

EdgeWork

Atto-Ubica and more!



The Underground,

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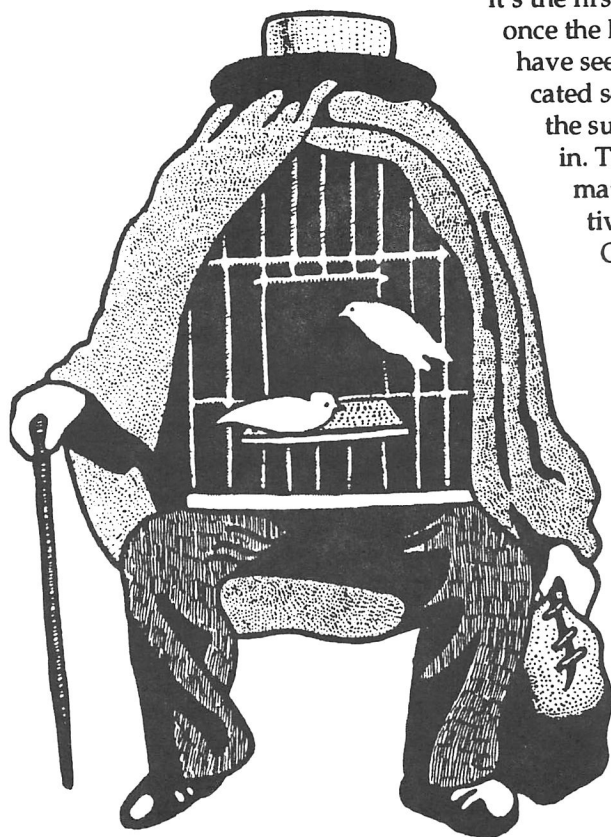
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Kaput Meantime

Every editor deserves an editorial and I guess this is mine. Herein I let you, the reader, know about the goals of this 'zine and the material in this issue. Also, I espouse my gaming philosophy and other pap like that.

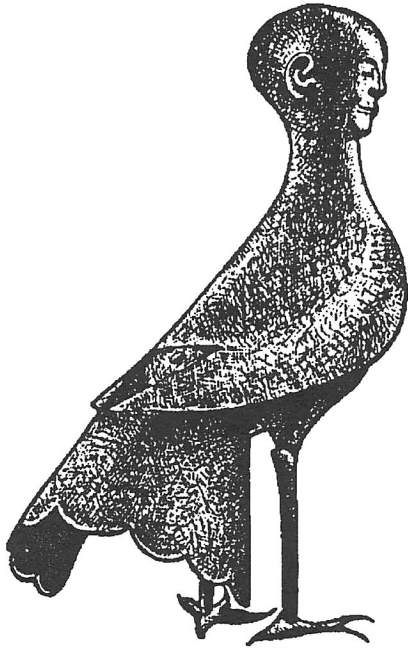


The first goal of *EdgeWork* is to provide material for the game *Over the Edge*. This will be the easiest goal to achieve. Already, I'm receiving trickles of submissions and enthusiastic letters. One thing that doesn't look like it

will be a problem is coming up with material. This issue may be a little light, but that's just because it's the first issue. I'm sure that once the loyal OTE players have seen a magazine dedicated solely to their game, the submissions will flood in. The focus of this material will be "alternatives" to the standard OTE products. Atlas Games has a certain vision of how Al Amarja works and the types of things that will be profitable and useful as supplements to the rules. I don't necessarily share the same view as Atlas Games and will strive to present information that would otherwise be unavailable to the people who play OTE. See page 3 for submission address.

The second, and perhaps most important, goal of this fanzine is to provide an open, unbiased opinion forum for OTE and its supporting material. We've all seen the house organs that dote on their parent company's games. If there is one thing this hobby doesn't need, it's another *Dragon* or *White Dwarf*. Even though Atlas Games is providing a good deal of support for *EdgeWork*, I alone hold editorial control. John Nephew never gets his grimy little hands on the electronic version of this publication and has no power to edit or control its content. This helps us prevent the kind of in-breeding that is evident at some other game companies and keep a fresh perspective on the products that are being produced. If I like a product and can recommend it, I'll do so. If I don't like something produced by Atlas Games or think that it's a rip off, I'll say that too. I hope that this will foster attitudes that will help me accomplish the third goal of *EdgeWork*.

