

Arcane Cards that Might Matter Search

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It's Arcane Week, so I thought I'd switch gears a little and, rather than focusing on principles or decks, go over the cards that drive those principles and make up those decks... the Arcane cards specifically. I'm going to split the cards up into a couple of different groups, based on how the cards operate. No, I'm not going to focus on inconsistent versions of Raze; hopefully I won't miss anything important.

Cards That Do Interesting, New, or Old Stuff

Charge Across the Araba

This card might have potential in some sort of White Weenie deck. Charge Across the Araba costs five mana, which is a lot, but you might get +20/+20 out of it or something. It sets you back on land drops, but that shouldn't matter overmuch because when you pick up all your lands for the purpose of getting in lethal damage, you are intending to end the game; if you fail, it's just going to end the other way. The biggest issue, honestly, is that White Weenie decks in Standard just have more consistent boosters right now, including Glorious Anthem and Sword of Fire and Ice, which are either faster or more disgusting with threats like Skyhunter Skirmisher, or both.

Ideas Unbound

This card offers some absurdly powerful options. It is one more mana than Ancestral Recall with much the same power. That said, the only application that really sticks in *my* mind is to not have three cards in your hand at the end of the turn, spending them all cheaply, but I'm sure that's not the only possible one... I'm just an aggressive theorist. Ideas Unbound probably also has application as a pure "dig" card, best because of its mana cost, but is competing with Peer Through Depths and even Thirst for Knowledge there. It's probably great in Extended (think Roar of the Wurm), but lacks a home in Standard at present, as far as I can see. Maybe when *Ninth Edition* comes online we'll be able to give this card a new home.

Reweave

Reweave is a card that doesn't see enough play. I like it because it can do a lot of different things surprisingly well. Obviously you are going to want to splice it onto something cheaper because six mana is an awful lot to get the effect only once, but Reweave's versatility hasn't been exaggerated (mostly because no one is telling the tales).

My favorite Reweave story ever comes from the recent PT Philadelphia. Frank "Karsten Affinity" Karsten was crossing the Red Zone with a Samurai of the Pale Curtain and Legendary 8.5 Tails. His opponent, Tsuyoshi "Resident Genius" Fujita aimed Reweave at the Samurai of the Pale Curtain, turning over... 8.5 Tails. This Reckless Spite-like play was made all the more impressive when Fujita set up double Keiga, the Tide Star to steal Frank's remaining board the next turn, a play that would have been impossible with the Fox Samurai still in play.



In Standard, Reweave can play havoc with a Tooth and Nail player's board. Not only can it undo the UrzaTron, but the crafty blue mage can use this card to dodge a Reap and Sow.

Shifting Borders

This card seems a little slow to me. The original was also slow, but we had Thawing Glaciers and Undiscovered Paradise for unfair trades back then. Today we need to keep an *extra* mana open, on top of the additional mana cost, and potentially the Splice primary, which adds up to quite a bit if you're trying to fight the UrzaTron. On the other hand, a long game Red Deck based on Boseiju, Who Shelters All is probably vulnerable to Shifting Borders on defense, just because its kill takes so long to actually kill the other guy.

Shining Shoal

The second best Shoal in Standard, Shining Shoal probably isn't good enough for Tier One. Best against Red, Shining Shoal looks pretty silly against Arc-Slogger, meaning that despite its potential -- and quite possible presence in some decks two weeks from now -- the likelihood of it mattering to you probably isn't high.

Dear WotC,

Thank you for creating "The Stack."

-Arc-Slogger

Sickening Shoal

The best Shoal in Standard found its way into the most recent PT Winning [*Kamigawa* Block] deck. Early on, we thought that this card would be a big player for Mono-Black Control, but no such deck has emerged as of yet. Will Mono-Black sneak up on the metagame come Regionals? If it does, you can bet that Sickening Shoal will be in consideration.

