Spell Abstraction

Sorcery is a language that communicates with the very roots of creation. Just as man uses his speech to influence and order his comrades, so may a sorcerer use this special language to command and alter the forces of nature. The sorcerous "word" is a name or derivative of an *original name*, given to an element, creature, or force when the world was created. Thus, to know these names is to know the very stuff of creation. These powerful words are called *facets* and can be used to evoke control over that which they name.

A "spell" is a combination of facets—a sentence if you will—formed to produce a specific desired effect. Using facets to create new effects is a process called *abstraction*. For example, if a wizard knew the facets for Control and Fire, rather than just the spell for Pyrotechnics, he could conceivably create abstractions to make the fire grow, fall, dance, change hue or even smoke.

However, abstraction is a difficult, dangerous and taxing art. The raw facets contain much hidden power and meaning. The wizard must focus that power into a desired effect.

Element

Air is the element of the wind; Anima is the element of the bodies and minds of creatures; Arcana is the sphere of arcane power—magic; Earth is stone, wood and dirt; Fire encompasses the sphere of the tool most useful—heat and flame; Heaven invokes the sphere of light; Water invokes rivers, seas, ponds and streams; White element is the dangerous sphere of heavenly fire, lightning and all her sisters.

Air (Wind, Breath)
Obstacle 2, Actions 4. Resource point cost: 10.

Anima (Mind and Body)
Obstacle *, Actions 5. Resource point cost: 12.

*The casting obstacle of Anima depends on the target stat of the creature or character being affected. Anima can not be used with the Create Impetus. You cannot create life.

Arcana (Raw Magic)
Obstacle 4, Actions 10. Resource point cost: 13.

Earth (Wood, Dirt, Stone and Metal)
Obstacle 1, Actions 6. Resource point cost: 8.

Fire (Heat and Flame)
Obstacle 2, Actions 5. Resource point cost: 10.

Heaven (Light and Darkness)
Obstacle 3, Actions 8. Resource point cost: 10.

Water (Rain, Pools, Streams, Lakes And Oceans)
Obstacle 2, Actions 3. Resource point cost: 9.

White (Lightning and Electricity)
Obstacle 4, Actions 7. Resource point cost: 11.

Impetus

The Impetus of a spell determines how that spell uses or affects its element.

Control

Obstacle 5, Actions 16. Resource point cost: 5.
Using the Control impetus, a sorcerer may change the shape of or forcibly move his target element.

Create

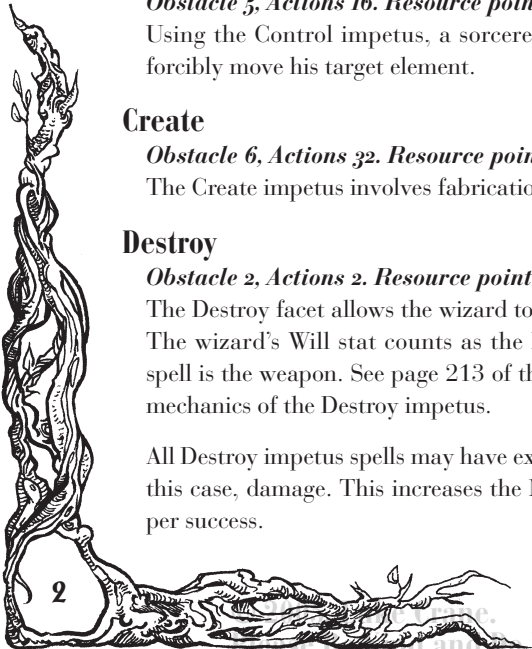***Obstacle 6, Actions 32. Resource point cost: 6.***
The Create impetus involves fabrication of materials or substance.

Destroy

Obstacle 2, Actions 2. Resource point cost: 3.
The Destroy facet allows the wizard to turn his magic into a weapon. The wizard's Will stat counts as the Power stat for the attack, the spell is the weapon. See page 213 of the Burning Wheel for the exact mechanics of the Destroy impetus.

All Destroy impetus spells may have extra success applied to effect, in this case, damage. This increases the Mark result of the spell by one per success.

Adding the Majoris and Minoris sigils can increase or reduce damage. See the Sigils section for details.

Enhance

Obstacle 4, Actions 12. Resource point cost: 4.

The Enhance Impetus grants a boon to its Element. It fortifies and strengthens even to an otherworldly degree. It adds dice to an ability or adds strength or quality to an extant material. It cannot add material or ability that would not previously exist in the Element. Also, in Anima abstractions, Enhance can extend senses into other viable realms — like the Sense spell — instead of adding dice.

Affecting stats is the standard Enhance effect. Single skill enhancements might be considered for the Minoris sigil. You may not affect Reflexes, Mortal Wound or an emotional attribute directly. Health and Steel may be affected directly.

Influence

Obstacle 3, Actions 4. Resource point cost: 3.

Think of a magnet and a compass. Such is the effect of the Influence Impetus. It can also change colors, temperature, and direction of its target. This impetus triggers a test in the element or *with* the element where there wouldn't be one before. Like Fear. Or using Influence Anima to make a character's arms tired.

Tax

Obstacle 1, Actions 1. Resource point cost: 2.

The Taxing impetus' role is to drain or weaken the strength of its target. Like Destroy, this can be done to an element or with an element. The Tax element can be used to cause an element to add obstacle penalties (Thunderclap) or be used to directly decrease dice from a stat or skill (Emperor's Hand). Affecting skills is the standard effect. Going for stats is a Majoris affect, as are Health and Steel. Emotional attributes, Reflexes and Mortal Wound may not be directly affected. Adding obstacle is a Minoris effect.

Transmute

Obstacle 4, Actions 20. Resource point cost: 7.*

Transmutation is a difficult and obscure art. This facet allows the sorcerer to change one element to another.

*Add the obstacle of this facet to the obstacle of the facet being changed into. The caster must know all applicable elements to affect this transformation.

Origin

Origin indicates where the spell can *start*—how far away from the caster the spell can be thrown and still have its intended effect. There are three Origins: Personal, Presence, Sight.

Personal

Obstacle 0, Actions 1. Resource point cost: —.
Spells with Personal Origin start from or on the caster.

Presence

Obstacle 2, Actions 2. Resource point cost: 2.
Presence Origin indicates the spell may be started anywhere within the caster's Presence.

Sight

Obstacle 4, Actions 4. Resource point cost: 4.
The spell may be started anywhere the caster can see. Even if the site is remote and distant, the wizard may throw the spell there—so long as he can see it. This "sight range" includes extrasensory sight extended by The Sense, Eagle Eyes and such.