My third goal is to promote participation in the development of OTE. Jonathan Tweet and Robin Laws are bright, creative people. They have, however, finite limitations on their imaginations and resources. It would be impossible for them to come up with everything that the gaming public wants to know about Al Amarja. What they don't have the imagination or time to produce, you, the gamer, have had to make up. Well, I don't see why all of us should have to make up all the bits every time we want something new. Hey, I've got a real job and not enough time to think up new stuff for my players. If I can steal a good idea from the pages of *EdgeWork*, you can bet I'll do it. It is my belief that by involv-



ing all of us in an exchange of ideas, the game as a whole will benefit.

None of these goals can be accomplished without support from you, the reader. If you don't buy *EdgeWork* and you don't contribute to *EdgeWork*, then the 'zine is going to die and, eventually, so will the game we all play. Now I'm not saying that

you should lay the kind of shameless devotion on *EdgeWork* that I despise in other contexts and I'm not saying that everyone has to write the kind of stuff that Jonathan Tweet does. What I do expect is a little bit of participation. Tell someone you read *EdgeWork* and what, if anything, you liked about it. Come up with a copyright-free piece of art and mail it to me. Draw something yourself. Drop me the description of your favorite character or favorite hangout. Hell, just drop me a postcard saying you hated everything in this premiere issue! Without feedback, I'll never know if you care that this rag continues.

Shameless groveling

This is as good a place as any to thank John Nephew and Atlas Games for the support provided to this publication. Atlas Games is putting up the hard cash to print and distribute this rag. (I receive a percentage of sales for my efforts.) Even though *EdgeWork* will probably lose money for a some time, John is willing to produce the fanzine because he believes in the

goals I've set out above. He'll even let me call him an asshole in print if he believes it will support the game. Most importantly, John's not interested in producing a house organ. He realizes that a fresh look at his product will keep his production top notch. (Sure he's a capitalist pig and only wants *EdgeWork* to prosper so that he can sell more games, but you can hardly blame him, right?) Furthermore, there are a lot of ideas out there that he simply can't afford to get to. So *EdgeWork* provides a place for useful, interesting information to be published even if it doesn't fit into Atlas Games' production plans.

A starting point

I'm not sure that "true confessions" are a good place to start a new enterprise but here goes: I don't know all that much about OTE. Sure I've read the rule book, I've even run a few games. I've created a number of characters and led the uninitiated through the Edge. But I couldn't tell you a lot about Al Amarja. Which barrio is closest to the airport? What is the protection service in Great Men? What are the names of all the plazas?

Does this lack of knowledge make running OTE more difficult? Yes. Impossible? No. Fortunately, the OTE rulebook has a decent index and I can find information

Fortunately, many things on Al Amarja are supposed to be secret and confusing. If I screw them up one session, I can correct myself the next without falling out of the system.

with a minimal amount of flipping through pages. Furthermore, it isn't the rules that I have to look up; they are pretty easy to remember. If I don't recall a rule I just refer to the 1-page rule summary. Still, I'm sure that my players aren't getting the same amount of "Al Amarja flavor" that others might be able to give them.

I'm also sure that I'm not alone. Jonathan Tweet put together a believable, intricate and wonderful setting. In doing so, he stepped beyond what I, and those like me, can grasp quickly. Fortunately, many things on Al Amarja are supposed to be secret and confusing. If I screw them up one session, I can correct myself the next without falling out of the system. Furthermore, the background for OTE allows, even encourages, the addition of strange stuff from any of a variety of sources. It also isn't real concrete; by that I mean that if I change a small detail (say put Sad Mary's in the Plaza of Science) it isn't going to bring the whole world down.

So where do I, a veritable neophyte, get off producing a 'zine like *EdgeWork*? Well, first of all, I'm willing and able to do it and was the first person to put something concrete in front of John Nephew's face. Secondly, by not knowing much about the game, I don't bring any prejudices to the production. If anything, I'm closer to "Joe Gamer" than people who have immersed themselves in OTE. And finally, what better way to become more familiar with OTE? The demands of editing the material that arrives on my desk to make it interesting and consistent with material that already exists will demand that I learn more about the game.

