dwelt in the vicinity could be found. There was no sign of violence, no trace of a disturbance, they were just gone. Word spread quickly and although many tried to find what had happened so far all the Bloodline has is speculation and rumour.

Fractured Line

Although they did not realise it,

Muricia was largely the force holding the Bloodline together. Although others know the Rite of the Third Birth it was her advice and suggestions that controlled the actions of the line. Without her guidance the Bloodline she founded has lost its cohesion, and different groups have started to go in different directions.

Either fearing an attack or looking for answers several packs have simply abandoned their own estates, while others have upped and moved to new, secret locations. The trust amongst the Cats has greatly diminished and although still nominally welcome at another's estate, it might not always be possible to find it. Some members of an already reclusive Bloodline have become totally withdrawn and paranoid, while others have sought safety or comfort in anonymity and have simply taken to passing themselves off as Gangrel, and not even always *antitribu*, sometimes joining up with mixed packs or coteries. Nobody seems keen to advertise themselves to the Sabbat and the sect seems to care little about what has happened to the Ahrimanes, unsurprising as most of it has never even head of them.

Several Elders who know the Rite of the Third Birth have started to recruit followers either from existing ranks or through creating new ones. None have yet started to make overt plays for power but it is only a matter of time before one tries, any many fear they might recruit some help from outside. Fear of this or simply not wishing to be involved has encouraged many Ahrimanes to seek their own path.

For many Ahrimanes the insular way of their own lives has been brought to an end by these recent events and rather than a life on an estate they find themselves in all kinds of places and mixing with all kinds of vampires that they would once never have considered possible.

Ritae

Like all Sabbat, rituals are important to the Ahrimanes as a means of providing unity and strengthening comradeship. Always lead by the pack Priest they are frequently regarded as sacred and treated with the respect of a religious act. On their estates, Ahrimanes perform many rituals unique to the bloodline and closed to outsiders. These rituals draw very heavily on their shamanistic origins, and at most major rituals both spirits and animals are summoned to play a major role.

During the rituals the Ahrimane also often paint their bodies with sacred symbols using their own blood, the blood given by a summoned spirit and sacred herbs and roots. They also burn the herbs and roots to drive away the evil spirits. The Ahrimanes do not regard vampirism as an unnatural state and their rituals are seen as a means of increasing their connection with the Worlds of Man, Beast and Spirit. Even the common Ritae of the Sabbat are adapted and changed, and are often rather different in both appearance and function to the original.

Ritae are held each month, on the night of the full moon. Major Ritae are also held at the equinox, and at lunar eclipses. These rituals are most often held a sacred sites, where it is easier to reach the spirit world. The greatest of their rituals, however, is the creation of a new Ahrimane and her introduction into the bloodline, and the visionquest.

The Rite of the Third Birth

This is the greatest and most sacred of the Ahrimanes rituals. It is through this rite that a new Ahrimane is created and the bloodline is perpetuated. The Ahrimanes assemble at a sacred site where the Mentor presents her student to her peers. The student must state why she is worthy to become Ahrimane and is often strongly questioned by those assembled. The formality of the rite varies greatly

depending the Ahrimane performing the rite. Some insist that it is done with the utmost solemnity, accompanied by chanting and ritual drums. Others have been known to play loud modern music and hold something closer to a party, sometimes requiring the new recruit to dance themselves into an ecstatic state before the rite begins. Whatever the ritualist thinks will please the spirits best and feels is most fitting.

The student is held down and her blood drained from her and spilled onto the ground in a spiral pattern. The assembled Ahrimanes contribute their blood to a bowl with the student's Mentor giving the most. Then a spirit, invariably feline in nature, is summoned and is asked to contribute 'blood', really a portion of its spiritual essence, to the bowl. Finally certain sacred plants are added to the bowl and mixed in, these plants are believed to allow contact with the spirit world and cleanse the vampire and include the yaryan root and peyote. It is not unknown for younger Ahrimanes to add some modern hallucinogens to the mix, although more traditional members frown on this practise.

A fire is lit and the bowl is passed through it several times, representing the tempering of the vampire into an Ahrimane. Then the blood from the bowl is used to paint the vampire's flesh with symbols sacred to the spirits that will encourage them to accept her, as well as protecting her. Finally the remainder of the blood is poured into the vampire's mouth and she is reborn.

Like her first two births this one is not easy. The Ahrimane is assailed by voices and visions from the spirit world as well as visions from her past and sometimes her future. These visions can last several hours and only if her will and spirit are strong enough will she emerge with her sanity intact, it is not unknown for these visions to

drive the new recruit into frenzy, requiring the others present to physically restrain her. During this period the other Ahrimanes, lead by her Ritemother, join in a chant or song to the spirits to guide and protect her.

Sometimes a particular spirit approaches the Ahrimane during her Third Birth, offering some help and guidance although also posing questions and challenges too which the Ahrimane must cope with to earn that help. It is not unknown for Ahrimanes to receive and animal or lesser spirit as a companion who mysteriously arrives the next night sent by her guide. In return the Ahrimane is frequently expected to revere and respect this spirit above others.

When the ritual is over, any existing blood bonds or Vinculi are severed, this applies to the both to the new Ahrimane and to anyone who has any ties to her. The only exception is ties to anyone whose blood has been in the mixture which remain. It is because of this that few Ahrimanes have much inclination to return to their old packs, and few members of the packs make much of a fuss about it. After all, in a sect that promotes freedom a vampire is free to leave her former comrades.

Finally, they celebrate the arrival of their new sister with a wild party, vampire style.

Visionquests

Visionquests are another ritual that is of vital importance to the Ahrimanes. Although other Sabbats are known to practise them, the Cats feel they are they only ones who truly understand how to perform it. They use it to bring themselves closer to the World of Spirit and enhance their understanding of both it and themselves. Successful visionquests often result in improved understanding of the Spiritus discipline.

For the visionquest the Ahrimane first drinks her fill of blood, as she knows that during the quest she will not be thinking of such things. Then she journeys by her self to a remote location with a special preparation. This contains many special herb and roots, including such potent ones as peyote, mixed with the blood of animals and a small quantity of blood taken from a summoned spirit. Using this concoction the Ahrimane first paints her body with sacred symbols, then consumes the remainder. The powerful mixture puts her into a trance like state lasting several days, where she see visions from the spirit world. In this state the Ahrimane has just enough awareness of the real world to avoid getting herself killed and to find cover come sunup, but little more. Some Ahrimanes take the ritual further, performing acts of self-mutilation upon themselves believing the pain will help send their consciousness into the spirit world.

Touching the Beast

While visionquests aim to get the Ahrimane in touch with the World of Spirits, this ritual aims to get them in touch with the World of Beasts, specifically though their Beast.

A wooden frame is constructed somewhere away from the sun and high enough that a vampire may be suspended from it without touching anything. Some Ahrimane estates have such frames purpose built, and a place set aside for them.

The Ahrimane undergoing the ritual is drained of most of her blood and taken to the place by some of her sisters. Sharp wooden spikes are attached to wires hanging from the top of the frame. They are then driven though the Ahrimane's body and she is raised up until she is suspended in the air.

It is not long before pain and lack of

blood lead the Ahrimane to frenzy. Indeed, during the course of the next several days the Ahrimane will constantly drift in and out of both consciousness and frenzy. After that, and during one of her more quite periods, some of her companions will come and let her down, making sure a supply of blood is handy.

Many Ahrimanes claim that after this experience they have better understanding and control of their own Beasts, and sometimes those of others too.

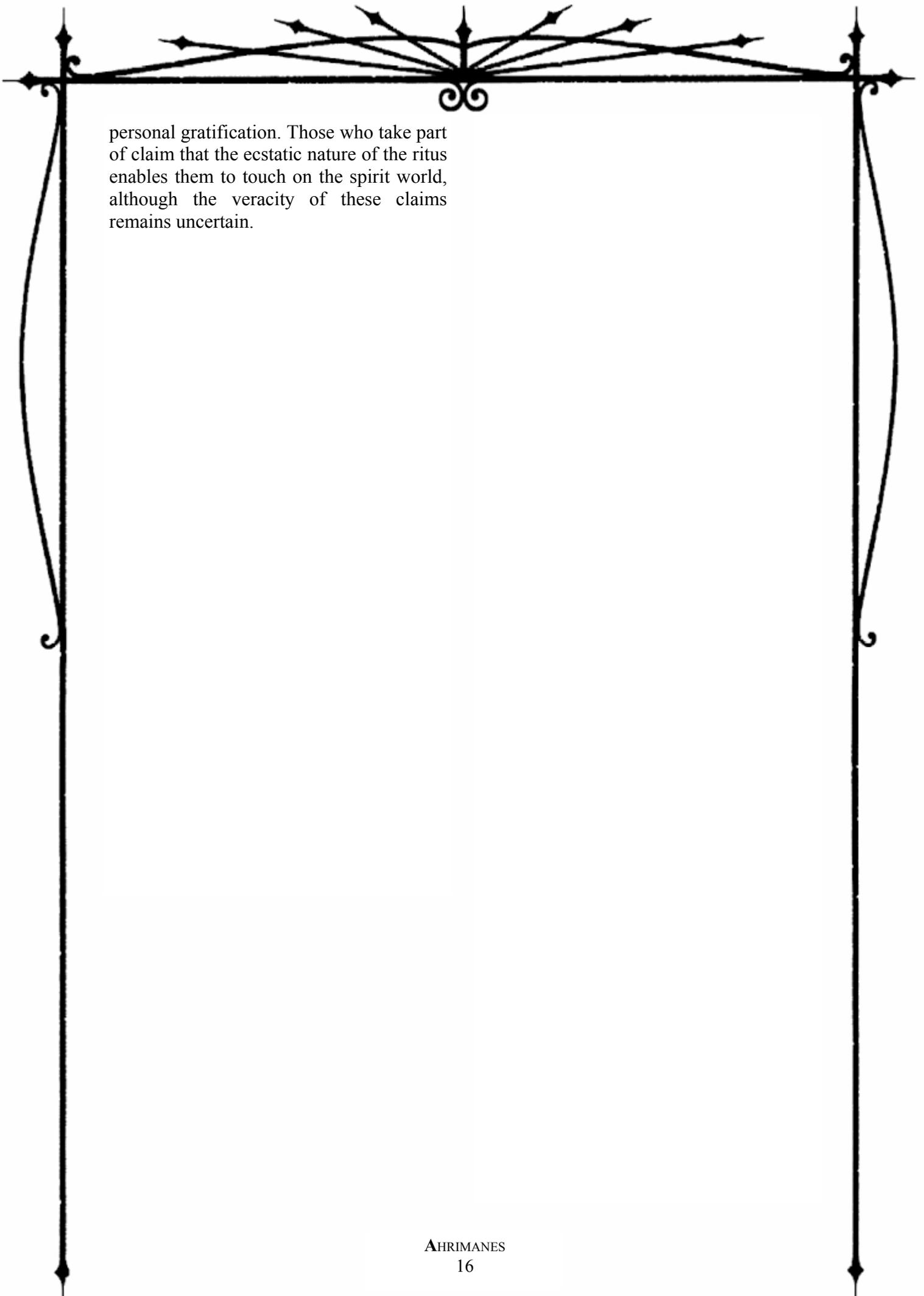
The Sharing of Blood

Technically Ritae, this is really little more than an excuse for a wild party. One Ahrimane is chosen for the honour of being the Sharer, normally as recognition of some deed or action although occasionally this is little more than a pretext. A few others, usually those adept in Presence, are chosen as Watchers.