Duration

There are four durations for spells in Burning Wheel. Spells that have an immediate, instantaneous effect; spells that have a continuing effect that rely on the caster to *sustain* them; spells that fade over time, and spells that have a permanent effect.

Instantaneous

Obstacle 0, Actions 1. Resource point cost: —.
These spells manifest immediately. If an instantaneous effect spell causes a penalty or modifier to a character (like Lights of St Andrew), that penalty should fade at one step per volley. If a spell causes +4 Ob penalties to a character, the effect fades in four volleys.

If an instantaneous effect spell creates a solid object like a stone or a phenomena like a gust of wind, these things come and go quite quickly, but any effect they had on the surrounds lasts as long as it naturally would.
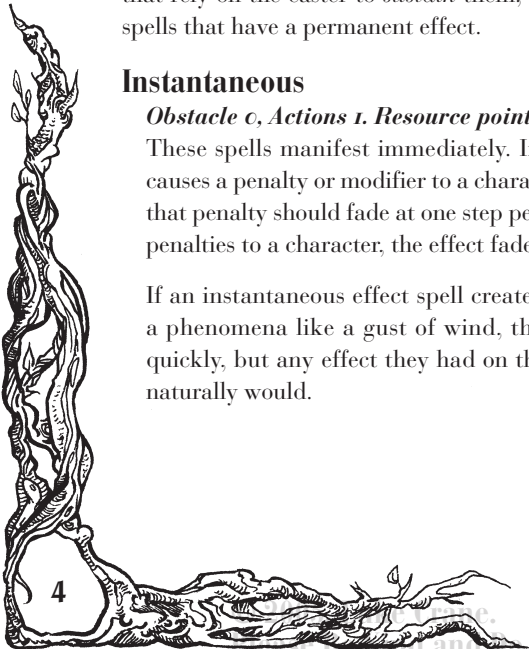
Sustained

Obstacle 2, Actions 2. Resource point cost: 2.

This spell is maintained by the force of the caster's Will. So long as the caster concentrates, the spell effects remain. See the Sustaining Spells rules on page 216 of The Burning Wheel and the Sustaining Abstractions section of this chapter.

Elapsed Time

Actions/Seconds: Ob 1, Actions 2. Resource point cost: 2.

Exchanges: Ob 2, Actions 6. Resource point cost: 4.

Minutes: Ob 3, Actions 8. Resource point cost: 5.

Hours: Ob 4, Actions 12. Resource point cost: 7.

Days: Ob 5, Actions 24. Resource point cost: 8.

Months: Ob 7, Actions 43. Resource point cost: 9.

Years: Ob 9, Actions 81. Resource point cost: 10.

Successfully casting a spell earns one "increment" of the time listed. Each extra success allocated to Duration adds one increment of time.

Duration for a spell that lasts for "Hours" would last for one hour and be increased by one hour per extra success allocated to Duration.

Permanent

Obstacle 10, Actions 500. Resource point cost: 100.

The Permanent facet renders the magical effect of the spell permanent. Force of Will, for example, makes the wizard's desires and influence a permanent part of the victim's psyche.

Area of Effect

Caster

Obstacle 0, Actions 1. Resource point cost: —.

This spell only effects the caster.

Single Target

Obstacle 1, Actions 2. Resource point cost: 2.

This spell only effects one character or object (who is not the caster).

Presence

Obstacle 2, Actions 3. Resource point cost: 3.
This spell effects everything within the Presence of the caster.

Half Presence
Obstacle 1, Actions 3. Resource point cost: 2.

Double Presence
Obstacle 3, Actions 6. Resource point cost: 4.

Natural Effect

Obstacle 3, Actions 4. Resource point cost: 4.
These spells play themselves out according to the inclination of their element. They have no set or defined "area" aside from the intent and effect of the spell. A wind summoned in a house to blow open a door would also blow out all the candles and even shatter windows (or worse) if cast too powerfully.

Double Natural Effect
Obstacle 6, Actions 8. Resource point cost: 8.

If a sorcerer wishes to conjure natural phenomena of truly cataclysmic proportion he calls upon the Double Natural Effect facet. Using this effect a wind that would have struck down one house would strike down two, a wave conjured to knock over men standing in the surf would be large enough to capsize boats, and so on.

Half Natural Effect
Obstacle 2, Actions 3. Resource point cost: 3.

If a wizard wishes to limit the effects of his magics, he may try to contain them with Half Natural Effect. This facet does not limit the immediate power of the spell, but does stop it short of destroying the whole city. Instead, a gale force wind would be contained on single street rather than ripping off the roofs of the entire neighborhood. Or a storm summoned would only rain on one house. Or a flood conjured would die before it washed out the entire mountain road—washing out only half of it….

Measured Area (MA)

This AOE is used when the caster wants to affect a certain confined or predetermined area or wants the spell to travel a certain distance. It is very hard to contain a spell in such a manner.
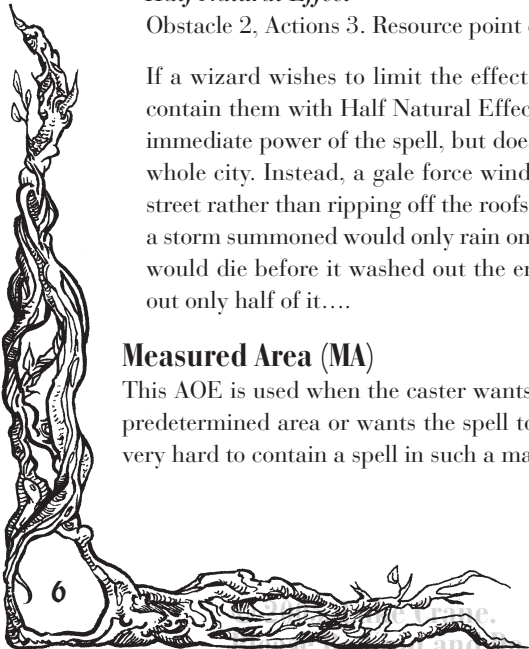
Paces: Obstacle 2, Actions 4. Resource point cost: 3.

10s of Paces: Obstacle 4, Actions 6. Resource point cost: 5.

100s of Paces: Obstacle 6, Actions 8. Resource point cost: 6.

Miles: Obstacle 8, Actions 10. Resource point cost: 8.

10s of Miles: Obstacle 9, Actions 15. Resource point cost: 9.

100s of Miles: Obstacle 10, Actions 20. Resource point cost: 10.