But what does all of this do for you? Given OTE's relative youth in the gaming marketplace, I imagine that many of you are in the same

boat that I am. You are intrigued by the game and its setting. Perhaps you are enchanted by some small part of Al Amarja and eager to learn more. If this is the case, *EdgeWork* will be offering you a guide into the mists of Al Amarja. If you've read the rule book and know that there just *has to be* something more on the island, something you just haven't seen yet, *EdgeWork* will be where you find it. By presenting additional background, this 'zine will give you the information you hunger for.

Additionally, *EdgeWork* will foster some discussion about the game. If you have a game problem, write a Letter of Comment (LoC) and I'm sure *someone* will have a possible answer for you. Want to see OTE develop in a certain way, or worried about the way it seems to be developing? Let the rest of the OTE community and Atlas Games know by writing to *EdgeWork*. This is your fanzine as much as it is mine, let me know what you want to see.

In this issue

Our premier issue proudly includes work by OTE author, Jonathan Tweet. He reveals material cut from the original OTE manuscript by an evil conspiracy that wants to suppress information about psychic and magical powers. Then yours truly introduces mass transit to The Edge. Also in this issue: An introduction to Alto-Ubica and Alice at Directory Inquiries.

I hope you enjoy *EdgeWork* as much as I enjoy putting it together. Be sure to write me a Letter of Comment (LoC) and tell me what you think. That address again is Peter Hentges, 1055 SE 26 Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55414. Or you can send e-mail to: peter.hentges@cool.vortech.com

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Origin of fringe powers

Jonathan Tweet takes a look at where the ability to read thoughts, move objects with your mind, produce soap bubbles on command and all those other powerful psychic or magic traits come from.

I originally aimed at making Over the Edge 192 pages long, but it went 25% over, and that was after we made some painful cuts. One painful cut was the loss of an in-depth look at the source of fringe powers, which got mashed into a paragraph in the final version. I think this material is important because understanding the basic functions of fringe powers helps a GM rule on what specific characters can and cannot do.

Illusory reality explanation

Human beings are illusory manifestations of real beings. We live in a world of illusion, and we obey the illusory laws of the world simply because we *think* we have to. There is no limit to what we can do, as the entire concept of "limits" make sense only in the context of the false, illusory world that we think we know through the senses. Whenever anyone "learns" something, all they are doing is accepting the fact that they can do something that they couldn't do

before (when actually we've always been able to do anything and everything). When you learn to play basketball, for instance, all you are doing is performing a ritual that allows you to believe that you can now play basketball. Someone who thinks they can learn it easily often does pick it up quickly, while someone who sees himself as clumsy will have a hard time learning to play, because he doesn't believe he can.

The same applies, more radically, to learning to do things that most people would regard as extraordinary or even impossible. Historically, wizards have used elaborate initiations, obtuse philosophies, and bizarre rituals to fool apprentices into believing that they can do the miraculous. The apprentice could have done the miraculous right from the start if they didn't buy into false laws of the illusory world they apparently "see" around them. Once the apprentice has gone through the ceremonies and studied the theories, he is then able to believe he can work magic, and viola, he can.

In the modern day, these magical trappings are less effective in encouraging someone to accept that they can do the impossible. To fit the times, teachers use

oriental mysticism, psychoactive drugs, or irrational "mind training" to convince neophytes that they can do the impossible. Still, it's the same scam, teaching

Once the apprentice has gone through the ceremonies and studied the theories, he is then able to believe he can work magic.



someone to do the impossible when they were capable of it all along.

Of course, there are genuine teachers who trick their students at first, but their ultimate goal is to show the student that it is only the world view, the acceptance of false illusory laws, that keeps one from doing anything they want, possible or not. And the fact of the matter is that without some sort of ritual or other justification, very few people can accept the fact that they can do the miraculous.

Occasionally regular people will do the miraculous, such as heal themselves of cancer or lift crashed cars off their injured relatives. These acts are possible because, at an unconscious level, they decide it is worth challenging their own understanding of the possible to achieve the impossible. Scientists, defending their paradigm, rush to the scene of these miracles and invent "rational" explanations. Often the people themselves attribute the "impossible" act to some force other than themselves, like God or luck. The explanations are simply excuses that allow them and those who believe in them to avoid questioning the nature of reality and possibility.