Making sure they are all fairly well fed, the Ahrimanes gather together somewhere where they do not think they will be disturbed. The Sharer is then fed a potent mixture of blood and drugs. Sometime this is mixed specially but at other times a drugged mortal is found, or a mortal is found and drugged, and their blood is used.

Once the blood is coursing through Sharer's body each of the other Ahrimanes, except the Watchers, bite into her. The ecstasy of the multiple Kisses has been known to causes some vampires to actually lose consciousness. The drugs from the Sharer quickly spread into the others systems and from here on things frequently degenerate into chaos with those present drinking from anyone. The Watchers are on hand to stop anyone going too far, but those present frequently emerge with more than a few scratches.

Older Ahrimanes frequently disdain this ritus. Sacred drugs and plants should be reserved contacting the spirits, not for



personal gratification. Those who take part of claim that the ecstatic nature of the ritus enables them to touch on the spirit world, although the veracity of these claims remains uncertain.

Chapter Two: Beliefs and

Beliefs

Three Worlds, Three Births

The core of the Ahrimane's belief revolves around the concept of the three worlds. These are the World of Man, the World of Beasts and the World of Spirits. The journey to become an Ahrimane is a journey through all three, as woman, Gangrel and finally Ahrimane. For each stage there is a birth, none of them easy, and with no guarantee of survival. Each birth is in blood and pain.

The World of Man

The first birth is the birth into the World of Man, it is the birth from the womb into the human species. Once the World of Man was shared evenly between men and women as equals, but that is now no longer the case. From the beginning, woman had a closer tie to the World of Spirit, while men were closer to the World of Beasts. In the beginning this difference was honoured and respected by men. Man and woman knew of the three world, and lived their lives close to *all* of them, interacting with them every day.

In time however, this respect succumbed to jealousy. Envious of woman's place closer to the spirits, men upset the balance between them by trying to take dominion over them. In doing so they caused the World of Man to grow more distant from the other worlds, and now many humans fear the worlds of Beast and Spirit because they do not understand them. Due this, the World of

Man is the most imbalanced of the three worlds.

The Ahrimanes have more to do with the World of Man than many Sabbat. The Harmonists amongst them, who are still in the majority, freely acknowledge their former human nature and accept that it is still a part of themselves. Therefore despite their isolationism they still make more effort than many Sabbat to retain some contact with the affairs of mortals. They also maintain a tight control of the little of the mortal world within their own territories, giving them a surprising amount of mortal pawns, although of limited influence.

It is through their discipline of Presence that the Cats influence the World of Man. The Ahrimanes originally used this influence just to protect themselves, but over time they have started to use it to follow their own agenda. They have used their power to protect the native tribes where possible, and younger Ahrimanes have also got involved with animal and women's rites movements, and have used their influence to try to further its cause.

The Ahrimanes often approach this with an attitude similar to a conservationists or a gamekeepers. Keeping the animals preserved and in good order, frequently with the intent of feeding on them later. They might see it as good sense but it would be a mistake to see it as caring for the humans and they are not above culling the herd.

It should be stressed however that to the Ahrimanes Man is no greater or lesser than the other animals. Although they are different from other animals they generally feel it is no worse to feed of a

human than to feed off of any other source of blood. While they don't revile humans like some Sabbat, many don't hold them in much regard either, at least not from a human perspective.

Getting in touch with the World of Man is as important to them as getting in touch with the other worlds. Some Ahrimanes indulge in hedonistic pleasures that would rival a Toreador's, collect interesting morals as pawns and living in a veritable state of luxury. To them its not just self-indulgence but strengthening their ties to one of the three worlds although not everyone is convinced. Generally such Ahrimanes are former City Gangrel.

Even in the modern world, women's greater spiritual connection remains, even though few of them realise this. It is because of this connection that only women are chosen to become Ahrimanes.

The World of Beasts

The second birth is the embrace and the Creation Rites. It brings the vampire away from the World of Man and places the vampire in balance between the Worlds of Man and Beast, for a Gangrel is closer to the beasts than any human. The embrace awakens a Gangrel's own Beast and brings them back in touch with their instincts and animal side.

By respecting studying beasts, a Gangrel can learn much about her own Beast. By talking to animals, and by becoming animals, they learn, understand and be a part of this world. Ahrimane havens are always open to animals, who are free to come and go whenever they wish. Despite this they rarely make Ghouls of animals, and rely on developing a relationship with them and their powers of Animalism rather than the blood. Ahrimanes often keep pets, and cats are especially common, although they are rarely of the domestic variety. Indeed many Ahrimane 'pets' are simply feral

creatures the Cat has a relationship with and agrees to share it's territory with her.

Although many Ahrimanes see themselves as strongly in touch with nature and the World of Beasts, their view of nature is a bloody and violent one. For them the nature of a predator is to take life from the prey and defend its territory and pack. Unlike most other predators, a vampire does not have to kill its prey, but that does not necessarily mean it is wrong to do so. Ahrimanes who spend a lot of time with the World of Beasts in various guises can be shockingly violent.

Ahrimanes with sufficiently advance Animalism sometimes spend days possessing an animal, almost invariably a predator, to become closer to the World of Beasts. Those with enough Protean often spend days in animal form.

It seems that there is somehow something feline about the Ahrimane's Beast. Although this is not immediately obvious, a Frenzied Ahrimane often shows some rather cat-like mannerisms. Its not that they meow or anything, but the way they move and sound just seems to suggest to observers a large feline predator.

Ahrimanes interact and influence the World of Beasts with their Animalism discipline. Through it they can commune with the beasts and even with Beasts. All vampires have a strong connection to this world because of their Beast, but only the Gangrel are close enough to be balanced equally between the two worlds. That is why only Gangrel are chosen to be Ahrimane.

The World of Spirits

The third birth is the ritual of the same name. Like the other births it is a birth in blood and pain, but when it is over the Ahrimane has now forged a connection to the World of Spirits.

As with man and beast the spirits, which the Ahrimanes often refer to as

Vampires and Spirits

As a rule the only spirits Vampires generally interact with are the corrupted spirits the Lupines call “Banes” and Demons. The Lupines and some Mages believe no other possibility exists. The Ahrimanes believe they are an exception to this and the spirits they deal with are neither corrupted nor forced into aiding them.

The truth of this matter is best left up to the Storyteller depending upon how they see the spirit world in their World of Darkness and what is best for their game. If you're game is assuming Werewolf's cosmology to be correct then go with the Garou's beliefs, on the subject. If you are using Vampire's then Lupine prejudices mean little. And if you are using Mage as the source for how the spirit world works, anything could be the case.

A caution though, it is pretty harsh to decide that a player's character is completely deluded about their powers and beliefs, especially as Werewolf cosmology is not very relevant to Vampire games, and it can be frustrating for the player.

The best option is probably to leave the real truth unknown anyway. The Lupines believe one thing about the spirits and the Ahrimanes another, pretty standard fare in the World of Darkness, and the players don't know who is *really* right. This works best for more crossover orientated games that might not use a single cosmology, or for Storytellers who simply don't want to try and work out one single truth.

manitous, must also be afforded respect. They can have great powers and great wisdom, and to deal with them without understanding is both foolish and dangerous. After her initiation and her third birth, an Ahrimane will be instructed on the ways of the spirits by her Ritemother.

The spirits do not dwell in isolation, rather each spirit is tied to something in the other worlds, be it a beast, a tree, a place or even an idea. How someone treats what they are connected to influences how the spirit will react to them. This is why the animal spirits respond to the call of the Ahrimane, for they know the respect with which they treat their corporeal cousins.

This tie can be used when calling upon a spirit. By having something of what the spirit represents present, it can make the summoning easier and the spirit more responsive. While sometimes the spirits are summoned to perform tasks for the Ahrimanes, at other times they are summoned for wisdom, advise or even companionship. Some less powerful spirits are unable to enter the physical world and even ask the Ahrimanes to call on them, so that they may carry out some desire of their own.

In general many spirits, particularly animal ones, tend to react very badly to vampires. While Ahrimanes are something of an exception to this they are still treated rather warily by most spirits, and some are occasionally downright hostile until the Cat can prove herself. Consequently most Ahrimanes learn quite quickly the best ways to placate the spirits.

Despite the sometimes less than friendly reactions, they don't provoke nearly the same level of violent response from the spirits as other vampires do. The Ahrimanes believe that the Third Births roots in a cleansing ceremony are responsible for making them more acceptable to the spirits.

Some Ahrimanes choose to strike bargains with a particular spirit, often one that appeared to her during her third birth. Rather than needing to be summoned each time, the spirit will stay close to the Ahrimane, usually in the spirit world but sometimes in the physical one. The spirit is not a servant however and will want something in return.

Bargaining with a spirit can be a long and tricky process, as vampire and spirit agree what they will provide one another. Sometimes what the spirits want is straightforward, protection and good treatment of their animal counterparts is common. Sometimes however, their demands are strange and irrational and an Ahrimane must simply agree to it without understanding why if she wants the spirit to be her companion.

The Ahrimanes are very aware that not all spirits are as harmonious as the animal spirits that they call upon. They know something of the darker spirit beings that dwell in the World of Spirit, and some make it their duty to combat them. While they rarely can confront them directly, they know that if they destroy what they are connected to in the physical world, they can break the power of the spirit and force it from the area.

Spiritus is the Ahrimane's way of contacting and influencing the World of Spiritus. It is the unique power that sets them apart from all other vampires. Through it they may call the spirits into the world, and into themselves.