Measured Area spells affect the basic amount of area indicated in the face description: 10s of paces affects a 10-pace diameter circle, or a 10-pace long stretch. Paces affects one pace of area. To increase that area, the caster must indicate his intended area of affect before the spell is cast. Each incremental increase of area (+1 pace, +10 paces, +1 mile, etc.) requires that the sorcerer increase his casting obstacle by one. (This doesn't affect the Tax obstacle). If you want a spell to level a football field, the sorcerer can't rely on luck, he's got to pay for the area of effect with increased obstacle.

If using spells as part of martial conflict or a duel of sorcery, be sure to consult the Duels of Sorcery, Artillery and Steel section in the Burning Wheel (pages 222-224).

Abstraction Process

Using these powerful names for the natural elements, time, space and distance and combining them with the *impeti*, a sorcerer may form a wholly new and unique spell.

Spell Concept and Intent

Spell concept (aka Intent) is of paramount importance when abstracting. It is the force of the sorcerer's will that shapes and governs the final outcome of this process. Without will there can be no spellcraft. However, its presence in the process also makes abstraction somewhat unpredictable.

Example concepts: "I want to incinerate him!"

"Spirits of Wind heed my call! Come forth and raise our sails, give us speed to cut these doldrum waves!"

"I need to favorably influence his opinion of the justiciar."

Idiom

Sorcerer players must keep the elements of their spells in a realm appropriate to the idiom of their game. Burning Wheel is a medieval fantasy roleplaying game. Modern science is not an acceptable venue for spellcraft. It is not cool to use the Water element to suck all the water from a person's cells. The medieval mind did not understand that such a relationship existed! The GM may veto a spell/abstraction that he feels violates the idiom of the setting.

Choose Facets

After the concept of the abstraction has been described, the player and the GM determine the proper facets using the Wheel of Magic or the Spell Facets list.

The facets of the previous examples would be:

"I incinerate him"
Fire element (Ob 2, 5 a), Destroyer impetus (Ob 2, 2 a), Presence origin (Ob 2, 2 a), Instantaneous duration (Ob 0, 1 a), Single Target area of effect (Ob 1, 2 a).

"Spirits of Wind..."
Air (Ob 2, 4 a), Enhancing (Ob 4, 12 a), Presence (Ob 2, 2 a), Sustained (Ob 2, 2 a), Natural Effect (Ob 3, 4 a).

"...to favorably influence his opinion..."
Anima (Ob 4, 5 a), Influencing (Ob 3, 4 a), Presence (Ob 2, 2 a), Sustained (Ob 2, 2 a), Single Target (Ob 1, 2 a)

Build the Numbers

Once the facets have been determined, total the obstacle and actions. This is the casting obstacle and casting time for this abstraction. From the examples above:

Fire Bolt: Ob 7, 12 Actions

Spirits of Wind: Ob 11, 24 Actions

Mind Trick: Ob 12, 24 Actions (Based on a Will exp of 4)

Those are some pretty high casting obstacles. When using raw abstractions, it's best to keep it as simple as possible in order to minimize risk and ensure success!
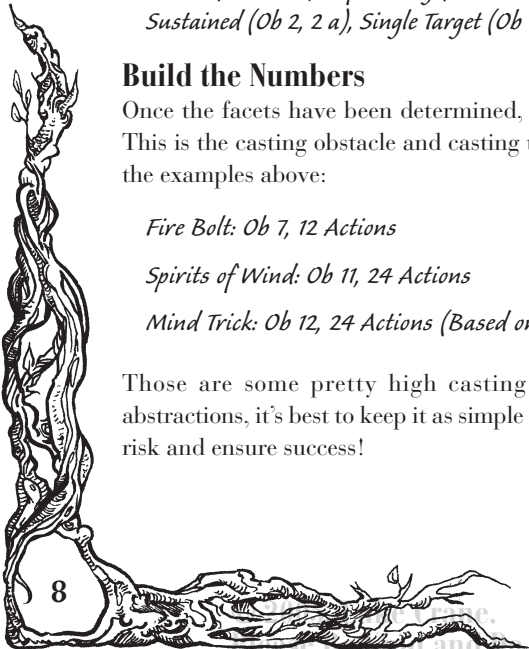
For the Mind Trick, you could reduce the obstacle by at least two points by using the Personal Origin facet instead of Presence. This would require that the caster touch his victim to trigger the spell, but that shouldn't be too hard in a dynamic social situation.

Speak the Abstraction

Cast abstractions using the normal spell casting rules: Use Will+Sorcery to meet the obstacle; time is factored by number of actions spoken; roll for Tax after the spell has been released.

If the player meets the obstacle for the abstraction, his intent for the spell is carried through. If the obstacle is missed, the effect of the spell varies from what was initially intended. Could be something good, probably something bad.

Successful Abstraction

When a sorcerer meets his obstacle, there is no variance on the Wheel of Magic. The intent of the spell is carried off successfully. Apply extra successes to effect and duration as appropriate.

Failed by 1 to 5 Successes

Abstraction is not a science. The sorcerer is experimenting with bits of power that he thinks will generate his desired effect. This kind of speculation often generates unexpected results; sometimes wizards are wrong. If the sorcerer is not careful, skilled and lucky then the effects of the spell can vary from the initial concept and change into something quite different.

The margin of failure for an abstraction determines how many rings on the Wheel of Magic shift. Roll on the table below to see precisely which rings vary.