Sickening Shoal gives you something to do with your redundant Legendary Creatures, and is a great defender against opponents who spend a lot of early game resources to get out quick Arc-Sloggers and other big threats. Sickening Shoal's alternate mana cost also lets a Death Cloud player void his hand so as to set up the perfect Pox without leaving anything on the other side of the board or being forced to actually discard himself.

Cards That Do Exactly the Same Stuff As Other Cards:

Consuming Vortex

Consuming Vortex is very close to a Tier One card. The problem with it is that, as a card that does exactly the same thing as other cards, it is currently out-classed by both Boomerang and Echoing Truth. Boomerang can break up the UrzaTron -- if only temporarily -- while serving as passable creature defense, whereas Echoing Truth is just a fantastic defense card, one of the best against Beacon of Creation, despite the fact that it can't save you from a Blinkmoth Nexus. Look for Consuming Vortex to start mattering at Champs next year... Either then, or whenever a dedicated Splice deck emerges in Standard.

Glacial Ray

Much like Consuming Vortex, Glacial Ray is a fine card that happens to be competing for space with a superior *Mirrodin* Block option at present. I think that Magma Jet is better than



Sensei's Divining Top at library manipulation and automatically include it in even splash Red Decks; in the absence of a dedicated Splice control deck, Glacial Ray just doesn't have that kind of status.

Murmurs from Beyond

This is a card that I really like. I can see it beating Inspiration and Thirst for Knowledge for space in many builds of Blue Control, in fact. The main reason to run Thirst for Knowledge over Inspiration at all is its mana cost, as Inspiration has the superior effect most of the time... but you don't always have the extra mana to get going. Many Blue Control decks just want bulk card advantage rather than selection, and Murmurs from Beyond provides that at a cheaper cost than Inspiration. It is more consistent than Thirst for Knowledge and less clunky (in Blue Control) than Gifts Ungiven. Sure, you'll never get your Vedalken Shackles unless you either don't need it or turn over two, but the ability to counter while generating card advantage and never missing a land drop can buy you the time you need to establish control without it.

Soulless Revival

It won the Pro Tour. Soulless Revival's main enemy in Standard is Molten Rain. Unfortunately a disproportionate number of decks express poor sportsmanship with precisely that card.

Sunder from Within

Ponza players seem willing to play Demolish. Sunder from Within is not really any worse in a straight Red Deck, and can set up new incentives for Glacial Ray Splice. This seems perfectly reasonable to me, once you've made the conceptual leap that it's okay to play Standard Ponza, that is.

Wear Away

This card is just better than Naturalize in most Standard decks. It isn't hugely better, but the fact that you can Splice it onto cards you are playing anyway -- particularly those at the end of this article, let's say -- means that running Naturalize in a 22-23 Forest deck is just foolish.

Cards That Do Stuff Poorly, But What Are You Going to Do, Really?

Reach Through Mists

No one is going to play The Unspeakable combo, but Reach Through Mists has the cachet of being one mana. It's not a particularly good cantrip, but its low cost makes Reach Through Mists a decent inclusion in a deck designed to flip Erayo, Soratami Ascendant.

Terashi's Grasp

I once saw a player I greatly respect trying to fight Vedalken Shackles with this card; it was quite sad. The net effect of Terashi's Grasp makes it powerful, and in a sense, it is a good answer to cards like Umezawa's Jitte or Sword of Light and Shadow. It is also versatile in the same way that encourages some Green mages to play Creeping Mold despite the presence of much more efficient hate cards. On the other hand, Terashi's Grasp is both too expensive and too slow to be actually *good* in the same way that we say the less splashy Annul or even Shatter are. Some decks have to play Terashi's Grasp because they can't fit Naturalize... but don't expect those decks to actually be able to answer the key artifacts they need to destroy with any kind of regularity; this is more of a necessary evil in its color.



Through the Breach

It was in Fujita's Extended deck, which makes this card pretty exciting; the question is whether or not there is a decent Standard application. I haven't seen any deck lists in the Top 8s as of yet, but *Saviors of Kamigawa* provides some real incentives in the way of Iname as One and particularly Homura, Human Ascendant, which is in-color and doesn't ask you to do any particularly crazy stuff.