Why is everyone so caught up in illusion? Most beings are not, but then they are not to be found in the world as we know it. The world that we identify as the "material universe" is a small, perverse exception to the rule of the universe: infinite potential realized in infinite diversity. Perhaps those found here are just afraid of possibility. Perhaps the "material world" is a game played by those twisted spirits that fear and distrust themselves, beings that do not want to have more power for fear of the damage they would do. As the years go by, however, I have come to believe that there is a conspiracy of miracle-workers who are working

like mad to keep the rest of humanity in ignorance. Anyone who goes public with psychic or magical powers is a target. Since the members of this conspiracy alone can practice miracle-working in a community of intelligent thought, they are more than a match for the occasional accidental miracle-worker who thinks he can make a quick buck by making his powers public.

Mystic energy explanation

Guiding the physical world is a parapsychical energy called ch'i (Chinese) or ki (Japanese). Ch'i flows around the universe in a semi-conscious way. The flow of ch'i guides everything from the movement of the stars and galaxies to the dance of electrons and smaller particles. The movement of ch'i tends to move everything in the universe into harmony. This is not to say that the ch'i seeks out stable or repetitive patterns. Ch'i, like life itself, moves in ways that few people can understand. Like most forms of energy, ch'i isn't visible and isn't perceived by the majority of people. Through accident or training it is possible to become aware of the ch'i that flows around you. Once you recognize the ch'i that flows through the universe (and through each individual) you quickly learn that a human being's conscious thought can direct the ch'i in limited ways.

It is ch'i that guided the evolution of human beings and that guides the development of individual humans from zygote to adult. Therefore, the energy of the ch'i is directed along paths that can have tremendous momentum. To dramatically change the paths of the ch'i can take monumental effort. The masters who teach you to recognize the ch'i and use it also teach you how to live in harmony

with the ch'i. Directly opposing the ch'i is futile and self-destructive; you would simply be crushed by the weight of the universe moving against you. As the martial arts teach you to use your opponent's momentum to cause greater effects, so the masters of ch'i teach you to follow the power of the ch'i to achieve greater tasks.

For most, the process of learning to perceive ch'i and manipulate it is long and difficult. For centuries in the East the masters have known the power and use of ch'i. Only through years of study have they been able to achieve the kind of quiet power that is evident in the ancient masters of painting, music or the martial arts. Everyone, however, has the ability to manipulate the ch'i and on a subconscious level, every person does. Only through conscious effort can the ch'i be manipulated consistently.

There are those that learn to manipulate ch'i spontaneously and quickly. Often the effects they can achieve appear to be far greater than those of ancient masters. This quick power has its price, however. The movement of the ch'i tends towards harmony. Those that use the ch'i to oppose the natural harmony may enjoy early success

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but will eventually fall to ruin as the ch'i resets itself to its natural pathways.

If the ch'i is so easily manipulated, why doesn't everyone manifest a fringe talent? One explanation is that all talents are merely expressions of the ch'i. While you may think that it is training, a quick eye and constant practice that make you a good knife fighter, the reality is that you are manipulating ch'i unconsciously to win knife fights. Ironically, you are probably also manipulating the ch'i to cause situations that lead to knife fights! Unlike phony practitioners who hide their lack of knowledge behind the veil of "mystic secrets," masters of ch'i glibly explain the use and power of their knowledge. Unfortunately, others don't want this information widely known and have manipulated world cultures to the point that most people simply can't accept the reality of ch'i.

Psychic explanation

Everyone is a little psychic, capable of exerting mental will outside their bodies to some effect. The manner of this effect is, in some ways, governed by the will itself. Psychic abilities include the reception and transmission of thoughts, the ability to read the past and future, and the ability to effect matter with the power of the mind alone. Some few exceptional individuals develop psychic abilities spontaneously, sometimes through traumatic experiences, most though, require some training.

There are many people willing to provide such training. Charlatans and con artists prey upon the lonely and powerless, offering them hope by telling them they are somehow different than everyone else. Seminars on how to unlock your psychic potential abound. Whether you want to contact your "inner child," get in touch with your primitive sexuality, awaken knowledge of your extraterrestrial heritage or just learn the secrets of manipulating people, there is someone willing to teach you for just \$150 a day.

Though most of the seminars and schools that offer the opportunity to learn psychic powers are phony, there are some that accomplish what they purport. Such schools are difficult to weed out of the mass of charlatans. Further complicating the process is the fact that completely phony methods can awaken true psychic power! While it is generally unlikely that someone who is only trying to take your money will provide the psychic abilities advertised, a person believing in the process can actually awaken psychic abilities through the effort of their own will.