Ring Variance
1: Element
2: Impetus
3: Origin
4: Duration
5: Area of Effect
6: *Additional ring varies*, roll again on this table. An additional ring varies each time a 6 is rolled. If the same ring is rolled multiple times, add +1 to the variance distance for that ring.
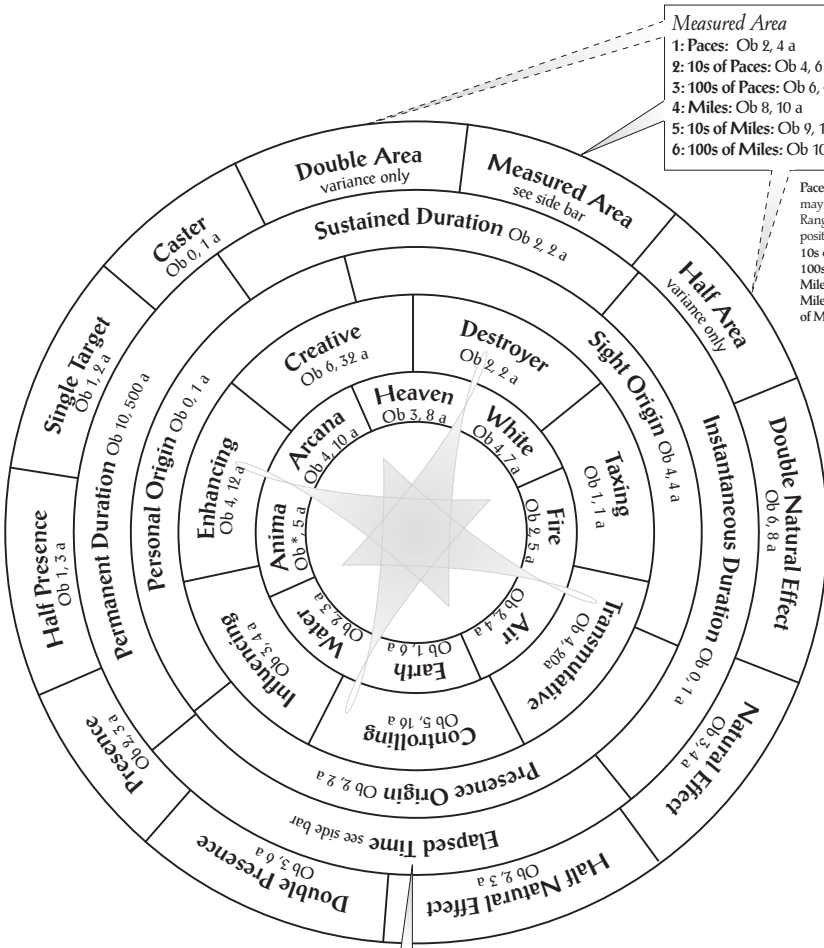
Measured Area
1: **Paces:** Ob 2, 4 a
2: **10s of Paces:** Ob 4, 6 a
3: **100s of Paces:** Ob 6, +8 a
4: **Miles:** Ob 8, 10 a
5: **10s of Miles:** Ob 9, 15 a
6: **100s of Miles:** Ob 10, 20 a

Paces AoE spells may add +1D to Range and Cover positioning tests. **10s of paces**, +2D. **100s of paces**, +4D. **Miles**, +8D. **10s of Miles**, +12D. **100s of Miles**, come on!

Wheel of Magic facets (outer to inner):

- Double Area *variance only*
- Measured Area *see side bar*
- Half Area *variance only*
- Double Natural Effect Ob 6, 8 a
- Natural Effect Ob 3, 4 a
- Half Natural Effect Ob 2, 3 a
- Elapsed Time *see side bar* Ob 3, 6 a
- Double Presence Ob 3, 6 a
- Presence Ob 2, 3 a
- Half Presence Ob 1, 3 a
- Single Target Ob 1, 2 a
- Caster Ob 0, 1 a
- Sustained Duration Ob 2, 2 a
- Personal Origin Ob 0, 1 a
- Permanent Duration Ob 10, 500 a
- Instantaneous Duration Ob 0, 1 a
- Sight Origin Ob 4, 4 a
- Presence Origin Ob 2, 2 a

Inner facets:

- Creative Ob 6, 32 a
- Destroyer Ob 2, 2 a
- Enhancing Ob 4, 12 a
- Arcana Ob 4, 10 a
- Heaven Ob 3, 8 a
- White Ob 4, 7 a
- Taxing Ob 1, 1 a
- Anima Ob *, 5 a
- Fire Ob 2, 5 a
- Water Ob 3, 4 a
- Air Ob 2, 4 a
- Earth Ob 1, 6 a
- Transmutative Ob 4, 20 a
- Influencing Ob 3, 4 a
- Controlling Ob 5, 16 a

Elapsed Time Obstacles
Actions/Seconds: Ob 1, 2 a. **Exchanges:** Ob 2, 6 a.
Minutes: Ob 3, 8 a. **Hours:** Ob 4, 12 a. **Days:** Ob 5, 24 a.
Months: Ob 7, 43 a. **Years:** Ob 9, 81 a.

2d6 for Variance
2: Years
3-4: Actions
5-6: Seconds
7-8: Exchanges
9: Minutes
10: Hours
11: Days
12: Months

If a player fails by two, two rings vary. If a 6 is rolled for either of those rings, an additional ring varies.

Variance

Find the facets of the abstraction being attempted on the Wheel of Magic. Roll two dice. The first represents direction—even is clockwise, odd is counterclockwise. The second die is the number of steps varied in that direction on that ring. The result will indicate a new facet. This facet replaces the one which varied and is used to interpret the final spell effect.
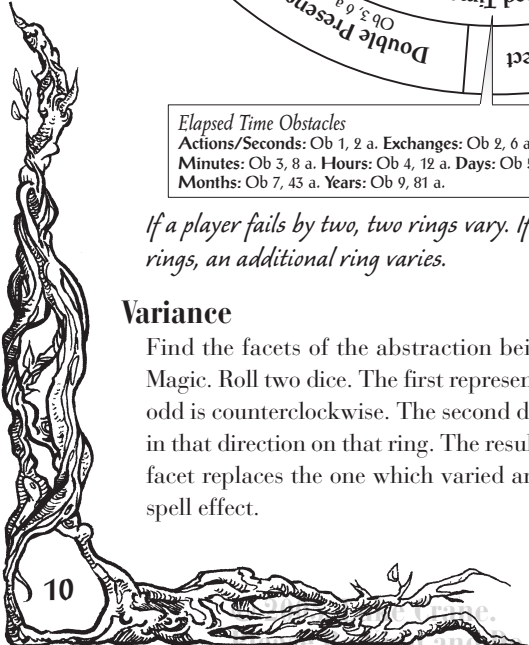
"I assure you that the justiciar is favorably disposed to you. My liege, you should grant him the benefit of the doubt and see his side on the matter." The sorcerer misses his obstacle by one success on the Influence spell. He then rolls for variance on the Wheel of Magic. First he determines which ring varies and then the distance and direction of variation. First he rolls for which Ring varies. A 4 tells him it's the Duration ring. Then he rolls for direction and steps varied: 3/2. Counter-clockwise, two steps from Sustained. This would result in variance from Sustained to Elapsed time. In this case, the player rolls one last time to see what the exact time is. He rolls a 7 resulting in Exchanges. The spell (Anima, Influencing, Presence, Sustained, Single Target) now lasts for 1 minute (he failed by one, so that's one increment of duration).

Carefully and Patiently

A player may cast his abstractions carefully and patiently as described in the Burning Wheel.