Earth Mother and Sky Father

To the Ahrimanes the two greatest spirits are the Earth Mother and the Sky Father. From their union all creation springs and all existence comes. While they have respect and even reverence for them they never petition these great spirits directly as they don't believe that they interfere with or care about individual

Ahrimane Appearance

Upon undergoing the Rite of the Third Birth successfully, Ahrimanes lose some of their vampiric pallor and usually gain a dark or dusky skin tone. Unlike the Assamites who grow darker though time, the Cat's skin colour remains stable after this. Why the transformation has this side effect is unknown.

It is commonly thought by those outside the Bloodline that the Ahrimanes only have one way of dressing, leather and denim with plenty of places to put their weapons. This is simply because most Sabbat that meet them do so when they are performing some mission for the sect. In such circumstances tough, practical clothes are favoured.

Under other circumstances their dress varies as much as any other vampires. Some effect traditional Native American or Mexican dress. Others eschew clothing all together seeing it as coming purely from the World of Man, and unnecessary for a vampire. By contrast, some of those that live amongst human civilisation wear on the finest, most fashionable and sensuous clothing they can buy.

mortal, or immortal, affairs.

As an outgrowth of this while many respect the natural world they have no delusions at all about how harsh and brutal it can be. Believing they are a part of that natural world they know that they must be like it.

Quite how Caine and his curse fit into this picture is anybody's guess. In as much as the Ahrimanes beliefs have a creation

myth, and it changes with each telling, there is no Christian God around with which to curse the first murderer. To many Ahrimanes Caine just isn't that important anyway, since they Third Birth they do not really see themselves as his children anyway.

Vampires and the Three Worlds

Having journeyed through all three worlds, and being a part of each, the Ahrimanes can affect each. They have a part that is of the World of Man, the human part that thinks and reasons. They have an animal part, a part of the World of Beasts, that is the Beast the part that is irrational, that is the source of instincts and emotions. They also have a part that is of the World of Spirits, the source of their supernatural powers.

All vampires have these parts and connections, indeed all beings are connected to all the worlds to some degree. Of the vampires however, it is only the Ahrimanes that can achieve the understanding of all three worlds. That is why their powers lie in all three worlds.

Moving Between Worlds

To become truly attuned to one of the Worlds an Ahrimane sometimes indulges herself in one of them for a while. Not all Ahrimanes follow this practice, many feel that balance should be maintained at all times and such things are just an excuse for some bad behaviour.

City Gangrel frequently start with the World of Man, acquiring mortal pawns, riches luxuries and treasures and generally enjoying material comforts. They often become selfish, hedonistic and pleasure seeking. Although they often have a great deal of mortal influence they rarely use it for anything other than personal gain, much to the frustration of

their Sisters who are trying to accomplish something in the mortal world.

Those indulging in the World of Beasts frequently act in an almost totally feral manner. They live apart from civilisation, spending time in an animal form or the Wildform if their Disciplines permit. Such Cats can be dangerous for anyone to approach, even their packmates. Its not unknown for those who spend a long time behaving like this to almost completely forget how to cope with some of the trappings of civilisation. Unsurprisingly former Country Gangrel are most prone to this kind of behaviour.

Shamans are most prone to getting lost in the Spiritworld. Although it can happen to any Ahrimane who can converse with a spirit, it tends to be the more experienced ones who are knowledgeable enough about the Spiritworld who indulge in it. These vampires are frequently lost in conversations with spirits or staring at marvels most others cannot see. Losing interest in the material world is common, and some are known to forget to feed, until the hunger takes them and the Beast insists.

Many Ahrimanes consider indulging oneself in one of the worlds to be a loss of the balance that they had obtained. If Ahrimanes are the only vampires who can truly balance between the three worlds, getting lost in one of them is wasteful, some feel even sinful.

Proponents argue that an indulgence is just temporary, that once the Ahrimane has come to understand that World she will return to balance. Indeed a proper balance between the Three Worlds can *only* be achieved this way, and given time every Ahrimane should indulge in all three.

Prestige

Amongst the Ahrimanes prestige is

gained in several ways. The single greatest way is to become a Ritemother and successfully tutor a new Ahrimane. Although a Ritemother is not responsible for her student after the Rite of the Third Birth the behaviour and actions of an Ahrimane reflects strongly upon her mentor. Treatment of spirits and animals is also very important. The respect that the spirits have for an Ahrimane has a strong influence on the respect that her sisters will have for her. All Ahrimanes are expected to be able to look after themselves and be self-sufficient, although prestige is not lost for requiring help if a task is genuinely difficult.

Paths

The path most widely practised among the Ahrimanes is the path of Harmony, despite it having fallen out of favour with much of the Sabbat. Its balance between man and beast and the respect for all living creatures meshes well with the beliefs of the bloodline.

While some younger members maintain their Humanity, and a scattering follow other Paths, most notably Feral Heart, many older ones are Harmonists and moving to the Path is subtly encouraged by the older Cats. Often instruction in the Path of Harmony is provided to a new recruit by her Ritemother, sometimes starting before the recruit has undergone her third birth if she is particularly promising.

Despite this increasingly more of the Ahrimanes newer recruits are followers of the Feral Heart, and some of the longer standing Harmonists have also had a shift in their beliefs.

Some rumours among the younger

members speak of another morality called the "Road of the Beast" practised by some of their elders. Perhaps they are referring to the Feral Heart, but that would be rather strange considering these tales predate its inception.

Opinions and Relations

The Sabbat

Generally the Ahrimanes have little involvement with the workings of the Sabbat. They are members, and serve the sect when it is required, but beyond that they tend to keep very much to themselves. Visitors to Ahrimane estates are welcomed and allowed to stay should they wish, but though the treatment they receive is hospitable the reception is rather cool.

Ahrimanes most often deal with other Sabbat when their skills are required to serve the sect.

Lasombra

The Ahrimanes have a rather poor relationship with the sect's leaders. Their very strong sense of independence, their secretive nature and their rather large mortal influence in the area around their estates all make the Keepers highly distrustful of them. This distrust is returned by the Ahrimanes, who are less than convinced of purity the Lasombra's motivations. However, their lack of involvement in sect politics and their loyal and valuable service to the Sabbat prevents the Lasombra making any open moves against them.

Tzimisce

The Fiends appear to have no interest in the bloodline, and rarely interact with them. This suits the often Harmonist

Ahrimanes who find the practices of many Tzimisce quite appalling. The only exceptions are a few of the older Tzimisce who still practices the Koldonic arts and remember the ties that the clan once had with the land and the spirits of the land. A few of the older Ahrimanes maintain a limited contact with these ancient sorcerers, respecting the knowledge of the spirit world they have, although they refuse to share any of their deeper secrets with them.

Country Gangrel

More recruits come from the Country Gangrel than from their city cousins. The Ahrimanes see the Country Gangrel as having a better balance between man and beast, and so are more likely to be a suitable candidate for becoming an Ahrimane. The Cats have more respect for the Country Gangrel than any other vampires, and when they do spend time with non Ahrimanes, it is the Country Gangrel they choose for companions. It is not unknown for an Ahrimane to attend a gathering of Country Gangrel and participate in the storytelling and the Ordeal.

Many Country Gangrel are of Native American stock and this can give them a greater understand of the Ahrimanes and their ways. When an intermediary is needed between the Cats and the rest of the sect, it is the Country Gangrel who are called upon.

City Gangrel

Most Ahrimanes, even those who came from the City Gangrel, feel that the City Gangrel are less connected to the World of Beasts due in part to their lack of the animalism discipline, and also their living in the cities. Due to this fewer of their recruits come from the City Gangrel, although recently this has started to

change.

Tremere *antitribu*

The Spellbinders would have loved to increase their understanding of the spirit world and increase their power there. The Tremere's approach to spirits, controlling and binding them, is contrary to the Ahrimane approach which involves bargaining and mutual respect. Consequently the Ahrimanes had refused to share any of their knowledge or lore with the Tremere, and some had even refused to allow them into their territories. Their departure will not be mourned by the Ahrimanes.

Serpents of the Light

The Ahrimanes in Louisiana have had clashes with the Setites in the region. They have learnt something of the undead ongons that belong to the Clan, and despise their attitudes to the spirit world and the dark spirits they consort with. This has carried over to the Setite *antitribu* and has lead to a distrust of the Cobras and their ways.

Other *antitribu*

Generally speaking the Cats have little to do with any of the other *antitribu*, and tend to treat each one on a case by case basis. Usually an Ahrimane will be more friendly towards a female Sabbat than a male one, but not all Ahrimanes have this attitude. Many of the city dwelling Sabbat have never heard of the Bloodline, and very few Sabbat in general have even met an Ahrimane.

The Black Hand

Only a few members of the bloodline have chosen to join the Hand, despite several being offered. Their skills in

fighting and survival combined with their unique abilities make the few Black Hand Ahrimanes highly prized. For themselves the secretive Ahrimanes dislike serving anyone other than themselves and many distrust the Hand and its motivations.

Camarilla

The Ahrimanes hold the Camarilla in contempt. They are the pawns of the elders and must realise this or be destroyed. The only clan they had any respect for is the Gangrel. For their part the Camarilla know nothing of the Ahrimanes, the nearest they came was an abortive investigation attempt by a Gangrel Archon, which died when she did.

Mages

The Ahrimanes know the Shamans of the native tribes and understand some of their ways. In turn the Ahrimanes are sometimes respected by them for their closeness to the spirit world, although equally often they are reviled as dead *things* that offend the spiritually oriented willworkers. The Ahrimanes have some contact with both the Penumbra of the Grey Squirrel and the Eyes of the Sun as well as some other groups that are a part of the Dreamspeaker Tradition.

Lupines

The Ahrimanes treat the Garou like they would a dangerous animal. They have great respect for their balance between the three worlds and their formidable battle prowess, and understand their spiritual ties in a way few other vampires could. Despite this they are hardly friends, and while they would rather leave a Garou in peace than fight with them, if their duty to the Sabbat requires it they do so with all the powers at their command. Frequently encountered Garou leave them with no

other choice, being enraged at the idea of any Leech dealing with the spirit world.

The two tribes that they have some contact with are the Uktena and the Black Furies. These contacts have arisen due to the Ahrimanes interference with mortals affairs. Their protection of the native peoples close to their estates has brought them to the attention of the Uktena and the involvement of some younger Ahrimanes in women's rights issues in their territories has led to some contact with the Furies. Generally the contact is reserved, with the occasional co-operation and trade of information, but mostly just an unspoken agreement to leave each other alone, although even this sometimes breaks down into violence.

The Ahrimanes refuse to have anything to do with their sects Black Spiral allies. They find the spirits that associate them to be repellent and their own spirit allies have warned that they will not assist them in anything they do that aids the mad tribe.