Cards That Do Stuff Well

Ethereal Haze

In a slightly different environment, there would be a real incentive to a Standard Isochron Scepter control deck featuring this card in the Orim's Chant position. Unfortunately, half the decks in the format can easily answer that combination, or just ignore it with a bunch of Fireballs. That said, Ethereal Haze is a powerful card that can be very effective against Big Turn plays such as Rude Awakening and quite surprising in race situations. This card's pedigree comes in large part from the reallocation of the Color Pie... I mean where else are you going to go for this kind of damage prevention effect?

Death Denied

Death Denied seems like a strong card without a home to me. It has Brangeyser-level power, given the right pitch, but no deck really. The only archetype that can really use it in Standard doesn't plan to have a lot of creatures in the graveyard so much as in hand, so not a lot of Death is going to get Denied. That said, this card is potentially superb in any match-up where you can expect a lot of trading (say black weenie v. a Red Deck with burn after boards), creating a late-game surge of card advantage to tip the scales. If you've ever gotten wrecked by this card in *Saviors of Kamigawa* draft, think about the potential recoup applied to constructed attrition.

Rend Flesh

This card is basically Terminate, albeit slightly more expensive. I thought Rend Flesh was good enough to play in Extended, but Standard is a world where the opponent's Iwamori is better dealt with via Terror and his Arashi isn't going to get hit anyway. Rend Flesh is a very solid sideboard card nonetheless, filling exactly the hole that you don't anticipate with your new control deck.

Cards That Do Stuff Really Well (i.e. Cards People Might Play)

Cranial Extraction

Up until Terry Soh's Troll and Nail, Tooth and Nail adherents quaked in fear of this card. Much faster than the typical UrzaTron, Cranial Extraction can take the teeth right out of the format's leading deck before it is anywhere near nine mana. Some players even said that the proper defense was a good offense, playing Cranial Extraction in their own sideboards for no other reason than to pre-empt the other guy's disruptive sorcery so they could get off their late game entwines. One of the best cards ever printed against combination decks, Cranial Extraction has applications as disparate as decking a creature-poor control deck to removing the only card that scares you at all -- ironically a 2/2 for four mana -- from your White Weenie opponent's arsenal.

Cranial Extraction is interesting in the sense that it sharply divides the competitive **Magic** community. Is this card good at all? It has no effect on the board, and generally doesn't do anything to hamper the hand. Many times players miss entirely because they put their opponents on the wrong deck. I tend to include Cranial Extraction in decks that can otherwise ensure that they will win the long game,



using it to remove one key component from the other guy's deck, the only threat that might otherwise impair the ability to take control.

Kodama's Reach

The consensus second-best card in all of *Kamigawa* Block Constructed is also far and away the best Arcane spell available in Standard. Kodama's Reach was originally held in check by the speed of Affinity, but in today's much slower Standard, players have time to use this card to generate card advantage and to shuffle up with Sensei's Divining Top. It is the reason that otherwise mono-Green decks can reliably play Cranial Extraction and sideboard Terror. It is part of the engine that enables 3-, 4-, or even 5-color Green decks with sunburst features. Most recently, Kodama's Reach has given Tooth and Nail -- notably Troll and Nail -- decks the defensive weapon they needed to protect their expensive namesake. Previously a single Molten Rain could be enough to beat Tooth and Nail, whereas a Sowing Salt would set up a foregone conclusion. With Kodama's Reach in the mix, Tooth and Nail can now rely on a secondary mana engine to win the game if the UrzaTron fails. This card makes the deck better against general land destruction, more resistant to Ponza, and slightly more consistent; it also provides some otherwise absent card advantage in the pre-Tooth and Nail stages of the game.



And there you have the Arcane Cards that Might Matter. You will definitely have to beat a couple of these cards if you want to succeed at Regionals, so build your threats around that knowledge.

Next week: 'Twas the Week Before Regionals...

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