Sustaining Abstractions

According to the Power Still Flows Through Him rules, Abstractions are all but impossible to sustain due to their high obstacles. Not many sorcerers have a B9 or B10 Forte. Abstractions are a bit more mutable than distilled spells however, so we can bend the rules a little bit.

Reinforcing the Weak Flesh with a Strong Mind

It normally costs one Will die to sustain a spell and a Tax test must be made at an interval of the Forte exponent minus spell obstacle in hours. (B6 Forte vs Ob 4 spell retests for Tax in two hours). If the spell obstacle is equal to or greater than the Forte exponent, the spell can't be sustained.

In order to give himself a chance to sustain an abstraction, a sorcerer may put up extra Will dice to make up for the difference in his Forte vs the obstacle. The total of Forte plus Will sustaining dice must exceed the spell by at least one. This is called *reinforcing*.

The Will dice set to reinforcing count as being set aside just like a die set to sustain a spell. *They may not be used for casting, sustaining, resisting or tests of any kind.* Wounded dice subtract from the current Will of the

character—so a character could be wounded, pass out, drop his spell and then regain consciousness as he recovers his reinforcing dice. Also, in case there was any question, the Reinforcing dice are not added to Forte when testing for The Power Still Flows Through Him.

The Strain

In addition to absorbing much of his concentration, reinforcing increases the risk to the caster. If the sorcerer encounters a May Not circumstance while reinforcing and the spell is forced down, he must immediately take a Tax test with his current Forte exponent.

Abject Failure

There are special rules for abstractions that fail by 6 or more successes. Roll the DOF and consult the table below:

1: Unwanted Summoning
2-5: Harmless Dissipation
6: Outright Tax

Unwanted Summoning

Consult the Offering Wheel on page 26 of the Summoning chapter. Roll a d6 to see what type of calling the summoner has put forth: even is angelic, odd is dæmonic; 1-3 is a roll on the Inner Star, 4-6 is a roll in the Outer Circle. The number on the d6 also determines the starting Named called. Start with the lowest Named and count up. For example if the dæmonic Outer Circle is rolled: a Lesser Imp is 1-2, Imp is 3-4, Greater Imp is 5-6. Or if the angelica Inner Star is rolled: a Lesser Seraph is 1-2, a Seraph is 3-4, and a Greater Seraph is 5-6.

Roll for direction and steps varied according to the Response to Offering rules. And of course, if the GM had something planned—something waiting in the wings—please use her discretion rather than this random determination.

Harmless Dissipation

The abstraction has no effect whatsoever. Roll for Tax as normal.

Outright Tax

The spellcaster has said something horribly wrong. Rather than be externalized, the spell effect is channeled internally. Test for Tax, the sorcerer may not use Patiently dice.
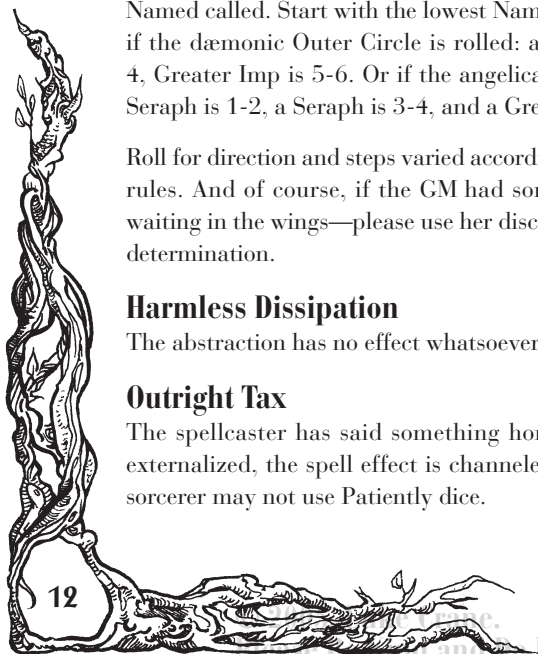
Abstracting from a Spell

Abstractions are far more useful when used to modify existing spells. Players may take a facet and add it into an existing spell in order to create a new spell on the fly.

Chris wants to abstract Turn Aside the Blade to change it from Caster Area of Effect to Single Target Area of Effect so he can cast it upon his allies.

It's an Ob 4 spell and takes 11 actions. Adding Single Target increases that to Ob 5, 13 actions.

When abstracting from extant spells, the player is always adding to the original intended effect. Nothing is subtracted or lost, though outcomes may change.

Adding the Fire facet to the Breath of Wind spell means that the character will shoot forth a Breath of Wind with all its Natural Effect glory that will be on fire. Since the spell uses the Destroy impetus, it will now Destroy with Fire and Wind.

Once a facet is added to an extant spell, the new formula becomes an abstraction. It uses the abstraction rules for variance and reinforcing.

Multiple Facets from the Same Ring

Certain spells in the Character Burner are listed with multiple facets. Turn Aside the Blade, for example, uses the Anima and Earth elements. Rather than just deflecting rocks and arrows, it protects against blows from the naked fist as well.

This effect is done simply by adding on the extra Element into both the abstraction process and distillation. Obviously this makes the whole thing a lot more difficult, but it can be very rewarding!

Feel free to use this variation of the rules for any set of facets. For example, many spells use the Caster and Single Target AOE to allow an either/or situation.

If a spell is to have two different, simultaneous effects, Death's Howl, for example, it is customary to divide the casting successes between the two elements/impeti. Between Control and Destroy in this case.

Eureka!

What the hell just happened and can I do it again? Sometimes an abstraction will produce an unintended result via the Wheel of Magic. Occasionally this result is even beneficial!

If an abstraction varies and creates an effect the wizard wants to reproduce at a later time, he must make a Sorcery test (straight skill, no Will involved!) to figure out what happened. Obstacle is 1, +1 for each ring varied. The player may know exactly how the variance took effect, but not so the character.

> *An abstraction that varies on one ring on the WoM is an Ob 2 Eureka test. An abstraction that varies on all five rings—a Garbled Transmission— requires an Ob 6 Sorcery skill test to figure out exactly what went wrong and how it can be done again.*

Invariably a GM will describe the results of a variation with meticulous, malicious glee. Eureka allows the player access to that spell concept. It may consist of facets that the player has, but may also be something the player never considered.

Eureka for Unknown Facets

One of the other benefits of the Eureka test is that it can grant a player knowledge of previously unknown facets. It doesn't grant the facet per se, but it does give the sorcerer a clue as to what it might be. If a sorcerer makes a number of successful Eureka tests equal to his Perception Aptitude against an unknown facet, he may then attempt to "distill" this knowledge into a usable form.