Other Changing Breeds

The Ahrimanes attitude to the Garou extends to others of the changing breed when they meet them, which is in itself a stunningly rare event. Those with ties to the native tribes, the Corax, the Nuwisha and the Pumonca are held in particular respect. Again this respect does not translate into open friendship and an Ahrimane will fight one if she must, but generally the Cats will try to find a peaceful solution to any encounter. While the Cats sometimes know a little more of the shapeshifters than most vampires though their spirit ties, they are far from being experts on them.

Special mention must be made of the Bastet. The legends of cat shifters have intrigued some Ahrimanes and several have set out to uncover the truth behind this. The Bastet are a secretive people, but also a curious one and rather less

judgmental of vampires than the Garou, and a few Ahrimanes have managed to make tentative acquaintances.

Pentex

The Ahrimanes reclusiveness has meant that until recent times the bloodline has been completely unaware of the wyrmcorp and the ties that it has with the Sabbat. As younger members have become active within the sect they have started to come into contact with the Megacorp and the Sabbat who work for it. Pentex presents them with a dilemma, it is a powerful ally of the Sabbat and many Sabbat hold positions in the company and its subsidiaries. On the other hands the Ahrimanes ability to interact with the spirit world gives them some understanding of what the company is really doing, although they do not yet know why.

Connections and Story Ideas

Yaryan

Described in both editions of **Chicago by Night** (now collected in the **Chicago Chronicles**, volumes one and two) is a former Brujah called Yaryan. Using a Native American cleansing ritual Yaryan severed the bond with his sire. After some time he found that he was developing new powers, a Discipline he dubbed Tellurian, that allowed him to see and interact with the Umbra. The similarities between this and Muricia's history should be immediately apparent, and brings up some interesting questions. Did he use the same ritual as Muricia? Are Tellurian and Spiritus variants of the same Discipline? If the Rite of the Third Birth, or some variant, can be done on non-Gangrel, and males at that, this could have huge

implications for the Bloodline. And just what would Yaryan and Muricia make of each other anyway?

The Lhiannan

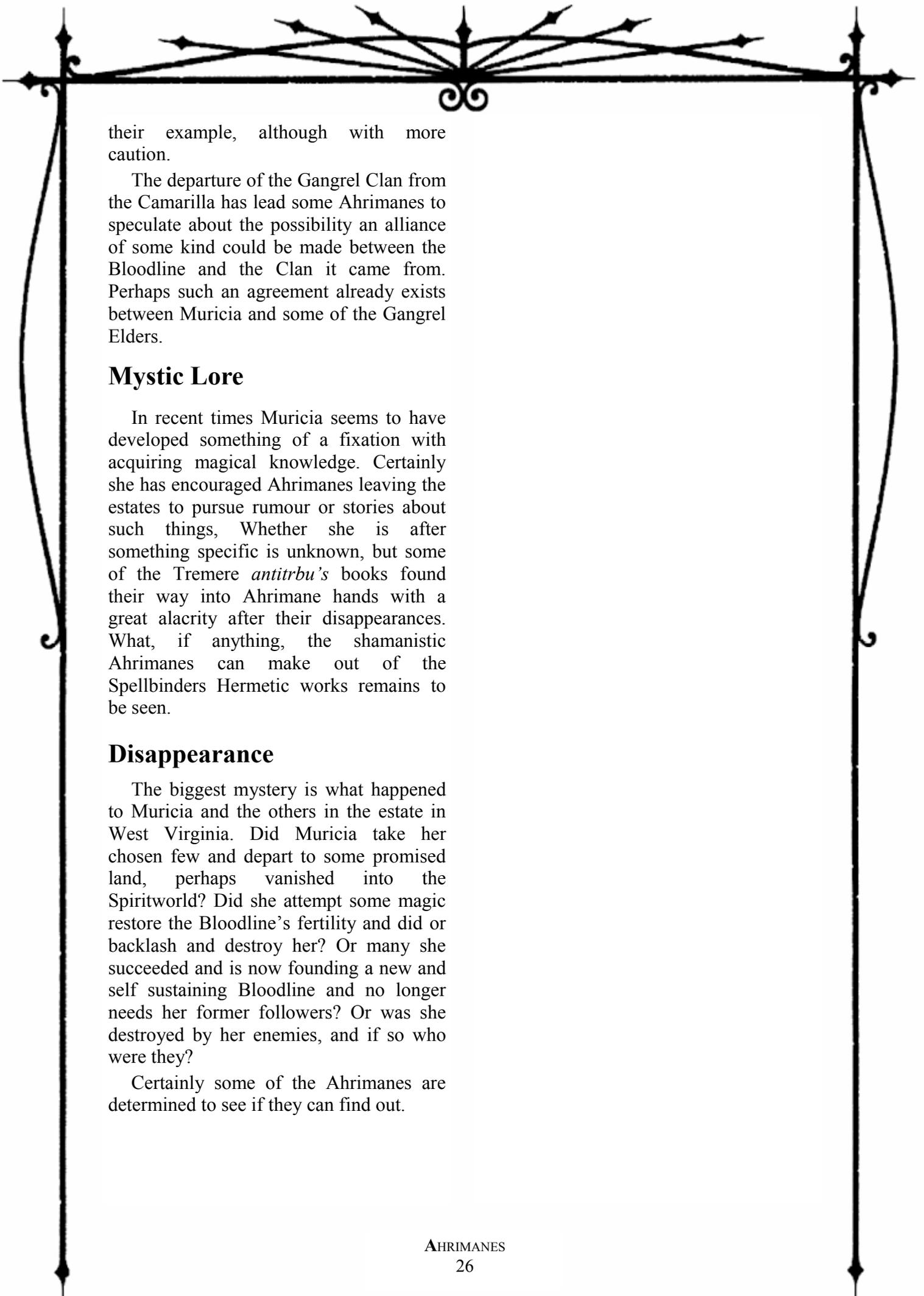
The Lhiannan are an extinct Bloodline that died out in the Dark Ages. They were an offshoot of the Gangrel who had Animalism, Presence and their own unique Discipline called Ogham. This power allowed them to tap the energies and spirits of the land through symbols they painted upon their bodies with their blood. Could the elder vampire Muricia diablerised have been a hidden member of that Bloodline? Just how much of the Ahrimane's nature and powers could have come this now extinct Bloodline.

Pentex and the Black Spiral Dancers

The corrupt spirits that work with these allies of the Sabbat are an anathema to the Ahrimanes. While they have had little to do with these allies in the past, its only a matter time before an Ahrimane has to choose between her personal convictions and duty to the spirits, and acting with allies for the benefit of the sect. As the Cats knowledge to them increases they may soon be forced to take some kind of action which could put them at odds with fellow Sabbat.

Separation

The Ahrimanes have always been very independent from the Sabbat. Now that Muricia has vanished and no force holds the line together at least some are going to leave in name as well as in practice, although they will have to be careful as the Sabbat has a brutal reputation for dealing with traitors. Its persecution of the Harmonists both shows this and has encouraged several Ahrimanes to follow



their example, although with more caution.

The departure of the Gangrel Clan from the Camarilla has lead some Ahrimanes to speculate about the possibility an alliance of some kind could be made between the Bloodline and the Clan it came from. Perhaps such an agreement already exists between Murciaia and some of the Gangrel Elders.

Mystic Lore

In recent times Murciaia seems to have developed something of a fixation with acquiring magical knowledge. Certainly she has encouraged Ahrimanes leaving the estates to pursue rumour or stories about such things, Whether she is after something specific is unknown, but some of the Tremere *antitru*'s books found their way into Ahrimane hands with a great alacrity after their disappearances. What, if anything, the shamanistic Ahrimanes can make out of the Spellbinders Hermetic works remains to be seen.

Disappearance

The biggest mystery is what happened to Murciaia and the others in the estate in West Virginia. Did Murciaia take her chosen few and depart to some promised land, perhaps vanished into the Spiritworld? Did she attempt some magic restore the Bloodline's fertility and did or backlash and destroy her? Or many she succeeded and is now founding a new and self sustaining Bloodline and no longer needs her former followers? Or was she destroyed by her enemies, and if so who were they?

Certainly some of the Ahrimanes are determined to see if they can find out.

Chapter Three:

Rules and Powers

Character Creation

Character creation for the Ahrimanes is handled in almost the same way as for any other character. The difference is that all Ahrimanes were embraced as Gangrel, and so many have at least a rudimentary knowledge of their disciplines. When creating an Ahrimane character, choose starting disciplines from Animalism, Fortitude, Presence, Protean and Spiritus for former Country Gangrel and Animalism, Celerity, Obfuscate, Presence, Protean and Spiritus for those of City Gangrel descent.

Ahrimane Blood

While the Ahrimane blood cannot create the Blood Bond, it can create a Vinculum rating if used in the Vaulderie (as stated in the live action rules). However the effect will be slightly less strong than normal, other participants should subtract 1 from their dice rolls when determining Vaulderie ratings, unless all the participants are Ahrimanes. Few Ahrimanes are in packs with members of any other clan anyway.

Ahrimanes can create ghouls, but their thinner blood means that the ghoul will require more sustenance. An Ahrimane's ghoul will require one blood point every two weeks to remain a ghoul.

Disciplines

Spiritus

Spiritus is a discipline that is unique to the Ahrimanes. Its powers stem from the ritual that transforms them and without undergoing this ritual, no vampire can learn the discipline.

This is an attempt to bring the Spiritus Discipline in line with the spirit world and spirit rules as presented in **Werewolf** and **Mage**, as well as **Kindred of the East**. The Werewolf rulebook is highly recommend for dealing with animal spirits, as is the Werewolf and Mage supplement, **Axis Mundi**. However, for people who do not want such details complete rules for using it purely with **Vampire** are provided.

●Speak with Spirits

The Ahrimane can speak to nearby spirits for the duration of the scene. This will not change the spirit's reaction to the Ahrimane. The Ahrimane communicates telepathically with the spirit. The Ahrimane may also try to see spirits in the area, although this requires intense concentration.

System: The speaker rolls Wits + Linguistics (difficulty 6). One success allows the speaker to communicate with whatever spirits are around. Of course, this does not require spirits to respond, although most spirits view Ahrimanes more favourably than many other vampires. Viewing spirits requires a Perception + Occult roll, difficulty of the local Gauntlet.

●●Summon Spirit Beasts

The Ahrimane can call on the spirits of dead animals, known to Garou and Magi as animal Naturae, to aid them. They will be predisposed to helping the caller, and follow simple telepathic commends. The spirits can take any actions they were capable of in normal life.

System: The summoner must roll Charisma + Animal Ken (difficulty 7). The difficulty of this roll may be decreased if the Ahrimane possess and appropriate Material Correspondence for the spirit (basically an item appropriate to the spirits nature, or something like bones, feathers or a tooth of the animal in question. See **Axis Mundi** for more details on Material Correspondences).