Because of the disinformation campaign sponsored by the global conspiracies, most people don't

believe that psychic powers are "real." Even those that manifest these powers are subject to this belief and often suppress their abilities. Another aspect of this disinformation is the "categorizing" of psychic powers. Some psychics foretell the future but believe they are incapable of healing while others read minds but don't believe they can move objects with their will. In reality, all psychically aware individuals have the capability of performing all of these acts and more.

For millennia before writing was invented every human was capable of learning to read and write, so everyone today is capable of developing psychic powers. The problem is that we haven't discovered a reliable system for talking about or teaching these powers. But imagine what a world we'll live in when such a system is invented. If you think the alphabet changed the world, imagine what universal psychic powers will do!

Naturalist explanation

Others may call these powers "supernatural" or "psychic," but they are merely the natural func-

Just as for millennia before writing was invented every human was capable of learning to read and write, so everyone today is capable of developing psychic powers.

tioning of a healthy mind and body. But in today's environment—with pollutants in everything we eat drink, and breathe; with countless petty worries about balancing checkbooks and wearing clothes of the right style; of conformity and mediocrity, only a very few are as healthy and capable as they should be. Any development of a fringe power requires some sort of change to a healthier lifestyle, either physically, mentally, or both.

Primarily, the problem is mental. In school we are all taught to make our brains mimic calculators and dictionaries, but we are not taught to control the mind itself, to regulate emotions, focus thoughts, or to raise the mind to a plain beyond thought itself. Those who have these so-called "psychic" powers have the advantage of being healthy individuals in a sick world.

To gain access to those abilities dulled by pollution of the body and mind, an individual would have to start fresh. A purifying regimen of fasts, macrobiotic foods and meditation can, over time, clean out the system and make the body a blank slate for the formation of fringe powers. The form that the power takes depends upon the individual and the natural abilities that have lain dormant for so long.

The media culture constantly bombards us with images and information about what we "need," "want," and "have." Breaking through the mental blocks formed by advertising, education and other social pressures to release the natural abilities of the individual is not a task taken lightly. If someone didn't want these powers repressed, would those social pressures be so pervasive?



Alto-Ubica

Bruce Turner offers this description of a new "organization" to add to your OTE Series. If your players aren't confused enough with the political climate on The Edge, throw Alto-Ubica at them and watch them squirm!

Type: Evasive country

Rep: No one knows where they come from, and no one understands what they do once they get here.

Brief: The Country that Isn't There, Alto-Ubica seems to have an unusual obsession with plotting. Their influence extends across the world, but their goals often appear contradictory. Even worse, the country appears on no maps, and even Alto-Ubicans are rather vague about how they get home. The most visible representative of the nation is the Alto-Ubican Legate, an office that seems to drive its holders mad on a regular basis.

Allies: Matrix Corporation, Arguss

Enemies: rogue Alto-Ubican Legates, anyone messed up in their schemes

There are rumors that no living human knows the physical location of Alto-Ubica. These rumors are almost certainly untrue, but they may as well not be. Though Alto-Ubican agents can be found poking their sticky little fingers into plots all across the world, the

exact location of their homeland remains unclear. The Matrix Corporation, a shadowy biotech corporation able to use fringe science to clone human bodies, is rumored to be headquartered in Alto-Ubica, but Matrix executives have always been unavailable for comment. Most Alto-Ubican citizens encountered abroad appear faintly Slavic, though some look African. All of them don't seem to know how to get home. In some respects, Alto-Ubica is like Faerie: you can't find it if you're looking for it, but if you try running from it, you'll end up in the Capital City.

The Alto-Ubican Legate is the only visible arm of the Alto-Ubican government (most Alto-Ubican agents receive their orders from other agents, blind mail drops, or shadowy voices on the telephone). She generally tours the world, setting up offices under various blinds, and attempting to represent the interests of the Alto-Ubican people. The Legate is also apparently able to travel to Alto-Ubica at will, though the exact means are unclear. This ability seems to inflict severe strain upon the Legates, as they go insane and turn rogue with some regularity.

The latest in a long string of Legates, Kapovic is starting to feel the strain of his job. Most Alto-Ubicans have no idea how to return to their home, and he has begun to worry that he might forget as well....