Use the rules for Learning New Spells on page 227 of the Burning Wheel. Use the facet's obstacle in place of spell obstacle. Practicals are done by creating abstractions using this facet at double obstacle. (Just the facet, not the whole spell.)

It is a difficult process, but using this method of luck, experimentation, trial and error, a sorcerer could possibly learn any facet!

Starting Character Abstractions

This system is meant to be used in conjunction with the incantations described in the Burning Wheel game. Starting characters must purchase spell facets they know during character burning. The cost of the facets are listed along with the actions and obstacle.
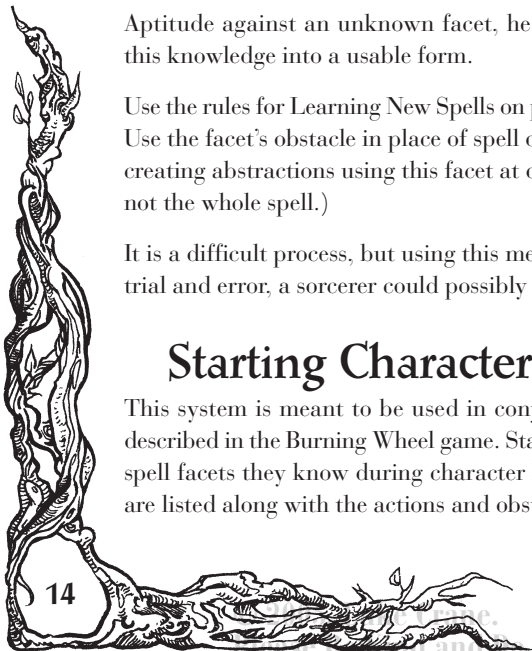
When choosing spell facets, a caster may not choose to start with the Double Measured Area or Half Measured Area facets. These steps are only used when rolling for variance on the Wheel of Magic.

And, of course, spells and incantations may also be purchased at their normal cost as per the rules in the Character Burner.

Basic Facet Knowledge

The Sorcery skill includes the knowledge of the *Personal* Origin, *Instantaneous* Duration and *Caster* Area of Effect facets. These do not have to be purchased or learned—any character with a Sorcery skill is considered to know them.

Learning Facets

Facets may be learned in game play using the Learning New Spells rules detailed on page 227 of the Burning Wheel. Use the facet's obstacle in place of the spell obstacle.
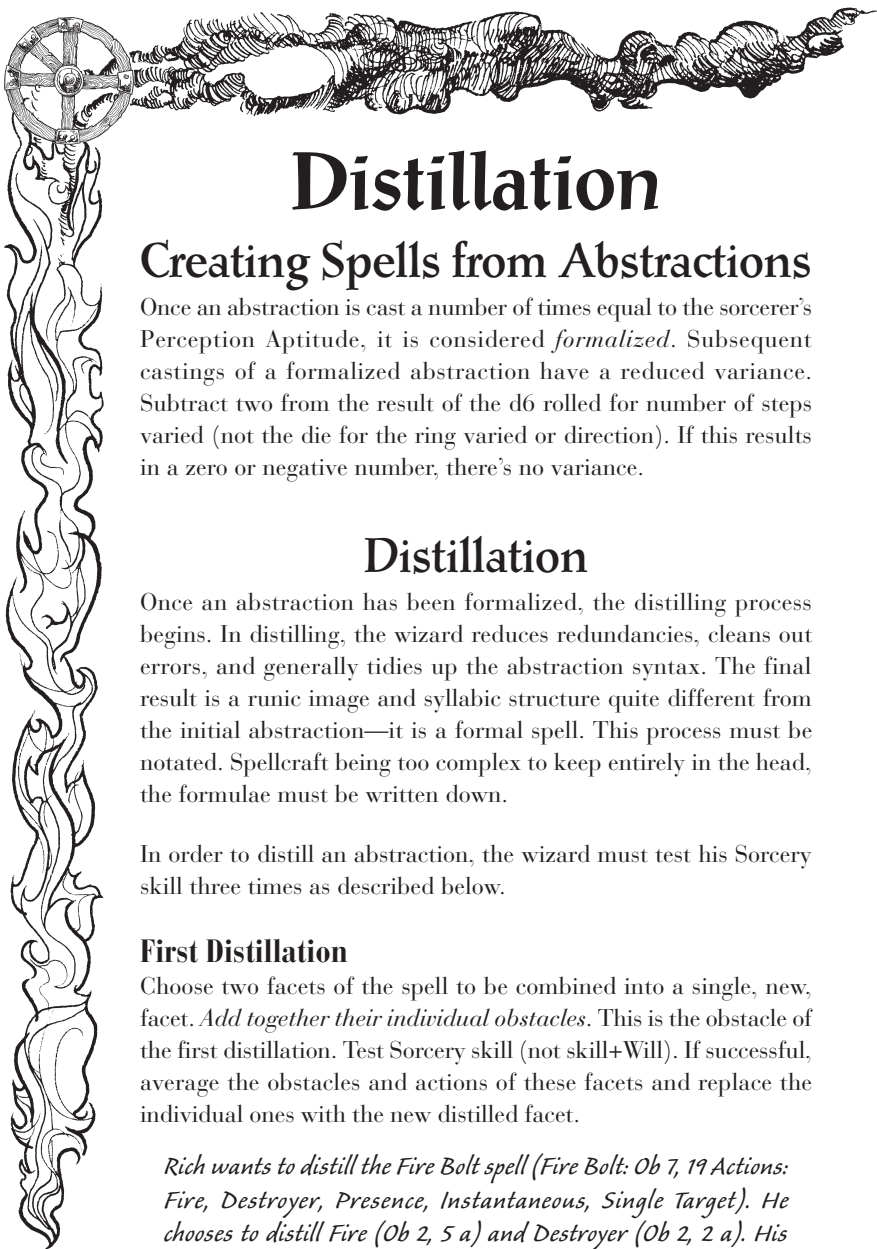
Distillation

Creating Spells from Abstractions

Once an abstraction is cast a number of times equal to the sorcerer's Perception Aptitude, it is considered *formalized*. Subsequent castings of a formalized abstraction have a reduced variance. Subtract two from the result of the d6 rolled for number of steps varied (not the die for the ring varied or direction). If this results in a zero or negative number, there's no variance.