The location also matters, if the animal being called is local to the region it will be easier to summon the spirits, if they come from the other side of the world, or a very different habitat it will be tougher. Use common sense, a rat will be easy to summon in a city, but it will be difficult to summon a polar bear in the desert.

Every success on the roll allows the animal spirit to Materialize for a longer period of time:

Spirits called by this ability do not have to spend Power to Materialize, may do so even if they do not possess the Charm, and ignore the normal restrictions for materialised spirits and the local Gauntlet rating. In this is the case, the spirit will have the attributes and health levels of a normal animal of whatever type. Spirits with the Charms Appear or Materialize

Successes	Duration
1 Success	One Turn
2 Successes	Five Turns
3 Successes	One Hour
4 Successes	One Night
5 Successes	One Week

may be persuaded to remain after the power's duration, although this will require some bargaining on the Ahrimane's part.

Rather than have them remain in the physical world, the Ahrimane can ask them to perform task in the spirit world or Umbra. In spirit terms a "typical" Naturae might be Rage 5, Gnosis 6, Willpower 6, Power 30 with a number of appropriate Charms. This should be modified as befits to the animal, an Owl-spirit for example is likely to have a high Gnosis score, where as a Buffalo-spirit may have a high Rage. Examples of animal spirits, and how to deal with them, can be found in **Werewolf** 2nd edition and **Axis Mundi**.

It is possible to call upon the spirits of extinct animals, but the longer the animal has been extinct the harder it will become. Calling upon a Sabre-Tooth tiger will be harder than a modern tiger, calling upon a Dinosaur may be so difficult the Storyteller can decide that it is effectively impossible.

For those without access to the spirit rules, assume summoned spirits have the attributes of a normal animal but are somewhat smarter. They may stay for longer than allowed by the power if a bargain can be reached. Some also have some additional powers, so a Falcon-spirit may have the equivalent of Presence 1 or a Snake-spirit Serpentis 1 for example.

While the spirits summoned may look like animals, they are not. Powers that work against animals will be ineffective against them, although powers that effect spirits will work. If another mystic tries to command the spirits, they must beat the successes the Ahrimane scored when summoning them. Finally, as supernatural creatures attacks from their teeth and claws do aggravated damage.

●●●Aspect of the Beast

Respect for the Spirits

Spirits, it must be stressed, are not just sources of information and powers. They are beings, often complex and unfathomable ones, in their own right. It's important that an Ahrimane interacts with the spirits rather than just using them.

Spirits exist in Broods. If you offend one Cat-spirit, the chances are all Cat-spirits are going to react badly to you. Conversely if you honour your bargain well with a Raven-spirit, other Raven-spirits will more likely to assist you.

The animal spirits that the Ahrimanes mostly interact with are not identical in behaviour to their material cousins. Rather they seem to be something of a fusion of the animals themselves and the human *beliefs* about the animal. So Owl-spirits tend to be wise, Coyote-spirits tricksters, Fox-spirits crafty and so on. Generally the more powerful the spirit, the more individually personality it has, but it still always has the same fundamental traits.

In game terms, having a good reputation with the spirits can be beneficial. If the Ahrimane has a good relationship with a particular spirit Brood it can reduce the difficulty or increase the duration of **Summon Spirit Beasts** and **Aspect of the Beast**. By contrast a bad relationship with a particular type of spirit can make it harder to call up, and less likely to stick around. Assume the quality of an Ahrimane's relationship with the spirits she is calling on can add or subtract up to 2 to the difficulty modifier of the appropriate rolls.

The Beast and Animal Spirits

Another factor in the relationship between an Ahrimane and the Spiritworld is her Beast. While the spirits they summon are not as hostile to them as they are to other vampires, they are not always friendly. The stronger the Vampire's beast, the lower their Humanity or Path, then the more violent the animal spirits that respond to them.

This does not always mean they are hostile, if the Ahrimane is summoning the spirit for a violent task it may be more inclined to help her. Nevertheless as the Ahrimane's Humanity or Path lowers it is harder for her to interact with the spirits of herbivores, as well as talk to spirits of things like plants and rock. Those spirits of any kind that deal with her will tend to either be frightened by her Beast or aggressive in nature themselves.

Although intended more as a role-playing tool, rules minded Storytellers can raise the Rage and lower the Gnosis of spirits called by Summon Spirit Beasts if an Ahrimane's Humanity or Path is low. Also if a spirit is described as not dealing with shapeshifters whose Rage exceeds a certain score, they will not deal with Ahrimanes whose Humanity or Path is *equal or less* than that score.

The Ahrimane can gain powers similar to those possessed by animals by calling on the spirit of that particular animal to grant her the power. In essence the Ahrimane is channelling the spirit she calls on into herself, and the spirit is employing the power.

If another vampire views the Ahrimane's aura while this power is being employed, they will see a ghostly image of the spirit being invoked overlaying it.

System: The Ahrimane must make a Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty of 7) and spend a Blood Point to gain the power. The power lasts for one turn per success. Even if the spirit fails to grant the power, the vampire must still expend the Blood Point.

If the Ahrimane employs a sensory power its possible to use that to try to penetrate another vampire's Obfuscate. Compare the Ahrimane's Spiritus rating to the opponents Obfuscate rating, just as if she were employing Auspex.

Here are some of the possible spirit powers, although this power is not limited to these:

Armadillo's Skin - The Ahrimane gains an additional two dice for soak damage, including aggravated damage.

Falcon's Eye - The Ahrimane can see great distances as if she had the eyes of a falcon.

Sounds of the Cricket - This grants the power to produce an annoying, grating sound loud enough to deafen those nearby for a few hours.

Swiftness of the Stag - The Ahrimane can move at twice her normal running speed.

Strength of the Bear - This gives the Ahrimane two extra levels of Strength.

Ferocity of the Cougar - All Courage

rolls are made at one less difficulty.

Beaver's Bite - This makes the Ahrimane's bite strong and sharp enough to cut through almost any substance, add +1 bite damage and biting through tough substances can be done with a Strength roll, difficulty set by the Storyteller.

Serpent's Venom - The Ahrimane's bite transmits a venomous toxin that causes two Health levels of Lethal Damage in living victims per turn. The damage continues until the toxin is removed or nullified or until the Ahrimane's spirit power ends.

Chameleon's Colors - The Ahrimane becomes a chameleon, capable of changing color to suit the environment, and +5 stealth dice, but only if the Ahrimane move at half speed or less.

Leapfrog - This grants the Ahrimane the ability to leap three times her normal height and distance.

Ears of the Hare - The Ahrimane can hear as well as a rabbit, reducing the difficulty of Perception rolls involving hearing by two.

Nose of the Hound - The Ahrimane's sense of smell is far greater than that of a mortal. She can even track by scent with on a Perception + Survival roll (difficulty set by Storyteller), smell related perception rolls have their difficulty reduced by two.

Squirrel Balance - The Ahrimane can move about in the branches and limbs of trees or across tightropes with little fear of falling. All such Dexterity rolls have their difficulties decreased by two.

Skin of the Frog - the Ahrimane's skin becomes slick and slippery. Attempts to pin or grapple the Ahrimane suffer a +3 difficulty and it becomes easier to slip

through tight spaces.

Shock of the Eel - with a touch the Ahrimane can deliver a potent electric shock. This will do as many dice in damage as the Ahrimane scores on her Manipulation + Occult roll to activate the power.

Charge of the Buffalo - this power can only be used if the Ahrimane is running towards an opponent or target. When used the Ahrimane will slam into the target with great force without being harmed herself, doing Strength +2 damage.

Spit of the Cobra - The Ahrimane can spit a blinding contact poison. The hit roll is Stamina + Athletics, difficulty 6.

Mole's Tunnelling - Mole gives the Ahrimane the power to tunnel through the earth. The Ahrimane must roll Strength + Athletics to determine how far she can go, with the difficulty depending upon how hard the earth is.

Stench of the Skunk - The Ahrimane can generate a truly foul smell that will distract anyone in the vicinity. A Self-Control roll is required to get close to the Ahrimane or to stay close to her. She stops generating the smell when the power wears off, but is likely to stink for some time to come.

●●●●Engling Fury

This power allows an Ahrimane to use an animal Engling, a spirit of mystical energy, to replenish her Willpower. When the power is invoked the spirit is summoned although it does not appear immediately in the physical world. The Ahrimane then has a choice she can either take the power from the spirit straight away, or she can honour the spirit with a hunt.

If the Ahrimane chooses to simply

force the energy from the spirit, then it dissipates immediately before even materialising. If she chooses to hunt it then it will materialise as an animal, and the Ahrimane will have to pursue, catch and kill it. At which point she must then say a small prayer of thanks to the spirit.

System: To simply take the energy the player rolls Manipulation + Intimidation (difficulty 8). Every success allows her to regain a point of Willpower, however each use of this power destroys the spirit. Obviously this can damage the Ahrimanes reputation in the spirit world.

Summoning a spirit to hunt requires a Charisma + Occult roll (difficulty 8) at which point the spirit will materialise. The player will then have to make whatever rolls the Storyteller thinks are appropriate to hunt and catch then animal, depending upon terrain she must hunt it through. If the hunt is successfully completed then the Ahrimane must say the prayer of thanks. If this is done the spirit will reform elsewhere afterwards.

Note that knowledge of the Discipline does not automatically grant knowledge of how to perform the hunt and prayer. The Storyteller may require this to be learnt as a *ritus*, as so require the character to have at least a point in Rituals.

●●●●●The Wildform

The Ahrimane has the power to channel spiritual energies to fuel a physical transformation, taking on a larger and tougher feral state and granting her special physical powers. She also takes on a more catlike appearance, and animals react poorly to this shape. The exact appearance can vary, some Ahrimanes just grow bulkier, acquire a thin layer of fur and look rather more feline, while others turn into a full blown Cat-woman. Unlike Protean, the transformation does not effect the Ahrimane's clothing or items she

carries, clothes are simply shredded.

System: The change is automatic, happening whenever the Ahrimane wishes it, raising the vampire's Strength by 3, and Dexterity by 2. Stamina also increases by 2, and can be used to soak Aggravated damage from physical attacks. Appearance goes to 0 and Manipulation is reduced by 3, however Strength can be used instead for Intimidation rolls.

The vampire's claws and fangs cause an extra die of damage, she no longer needs to hold, tackle or clinch before biting, and her claws are retractable like a cat's. Both fangs and claws do Aggravated damage. Smelling, hearing, and night vision improve to roughly twice normal (double Perception dice for appropriate rolls). Finally all rolls for interacting with animals are at +2 difficulty.