Distillation

Once an abstraction has been formalized, the distilling process begins. In distilling, the wizard reduces redundancies, cleans out errors, and generally tidies up the abstraction syntax. The final result is a runic image and syllabic structure quite different from the initial abstraction—it is a formal spell. This process must be notated. Spellcraft being too complex to keep entirely in the head, the formulae must be written down.

In order to distill an abstraction, the wizard must test his Sorcery skill three times as described below.

First Distillation

Choose two facets of the spell to be combined into a single, new, facet. *Add together their individual obstacles*. This is the obstacle of the first distillation. Test Sorcery skill (not skill+Will). If successful, average the obstacles and actions of these facets and replace the individual ones with the new distilled facet.

> Rich wants to distill the Fire Bolt spell (Fire Bolt: Ob 7, 19 Actions: Fire, Destroyer, Presence, Instantaneous, Single Target). He chooses to distill Fire (Ob 2, 5 a) and Destroyer (Ob 2, 2 a). His Sorcery skill test obstacle is 4. If he is successful, his abstraction will become: Fire-Destroyer (now Ob 2, 3.5 a), Presence (Ob 1, 2 a), Instantaneous (Ob 0, 1 a), Single Target (Ob 1, 2 a)—Ob 4, 9 (8.5 rounded up) actions.

Always round mathematically when averaging the numbers in distillation. This test takes months equal to the obstacle minus 10% per extra success.

Second Distillation

Second distillation is much the same as the first. The wizard chooses two (undistilled) facets of the spell, combines them, and then tests his Sorcery skill against this obstacle. A successful test means the two facets are "averaged" to create a new, unique facet.

> *For second distillation, Rich merges the Presence and Single Target facets: Ob 1, 2 a plus Ob 1, 2 a is an Ob 2 Sorcery test. And it distills to Ob 1, 2 a. The current casting obstacle for the spell would be Fire-Destroyer Ob 2, 3.5 a, Presence-Single Target Ob 1, 2 a plus Instantaneous Ob 0, 1 a: Ob 3, 7 a.*

Finalization

After the spell has been reduced to three facets—two conglomerate and one raw—the sorcerer may make one last attempt to squeeze the spell down into a tighter, more efficient ball. The process is the same as above, except the erstwhile sorcerer now combines the three remaining facets of the abstraction/distillation. Add together the base obstacles of the remaining facets. This is the obstacle of the Sorcery skill test. *If the test is successful*, *divide the distillation obstacle and actions by two* (do not average the three numbers). This is the new and final spell obstacle.

> *To finalize his Fire-Bolt spell, Rich combines all three remaining facets— Ob 2 + Ob 1 + Ob 0—an Ob 3 Sorcery test.*
>
> *The test is successful and the final product yields: Fire Bolt! (Fire-Destroyer-Presence-Instant-Single-Target)—Ob 2, 3 actions. Effect: Shoots forth a tiny spiralling dart of fire from the caster at character of his choosing within his Presence. The character subsequently bursts into flames taking Damaging Effect, +1 Power, +1 per extra success. DOF/IMS.*

Distillation Notes

Each Element or Impetus facet combination nets one effect that is achieved when the spell meets its base obstacle.

Using multiple elements or impeti but taking only one effect qualifies the spell for the Minoris sigil.

Taking a secondary effect beyond what is provided by the element/ impetus combos invokes the Majoris sigil with at least +1 Ob.

Partial Distillation

A "partially" distilled abstraction may be cast by the wizard at its current level of actions and obstacle.

Failed Distillation

If any one of the three distillation Sorcery tests are failed, the wizard has made a mistake in his formula. He's put an accent where he shouldn't, left out an important sigil, or just misdrawn one of the runes. This can lead to dangerous results, as the sorcerer is rarely aware of his mistake. See below for the effects:

Failed by One or Two Successes

If the distillation sorcery test is failed by one or two successes, roll for variance on the Wheel of Magic. Use only the rings of the facets that the sorcerer was trying to distill. This variance is now written into the spell and it isn't discovered until the next time the wizard attempts to cast his abstraction. When factoring the distilled obstacle and actions, use the numbers for the facet generated on the variance. ("Hm, that was harder than it should have been. Oh well, back to work!")

Once the results are discovered, the sorcerer may toss aside this variant and return to his original formalized abstraction, or he may continue on with the distillation process using his new variant abstraction.

### Failed by More Than Two Successes—Unutterable Garbage

This round of the distillation goes very badly. The wizard just makes a mess of what he had and produces a tangled mass of unutterable garbage. The time for this test is completely wasted. The sorcerer may return to the previous stage and start again (after wasting the full number of months required for the test due to the failure).

Anima Element Distillations

When *distilling* Anima abstractions for targets other than the caster, use Ob 5 as the factored obstacle for the averaging. When distilling Anima spells for use on the caster only, use the caster's stat as the obstacle.

Anima (Ob 5, 5 a), Influencing (Ob 3, 4 a), Presence (Ob 2, 2 a), Sustained (Ob 2, 2 a), Single Target (Ob 1, 2 a). This can be distilled like so:

First Distillation: Anima (Ob 5, 5 a) + Presence (Ob 2, 2 a)/2= Anima-Presence (Ob 3.5, 3.5 actions).
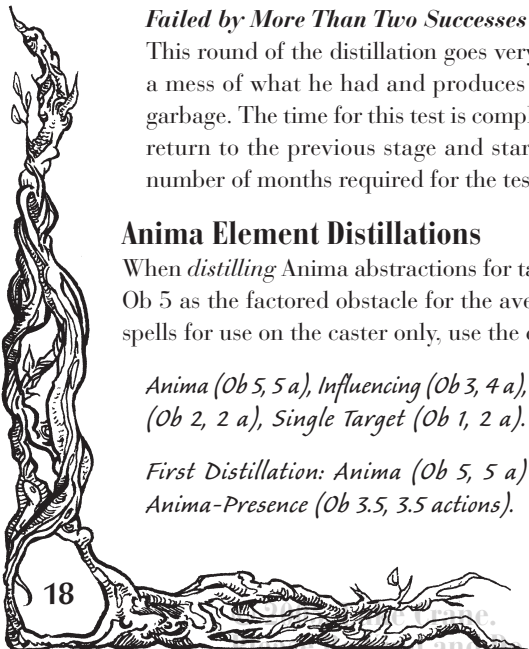
Second Distillation: Instantaneous (Ob 2, 2 a) + Influence (Ob 3, 4 a)/2= Instant-Influence! (Ob 2.5, 3 a)

Finalization: Instant-Influence (Ob 2.5, 3 a) + Anima-Presence (Ob 3.5, 3.5 actions) + Single Target (Ob 1, 2 a)/2=

Persuasion: Ob 4 (3.5 rounded up) + Will of target, 4 actions (4.25 rounded down).

The final obstacle for an Anima distillation is essentially an obstacle penalty that is tacked onto the target stat when casting.

Learning Another Wizard's Distilled Spell

The process for learning a finalized distillation is described on page 227 of the Burning Wheel under *Learning New Spells*.

Distillation Sigils

After a spell has reached the Final Distillation phase, but before the sorcerer has left the laboratory, he may add a number of sigils to the formalized abstraction in order to modify the obstacle or actions.

Cap

All abstractions are open-ended (^) spells. Using the Cap sigil allows the player to remove the ^ and reduce the casting obstacle by one. Be sure to describe the spell effect of capped spells.

> *The base Ob 4 for my distilled Persuasion spell is way too high. First, I'll set the cap on it. Since it's only got one effect that isn't related to extra successes on the dice, having the spell be open-ended is unnecessary. This drops the Ob from 4 to 3.*

Minoris Sigil

If a spell has a minor effect given its facets — Delirium Tremens as opposed to Emperor's Hand, for example — reduce the casting obstacle by one. This is subject to Peer Review.

As mentioned under Distillation notes, using multiple elements or impeti but taking only one effect qualifies the spell for the Minoris sigil.

> *I decide that to limit my influence using this spell. I can only "favorably dispose" a character toward something. I can't bad mouth or command. That qualifies it for the Minoris Sigil. The obstacle drops from 3 to 2.*

The Minoris Sigil may be applied multiple times.

> *For example, the Shards spell has the Minoris sigil applied twice. Once to reduce damage from Will to half Will, and again to reduce additional damage from 1 success per +1 Power, to two successes for +1 Power.*

Majoris Sigil

If the other players and/or the GM find that a spell has a huge, ridiculous or overblown effect, they may add up to +2 Ob and can multiply the casting actions from x10-x100.

Also, taking a secondary effect beyond what is provided by the element/impetus combos invokes the Majoris sigil with at least +1 Ob.

> *Storm of Lightning needs to do serious damage. I apply Majoris to it twice in order to raise the damage from +1 Power per extra success to +3 Power per extra success.*

The Majoris Sigil may only be applied as the GM and other, non-mage, players see fit. It may be applied multiple times.

Extension

By lengthening the spell, the mage makes it easier to parse difficult magical sentences: -1 Ob for x5 actions.

> *For my Mind Trick spell, I decide that I don't feel the need to cast this quickly, so I'll add an Extension Sigil. That takes the actions from 4 to 20 (x5), but drops the obstacle down to 1.*
>
> *Final obstacle would be 1 + Will. Not bad! This is different than the spell in the Character Burner, though. Why? Because I distilled that spell differently.*

Extensions may reduce the spell obstacle up to half (rounded up).

Compression

By shortening the spell, the mage increases its difficulty—a sorcerer must intuit many parts of the incantation himself. -50% to actions for +1 Ob.

Always subtract the percentage from the current actions and round up any fractions. So, a 10 action spell could be reduced to 5 actions for +1 Ob, then to 3 actions for another +1 Ob. Then to 2 for another +1 Ob, then to 1 action for another +1 Ob—+4 Ob total. Compression may be applied as many times as the player sees fit.
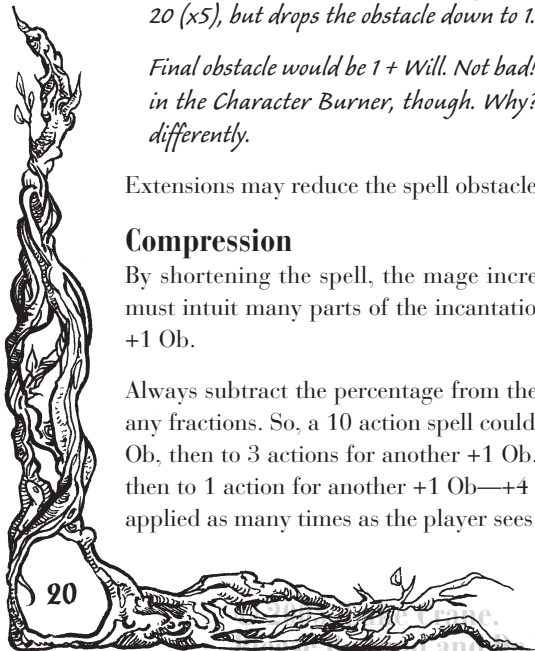
Designer's Notes

First and foremost: You must be familiar with the basic Burning Wheel magic rules and their conventions in order to use this chapter. I highly recommend playing out a couple of adventures using the basic rules in order to get used to meeting your obstacles, taking Tax, casting patiently and carefully, and dividing successes between effect and area. After you are comfortable with that, you should be able to adapt to the fluidity and complexity of the Abstraction rules.

A Note on Concept

One point that I cannot stress enough is: *The caster's concept is of paramount import in creating abstractions.* This represents the contribution of the sorcerer's Will to the variable equation. And thus the manifestation, and even the effects, of one wizard's spell will not be the same as another. Since no two thoughts are ever exactly alike, even spells of the same basic facets arrive at different outcomes, all directed by the force of Will.

"I destroy him with a blast of fire."

"I turn him to ash!"

"I breathe fire on him!"

These spells all have slightly different concepts, but largely the same result. They will use similar spell facets to get the job done. But one will detonate the target in an explosion, one will immolate the target in a burst of flame, and one will launch a tongue of fire at the target from the caster's mouth.

The Limits of this System

There are a few popular spell effects that do not or cannot exist in the scope of these rules: Teleportation, Time Control and Life Creation. These phenomena are beyond the scope of power of abstractions.

Creation Duration

Remember, when using the Creation impetus, the element created only lasts as long as the duration of the abstraction. A rock instantaneously conjured would instantly disappear. However, the impact of the rock on the soft earth, or the caster's toe, would remain just like any other natural phenomena.

A Note on Impetus

What can Fire Destroyer mean? Well, obviously that is largely up to the player's concept. As we have seen in the examples, it can mean Destroy *with* Fire. But can it mean something else? Absolutely, Fire Destroyer could be conceptually interpreted to mean Destroy Fire. The same goes for all elements and impeti.

Create Fire? Or Create *with* Fire? Influence Fire? or Influence *with* Fire—the old hypnotic campfire spell! These are just suggestions for creatively using the facet system. I am sure that you will create many more variants and abstractions.