●●●●● ● **Blessing of the Beast**

This power is a more potent version of **Aspect of the Beast**. Through her greater understanding the Ahrimane can hold the spirit energies within herself for a longer period of time.

System: This power works in all respect like **Aspect of the Beast**, except the invoked powers last for one scene per success rather than one turn. The Ahrimanes cannot employ more powers through this level of Spiritus at any one time than her Animal Ken rating. Also at the Storytellers discretion powers from animals that would conflict, such as dog and cat, cannot be employed at the same time. The spirits of such creatures refuse to be in each other's proximity for any length of time.

Protean

Many Ahrimanes have Protean from

their days as Gangrel. While this Discipline works the same for them as for any vampire there are a couple of minor points. The Feral Claws they grow always look feline in shape and if they are advanced enough to turn into an animal form it is always a cat of some kind rather than a wolf. Generally this is a large North American cat such as a puma and has exactly the same benefits as the wolf form. Ahrimanes who had mastered these levels of Protean before their Rite of the Third Birth find that the rite alters their Protean powers to these new forms.

Thaumaturgy

Given that its Thaumaturgy that has created the Bloodline, and that several members have close contact with human Shamans its unsurprising that several Ahrimanes have an interest in the magic of the blood. Unlike the Tremere with their Hermetic based magic, or the Tzimisce's magic with its Koldonic roots the Ahrimane's magic comes from the Native American practices. This is reflected in the style of their magic, which bears little resemblance ordered study of the Warlocks. Ahrimane rituals instead include much chanting, drumming, dancing and painting themselves with their blood. Its common for practitioner to purify themselves before performing any but the most trivial of rituals.

There are not enough practising Ahrimane Thaumaturgists to make it worth having a separate system for them. Consider the Path of Spirit Manipulation to be their base Path rather than the Path of Blood. Other common Paths are Elemental Mastery, Neptune's Might and Weather Control. The Rituals they use tend to be those that deal with spirits, animals, plants and the land itself. They have Rituals at most levels that allow them to summon, and if necessary dismiss or bind, many kinds of spirits. Some Ahrimanes are rumoured to even be able

Auspex and the Vampire Storyteller's Handbook

The brief passage on the Ahrimanes in the **Vampire Storyteller's Handbook** refers to them having Auspex. I tend to view this as rather like **Vampire Revised's** description of Lupines having Celerity, Potence and what have you, a quick way of summarising something not detailed in the book.

From the point of view of this work, Auspex is encouraged because it can bring a Vampire closer to the spirit world (for example the Site of the Spirit combination power). However it is not their main Bloodline Discipline, after all who would sacrifice the ability to make childer for a power they could probably pick up of a packmate?

Auspex, Animalism and Protean is fine for "quick and dirty" Ahrimanes, but if that's all you wanted you probably would not be reading this.

to feed off of spirits.

Ahrimanes and the Spiritworld

Although unlikely, its possible that an Ahrimane could end up in the Spiritworld, often called the *Umbra*. If such an event should occur then the Ahrimane will appear somehow more solid than a vampire normally would. She can also interact physically with spirits and ephemera even when not in Frenzy. Rules for vampires in the Umbra can be found in the **Book of Worlds**, a supplement for **Mage**.

Ahrimanes are also capable of using Fetishes should they acquire them, and some of the older ones are capable of making them. This requires a Willpower

roll, difficulty equal to the Fetish's Gnosis or Arete +1. Characters wishing to start off with such an item can purchase them with the Special Gift Merit like any vampire character wishing a mystic item.

Combination Powers

These powers are rare, even amongst the Ahrimanes it is hard for them to find a teacher. Its rumoured that the spirits themselves can teach these powers if approached properly, but the truth of this is unknown.

Sight of the Spirit

This power lets the Ahrimane peer through the Gauntlet, the barrier that separates the physical world from the spiritual one.

Required: Spiritus 1, Auspex 2

Cost: 10 experience

System: The Ahrimane rolls Perception + Occult, difficulty the local Gauntlet. The more successes she scores, the more clearly she may see, and hear and smell, into the Umbra. While doing this, she cannot see into the real world.

Sign of the Beast

By combining her limited shapeshifting powers of Protean with her ability to call on the powers of the animal spirits the Ahrimane may ask the spirits to control her shapeshifting. This enables the Ahrimane to grow a fully functional animal feature such as a tail, fins or wings.

While this power only needs to be learnt once, the ability to grow a particular animal feature requires that the Ahrimane makes a bargain with the animal spirits in question. The spirits will want something quite considerable in return, sometimes wishing to take control of the Ahrimane's body for agreed periods of time so they

can act in the mortal world. Once the bargain is struck the Ahrimane can use features from that animal whenever she likes, as long as she has kept her end of the deal.

Required: Spiritus 3, Protean 2

Cost: 15 experience

System: The Ahrimane must spend a blood point and roll Stamina + Animal Ken, difficulty 7. The transformation takes one turn and will last for the rest of the scene. The abilities transferred by the power will depend on what feature the Ahrimane grows.

Spirit Claws

All vampire's Feral Claws are dangerous weapons, but some Ahrimanes have learnt to extend their reach. Using their knowledge of how to effect spirits and their energies they can manipulate the energies of the Beast in their claws to effect the spirit world.

Required: Spiritus 4, Protean 2

Cost: 20 experience

System: The Ahrimane must spend a Blood Point and grow the Feral Claws as normal. To attack into the Penumbra requires the expenditure of an additional Blood Point and a Dexterity + Brawl roll, difficulty 7, or the local Gauntlet, whichever is higher. This attack can be dodged and soaked as normal and is considered Aggravated Damage.

Shape of Many Creatures

This power is a more advanced form of the Sign of the Beast. With greater knowledge of shapeshifting the Ahrimane can now call upon an animal spirit and assume its form.

Required: Spiritus 3, Protean 4

Cost: 25 experience

System: The Ahrimane must roll Stamina + Animal Ken, difficulty 7. The transformation costs 1 blood point and takes three turns, or additional blood may be spent to speed the this up, each extra point reduces the number of turns by one, to a minimum of one. The powers and attribute changes will depend on the animal whose shape she assumes. The size of the animal cannot be smaller than a rat or larger than a buffalo.

As with **Sign of the Beast** an appropriate animal spirit must be bargained with for each different form the Ahrimane wishes. Bargains made with spirits for growing animal features do not carry over to full transformations.

Ritae Systems

None of the Ritae presented in Chapter One have mechanics. They are all essentially roleplaying opportunities and should be treated as such. Of course the Rituals background is required to get them to work properly.

Visionquests may be used as a reason to increase Spiritus, Spirit Lore or Cosmology. Touching the Beast may be used as a reason to increase Animalism, Self-Control or Instincts.

Paths

Although it has fallen out of favour amongst much of the Sabbat, the Path of Harmony is still practised amongst some of the Ahrimanes. The Path of Harmony was printed in the **Player's Guide to the Sabbat**, since that book is now out of print some details are given here.

Nickname: Harmonists

Basic Beliefs: The central tenant of the Path is that human distinctions between good and evil are not relevant to vampires. What is important to all creatures is the distinction between natural and unnatural. Being a vampire is not inherently unnatural or sinful. Being a vampire yet not acting according to your nature as an undead predator is both.

The Harmonist view of nature is not a view of cuddly animals living together peacefully in the forest. Nature is about survival, and that is frequently a violent and bloody business for animals, humans and vampires.

Killing is not regarded as being an inherently bad thing. Indeed killing to

survive is the right of every creature on the planet, and to do and act otherwise is an offence against the natural order of things.

Following the Path of Harmony is an act of balance. A vampire is not a human, so it is unnatural to behave like one. Nor are they a beast, so succumbing to the Beast, however tempting, is also not following their natural path. Rather the vampire is seen as being a balance of both these aspects. Both of them must be balanced, both must be served but neither can be allowed to grow to dominate.

It is this aspect of balance that gives it its appeal to the Ahrimanes. Those that feel they must balance themselves between the Three Worlds find Harmony

Path of Harmony

Score	Moral Guideline	Rational
10	Failing to spend at least two hours per night communing alone with nature.	You are part of the natural order and must contemplate and maintain your place in it.
9	Killing an animal for any reason other than survival.	Predators kill for survival, for food or protection. They do not kill for pleasure or sport.
8	Failing to hunt and drink blood whenever hungry and time permits.	You are a predator , and given the opportunity you must hunt for that is now your nature.
7	Acting in an overly cruel manner.	Cruelty is the mark of a sadist, not a predator.
6	Refusing to ride the wave as long as it is not detrimental to your own survival.	The Beast is part of your nature which you must accept, although you cannot do that if you are dead.
5	Killing a mortal for any reason other than survival.	Predators kill for survival, for food or protection. They do not kill for personal reasons or hatred.
4	Failing to provide safety for your loved ones and comrades.	As the wild predator must protect their pack and family, so you must protect those close to you.
3	Allowing yourself to act too human or too bestial.	Your are both human and beast now, to go too far into one is to loose touch with the other.
2	Feeling guilty about doing something you needed to do.	To feel guilt over acting in your nature is to reject what you are.
1	Refusing to kill when it is important for your survival.	Killing to survive is the way of the natural world.

ideally suited for their purpose. Obviously those who practice in indulging usually find its ban against going too far into human or bestial behaviour to be too prohibitive.

The Ethics of the Path:

- Nothing acting according to its nature is evil, the only sin is to act in a way unnatural to your being.
- Life should be respected, animal or human, but respecting a life should not prevent you from taking it when necessary. It is possible to feel compassion for your prey, but you must not feel remorse if the act was necessary.
- Being a vampire is an act of balance between the human side and the Beast. Vampires are not humans and to try an act human is both unnatural and to invite disaster as human morals are not designed to cope with the Beast. To give in to the Beast is equally unnatural, vampires are not animals either.
- Vampires, humans and animals are neither superior or inferior to each other. Rather they all have different roles and places in the order of things. Although vampires are *supernatural*, they are not *unnatural*.
- Every creature has the right to ensure its own survival, even if that is at the expense of others through feeding or defence.

Virtues: Harmony uses the virtues of Conscience and Instincts.

History: The Path developed in the New World colonies in the late 1700s.

Initially very popular, its numbers have dwindled in recent years. This is partly because its members tend to be very choosy about who they pick as recruits, and also because it has been seen in some quarters of the Sabbat as weak for allowing compassion under some circumstances.

Some Harmonists were persecuted were persecuted by their supposed comrades, some adapted their beliefs to the Path of the Feral Heart, and some left the Sabbat all together. Due to their comparative lack of involvement in the sect, the Ahrimanes have been left to pursue it in peace.

Current Practices: Very little, a few gatherings still occur but they are growing rarer in number. The Ahrimanes still largely follows the Path, but the Bloodline simply is not big enough to start holding meetings of Harmonist Ahrimanes.

Description of Followers: Outwardly Harmonists often appear fairly humane the uninitiated, although they certainly tend towards the emotional side. However when their survival is at stake they are capable of exploding in ferocious and shocking violence. It is not this that others can find most unnerving however but the fact that afterwards they show absolutely no remorse over the act they felt was necessary. Harmonists often prefer to go with their instincts and intuition than to rely on cold logic.

Following the Path

The character should show a respect for the natural order of things, and an understanding of the place in that order that the vampires has as a predator. They should no more harm than they must, and feel no remorse about doing what was necessary.

Common Abilities: Abilities that allow

them to better understand themselves, those around them and their environment are prized. Examples would include Alertness, Empathy, Animal Ken and Survival.

Preferred Disciplines: Animalism is prized for its insight into the Beast. Auspex is valued for the understanding it can give of the world around the vampire.

Merits & Flaws

Animal Features (1pt Flaw)

During your time as a Gangrel you have acquired one or more animal features. The number of times you take this flaw determines the number of features that you possess. Every five features you have removes a point in Social Attribute.

Since many Ahrimanes were quite young when they were transformed the Storyteller may wish to place a limit on the number of times the Flaw may be taken, generally no more than five times.

Strangely enough although the features were acquired before the transformation ritual, most Ahrimanes have animal features of a feline nature. This is partially because having such features is considered a good sign and such Gangrel are more likely to be considered as potential recruits. However, it is not unknown for a Gangrel's feature to actually change during the Rite of the Third Birth, she may start with a wolf's tail, only to awaken when it is over with the tail of a cat.

Unknown Origin (1-2pt Merit)

Nobody but your sisters is aware that you have undergone the Rite of the Third Birth. For the one point version of this merit people think you are a Gangrel *antitribu*. For the two point version people think you are a member of the newly independent main Clan. This merit applies to actual members of the Clan and

Bloodline and means more than just nobody knows you as an Ahrimane, you can produce a few people to backup your claim as Gangrel or *antitribu*, possibly even your sire.

Discipline Affinity (3-7 pt Merit)

You have kept an affinity for your former Gangrel disciplines. For three points you may buy one discipline of your former clan at clan rates, for five points two and for seven points three. Former Country Gangrel may choose from Protean or Fortitude and City Gangrel from Celerity, Obfuscate and Protean. Obviously the 7 point version of this Merit is meaningless for a former Country Gangrel.

Feline Affinity (1 pt Merit)

Felines of all description react well to the Ahrimanes presence, reduce the difficulty all rolls for interacting with them by two. In addition, the Ahrimane reduces by two the difficulty of any roll that involves felines spirits.

Feline Mannerisms (2 pt Flaw)

Every now and then something about your actions is distinctly catlike in nature. When you are happy you purr, when you get blood on your hands you lick it off, and so on. While other Ahrimanes don't mind its not good in polite society.

Whenever a situation where the character will act in a feline manner comes up, and these are at the Storyteller's discretion, the player must roll Self-Control or Instincts, difficulty normally 7 although it can vary. A failure means the character acts on impulse without even realising it.

Spirit Magnet (3-7 pt Merit or 2-6

pt Flaw)

This is described in the **Book of Shadows**. In essence it means that the Ahrimane is surrounded by spirits in the Umbra. The spirits attracted to an Ahrimane are always animal spirits, although they may be benign ones (for a Merit) or malevolent ones (for a Flaw). The cost of the Merit or Flaw determines how numerous and powerful the spirits are.

Backgrounds

Mentor

Most Ahrimanes should take some points in the Mentor background to represent their Ritemother. The exact cost will vary depending upon both the power of the Ritemother and how close at hand she is. If the Ahrimane is in a roving pack and her Ritemother is on an estate she will not be able to offer the help and advice were that she could if they were both at the estate. No points in this background implies that either the two no longer get on, or the Ritemother is either dead or out of contact for some reason.

Familiars

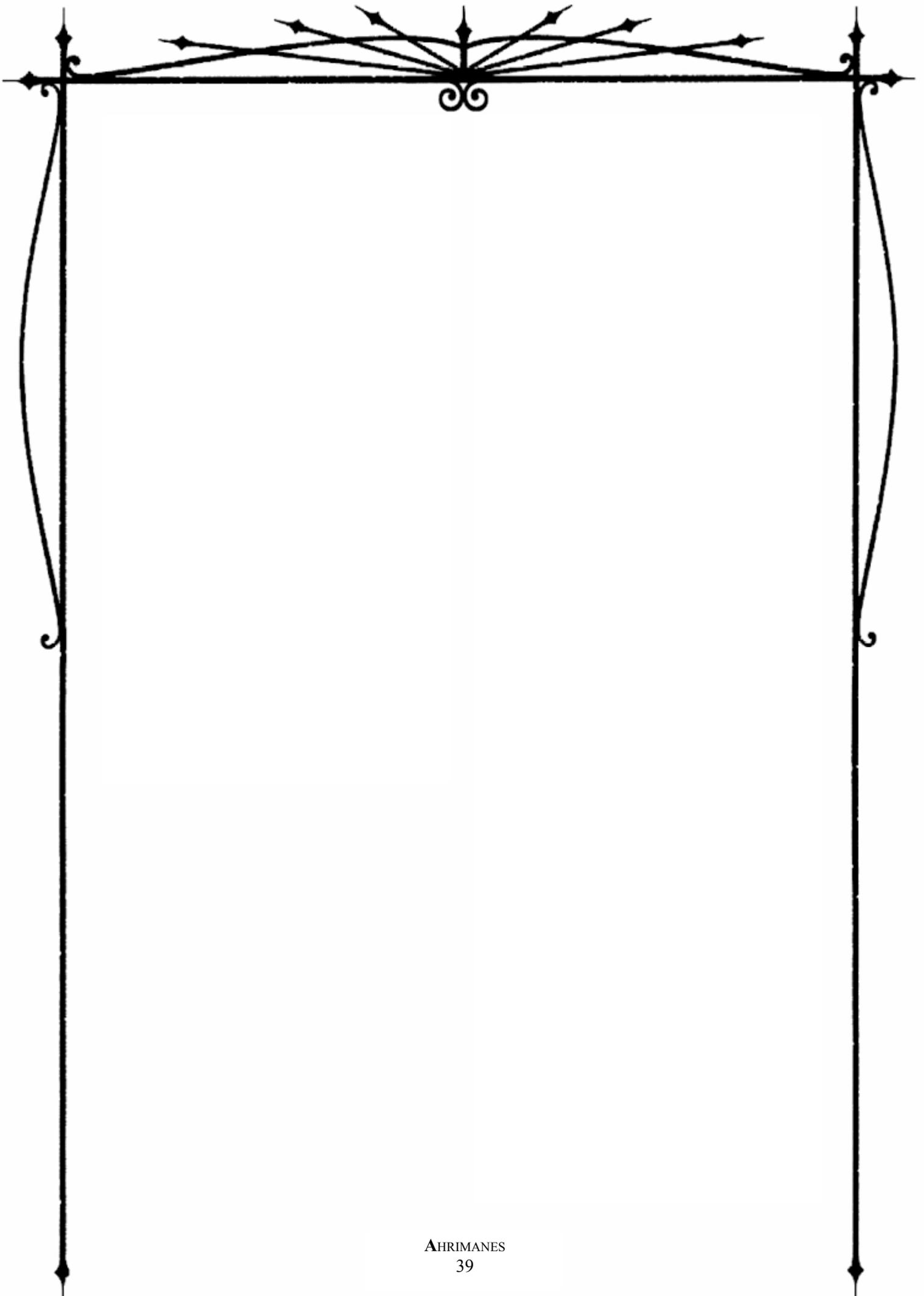
Several Ahrimanes have animals or spirits for companions. Storytellers might want to allow an Ahrimane character to take the backgrounds of Familiar (lesser) from **World of Darkness: Sorcerer**, providing she takes an animal and has at least one point in Animalism, or the background Familiar Spirit from the **Werewolf Players Guide**, providing that they have at least a point in Spiritus and has an animal spirit. Obviously familiar spirits cannot hold Rage or Gnosis for an Ahrimane, but they can hold "blood" instead of Gnosis. This is not true blood, but spiritual energy that it can transfer to

the Ahrimane to nourish her.

A familiar is a *very* demanding background to have as they expect at least as much out of the relationship as they give. Otherwise they will leave at best, and cause real trouble at the worst.

Knowledges

Ahrimanes may have the Knowledges of Spirit Lore and Cosmology at character creation. Spirit Lore quantifies the Ahrimane's knowledge of the beings of the spirit world, and may be used in place of Occult when employing Spiritus. Cosmology is described in the **Werewolf Players Guide** and **Mage: the Ascension** and represents a knowledge of the spirit world itself, and very few Ahrimanes possess much of it. Storytellers are encouraged to make sure characters have good reason to possess these rare abilities.



Appendix:

Daughters of the Blood

Important Ahrimanes

It would be meaningless to talk about famous Ahrimanes, hardly any vampires in the World of Darkness have even heard of the Bloodline. Amongst its members though, there are some whose personality, influence and ideas have had great impact.

Alicia

In the wake of Muricia's vanishing several Ahrimanes have had quite different ideas about the direction the Bloodline should go in, but none have been more radical than Alicia. A relatively new member, but seen as having much potential and a prominent Ritemother in Eileen Blackfeather she was thought to be heading for important things perhaps heading her own pack and ultimately den some day. However, after an apparently spontaneous revelation she has become a Bahari and set upon a mission of conversion to the rest of the Bloodline and anyone else in earshot with some limited success.

She claims that the true roots of the Bloodline are older than any realise, that the spirits that answer the Ahrimanes powers are all creatures of Lillith and that the Bloodline has a special destiny in the Dark Mother's plans for Gehenna. Older Ahrimanes mostly dismiss her as a crank, but she has won some converts and is said to have recently acquired the knowledge necessary for the Rite of the Third Birth from a strange spirit. Others now fear that she will create more Ahrimanes who share her beliefs and that her ways may bring the Bloodline undesirable attention.

Maria McKinnan-Fisher

Some people never fit in, from mortal life to vampiric existence. Always something of a loner, Maria has gone from mortal misfit who tried to kill herself to a Gangrel misfit in a pack that self-destructed and now Ahrimane who is causing trouble.

Always impatient by nature she quickly grew tired with the speed at which she was being taught the powers of the Bloodline and the time it took to master dealing with spirits, along with the whole lifestyle on an Ahrimane Estate Maria left to find her own path through the world, travelling around America and to Australia. Now several years later she is back, accompanied by rumours of diablerie, a dhampir child and an incredible mastery of Spiritus.

What is know is that she has taken a Pander as a husband, the two were wed through a *ritus* and she claims he has a knowledge of the spirit world as great as the Bloodline's, and can teach them new and better ways to deal with the spirits. Some credit the two of them with the *ritus* that enables an Ahrimane to draw power from an Engling without it being destroyed. Her cause has not been helped by her blunt and sometimes confrontational attitude and her zero tolerance for those who disagree. So far her formidable personal powers and combat prowess have kept her safe and her detractors have fought only with words.

Helen Fairchild

While others argue over the future,

worry about the present and prepare for the future, some just get down and part. Helen Fairchild former City Gangrel and now the most notorious socialite and celebrant of the Bloodline certainly knows how to party. The spoilt daughter of wealthy parents in life, the spoilt protégée of her sire as a Gangrel and now probably the most well known Ahrimane outside the Bloodline, although for nothing many of her sisters would take pride in. Her own events are legendary for their acts of indulgence and extravagance and she is never short of an invitation. People still talk about the orphanage children served on silver platters and her “Hollywood Tour” where several minor celebrities met an untimely demise.

Helen travels from city to city, both Camarilla and Sabbat, apparently as the mood takes her. She has extensive contacts, primarily amongst the Toreador and Venture although few know her actual pedigree, and has no trouble being invited to both Elysiums and major Ritae. With the recent upheavals in America Helen has been planning a visit to Europe.

Eileen Blackfeather

Nobody knows much about Eileen’s history, she was one of Muricia’s first recruits and has long been her loyal follower and right hand vampire. It is known that she in her mortal life she was a half-caste, born to a Native American woman raped by a white soldier.

However, Eileen is thoroughly a vampire and has left mortal thought and politics behind. Mortals are tools and food and one type is no better or worse than another.

Since Muricia’s disappearance Eileen has worked hard to try and keep things in the Bloodline as they always have been, acting as a sort of caretaker leader and waiting for Muricia to return. It has been less successful than she might have hoped

however, as many younger Ahrimanes have gone in their own direction and even most of the older ones believe that everything is not alright.

Although she has formidable personal power her, her influence has been slowly slipping over the Bloodline and she has become more desperate to try and reassert it. Where as Muricia was always followed out of respect Eileen has had to throw her weight around more and more to be followed and a confrontation, possibly violent, between her and the increasing numbers of those who disagree with her seem inevitable.

Muricia

Mother, founder, guider and mentor Muricia is known to all of her daughters. While her history is discussed in more depth in Chapter One, it is her present that concerns the Bloodline now.

Theories abound. Some say that she has gone into the spirit world on a great vision quest to bring back some powerful knowledge or medicine, possibly the secrets of creating a fertile Bloodline. Others that she has taken the worthy to some safe place for Gehenna. Darker stories are also whispered that she and those with her have been destroyed, by some wrathful manitou or ancient vampire. Some even claim the Gangrel are responsible, seeing the Ahrimanes as some sort of blemish upon their blood, while others think it is the revenge of the Lasombra for the Bloodline independence.

Character Concepts

It is a common misconception that Bloodlines must have a limited range of character concepts. Like any vampire, an Ahrimane is an individual first and foremost.

These concepts are only rough outlines, their purpose is to provide some ideas

rather than completely formed characters. Likewise the notable traits provided for each concept are hardly an exclusive list, just the important ones for the concept.

Southern Belle

Brought up in a good, although no longer wealthy, family you were taught early on the importance of behaving the right way, especially after the 'incident' with your sister who had ran away. Family secrets have a bad habit of catching up with people though, and one night your sister returned, with a friend.

Although you did not want to go with her and be "liberated" you did not have much choice, especially after her friend took most of your blood. Your next memory is waking up under packed earth and clawing your way out. Dazed and confused you travelled with the pair for a while, but they soon fell out. The fight was apparently over you, and who you belonged to, but it was really just an excuse. Your sister tore her erstwhile friend apart then took you with her to meet her "sisters". You soon regained your composure and they taught you some quaint but effective native customs and how to use your powers, eventually culminating in a rather touching ceremony.

You still act very much the proper lady, you talk and act politely and do not speak out of place. Just because you are a undead bloodsucking monster does not mean you have to be a rude one, even to mortals. After all dinner is a serious business and you were always taught to eat properly.

Notable Traits: Social Attributes, Presence, Etiquette.

Party Animal

Always you were a bad girl, and you loved it. After all bad girls get all the fun and all the attention and that's what you

wanted. One night though was a little bit too wild, you woke up the next evening, you were dead. It was a shock but you got over it, and had a blast with your sire, who called himself something called City Gangrel, for a while. After all now you really could get anyone to do anything for you.

One night, after a few years your sire introduced you to another vampire who could beat you both hands down for sheer self-indulgence and pleasure. Your sire, she told you, was rather deadweight, but you and she could have fun together if you were willing to learn a few things. You dropped him like a shot, and although there were some tiresome things to be studied you were eventually ready to join your new Bloodline.

You embody all the feline sleek sensuality and selfishness and love to be the centre of attention. Parties, social gatherings and wild orgies fill up your nights. You like to pick a victim... er playmate for a while and toy with them a bit, both mentally and physically. Afterwards you leave them as a wreck, if you leave them alive.

Notable Traits: Social Traits, Presence, Carousing, Seduction.

Hippy Chick

Your parents were 60's burn outs who taught you to love everyone and to be in touch with the natural world around you. One night on a camping trip something from the unnatural world took an interest in you and your friends. A couple of City Gangrel decide you would get a whole new experience of the natural world, as prey. They chased you and your friends around the woods and prolonging their fun and eventually killing the others. They were going to kill you too but then one found out you were a vegetarian from the scattered food tins and they decided to embrace you for a laugh.

Much to everyone's surprise you adapted quite well. Eating meat as a human is a matter of choice, drinking blood as a vampire is a matter of survival. Learning to talk to the animals gave you a massive insight into the real nature of the natural world, violent and brutal but full of passion and a wild savage beauty. Also you felt, a spirituality too.

You were proved right as well, a few years after proving yourself True Sabbat you met an interesting vampire, almost instantly the two of you hit it off. She offered you a chance at a new existence, to become closer to the natural order of things and get away from your brutish packmates. She taught you the tenants of the Path of Harmony and eventually was your Ritemother through the Third Birth.

You still dress and act a lot like your mortal days. You even preach love and tolerance to those that will listen. After all you love the humans and animals that give you sustenance, especially those whose lives it becomes necessary to take, its all part of the cycle of life.

Notable Traits: Path of Harmony, Social Traits, Spiritus, Animalism, Empathy.

Wild Child

You were an experiment by your sire, an attempt to see if a human really could be brought up among animals. Using her powers of animalism to command her ghouled animals your future sire had them raise and care for you. When she thought you were ready she embraced you.

Not much changed really except now you could hunt for yourself. Even when your sire failed to return one night you were not too worried, for now you could talk to the animals yourself, and feed them your blood as your sire had done. You continued almost unthinking with your life until you found another like yourself in your territory. You attacked her for daring

to intrude, but were soundly beaten for it seemed she had the power to summon animals from nowhere. She did not kill you however, instead she spoke to you in the language of the animals, telling you that she thought you had much potential and she could teach you the secrets she had used to defeat you.

Now you are an Ahrimane, although you have learnt the human tongue you rarely use it. Instead it is the language of the spirits you wish to learn for human affairs have little interest to you, as do humans except for as a meal.

Notable Traits: Path of the Feral Heart, Physical Traits, Animalism, Protean, Animal Ken, Survival, Retainers (Animal Ghouls)

Urban Shaman

The streets are a hard place to grow up, harder if you are a young girl by yourself. You were a survivor though and knew how to get by, at least until your first run in with a vampire. Your sire was a City Gangrel recruiting for an attack on some Camarilla and you were in the right place at the right time. Surviving the attack you ran with his pack for a while, although you felt something was lacking, some world existed just beyond your senses.

You did not know what it was however, until you were approached one night by a vampire who said that she could see in you a greater potential. You eagerly learned all she could teach you about the world of spirits and your eyes were opened to this marvellous new world.

Now you see the city as a vast living organism with which you are a part. You speak to the spirits of the urban animals, of the buildings and streets and on rare occasions even feel the presence of the spirit of the City itself.

Notable Traits: Mental Attributes, Spiritus, Spirit Lore, Occult, Streetwise

Scout

Daddy was a survivalist who spent most of his days in the woods and taught you to handle and automatic soon after you could walk. He taught you how to survive in the woods, how to look after yourself and about the secret powers that were controlling people. It was not the UN or the Federal Government that came for him that night though, but something even his paranoia had not counted on, a vampire.

Actually he had been pegged as a recruit, but things got messy and he wound up dead. Not wanting to make it a complete loss you were taken instead. Soon you found yourself fighting the real secret powers, the ancient vampires manipulating Canite and mortal to their own ends. Recently a former pack-mate returned and offered you a chance to learn more about the real nature of the world, and you took it. Now you are no longer a Gangrel but an Ahrimane.

Your skills make you an ideal scout. Apart from your mundane talents you can talk to the local animals and spirits to get a really good idea of the area you are moving into. Although you can handle yourself well in a fight you know the real trick is not to be noticed in the first place.

Notable Traits: Physical Attributes, Animalism, Spiritus, Fortitude, Survival, Stealth.

Gamekeeper

Growing up on the reservation was really tough. Keeping to the old ways like Mom taught you was even tougher, particularly when even your brothers and sisters could not. Then one night he came to you, dressed like a traditional warrior and surrounded by a aura of power, and took you to be his immortal bride. He was impressed by your keeping to the traditional ways, but you soon found he

made no attempt to try and preserve them amongst your people.

After he was killed by a ravaging Lupine you returned to the reservation. You soon found that there was someone else there who was watching the people, and she offered to show you how to talk to the spirits of your people and have the power to truly practise the traditional ways. You discovered that her ways were only loosely based on your own and decided after your transformation that you would be the keeper your people needed.

Now you keep the reservation in order, keep it the way it should be. Like a Gamekeeper or warden preserving some species you keep watch over your former people and keep them pure both. Those who bring the ways of the white man into your territory you punish, sometimes fatally. You dabble sometimes in mortal politics too if it helps your people be left alone. Despite all this you are no longer close to your people, your attachment has become more of an ideal as any emotional closeness slowly fades away.

Notable Traits: Presence, Politics, Intimidation.