The Alto-Ubicans are also known to have an extensive computer network, watched over by a powerful Artificial Intelligence called Arguss. As with the rest of the country, the details of the network's construction and the physical locations of the computers comprising it are unknown. Arguss has proven to be able to deflect most inquiries, though it allows some through with little difficulty for reasons of its own.

The Secret

Alto-Ubica is largely a virtual nation. It was originally a small Duchy in the Balkans, ruled by an extraordinarily secretive, extraordinarily grasping Duke. All that remains of it physically are several small hamlets and villages scattered throughout the Balkans and sub-Saharan Africa (the legacy of the old Duke's colonial ambitions). The *real* Alto-Ubica exists completely within its computer network as a virtual reality construct. Most Alto-Ubicans encountered in the world are computer construct personalities who have been implanted into clone bodies grown by Matrix from the DNA of the original inhabitants of the Duchy of Alto-Ubica or their descendents. Even "real" Alto-Ubicans spend much of their time floating in sensory-deprivation tanks, while living their lives in their virtual world.

Because the transition from virtual world to real world can be quite traumatic, it is only undertaken very occasionally, and is always disguised as some sort of trip. The Alto-Ubican Legates possess full knowledge of the true nature of Alto-Ubica, and are driven insane by repeated transitions between Alto-Ubica and the real world.



GMCs

Hendric Kapovic, Alto-Ubican Legate

The latest in a long string of Legates, Kapovic is starting to feel the strain of his job. Once a secretive man who could spend hours devising new ways to keep the Alto-Ubican Secret safe from the prying eyes of the world, he has lately begun to construct elaborate fantasies about the virtual Alto-Ubica. He obsessively collects tapes of old American television shows that reflect the (partially correct) idealized notions he has about Alto-Ubica (*Father Knows Best, My Three Sons, Leave It To Beaver*, etc.) He knows that most Alto-Ubicans have no idea how to return to their home, and has begun to worry that he might forget as well....

Slavic man, apparent age 58, 81 kg, greying hair, full moustache and beard.

Languages: Alto-Ubican, French, English, bits of Serbo-Croatian and several African tribal languages

Attack: 2 dice, x1 damage

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 11 (fragile)

Traits:

Alto-Ubican Secrets, 4 dice, Legate Kapovic knows encyclopedic amounts of detail about Alto-Ubica and its territories. He can spot Alto-Ubican citizens practically automatically, knows the locations of all Alto-Ubican computer centers and safehouses, and can get to Alto-Ubica (the virtual world or the real territories) whenever he wants. (Alto-Ubican diplomatic passport.)

Diplomacy, 4 dice, Legate Kapovic is an accomplished diplomat, especially adept at negotiating while never revealing any real information about the true nature of Alto-Ubica. (Dresses formally.)

Obsessed With Old American Television, Kapovic has almost created a personal religion from old American TV programs, especially those depicting an ideal father-figure, able to solve all troubles in an hour. He tends to cast himself as the father-figure. (Collects tapes of TV shows.)

Madeleine Zenabu, Alto-Ubican Assassin

Madeleine Zenabu is one of the top Alto-Ubican assassins. A classic femme fatale, she loves being around people, getting to know them, getting them to trust her, and then killing them. She exudes a natural air of vitality and ease that makes people trust her almost automatically. She is also never without a weapon (see below).

Zenabu thinks she was an orphan who survived a grueling childhood and adolescence to finally get admitted to the Alto-Ubican State Espionage School. An outside observer would notice how much her life history resembles a viciously twisted version of a Horatio Alger story (which it is).

Attractive red-haired woman of uncertain lineage, apparent age 28, 54 kg, perfectly formed ears.

Languages: Alto-Ubican, English, German

Attack: 4 dice (3 dice unarmed or w/firearms), x1.5 to x2 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 30 (resilience)



Traits:

Always Armed, No matter what the situation, Madeleine will be carrying a weapon to provide for it. She can't use this ability to arm others, and must be able to plausibly have concealed the weapons (combs concealing stilettos are a favorite). She will be able to retain weapons even after a thorough search, though a good enough searcher will doubtless uncover *some* of her arsenal. By nature, she almost never carries guns or explosives. (Plays with a knife at odd times.)

Expert Assassin, 4 dice, Madeleine is extensively trained in combat, stealth, disguise, and the myriad other arts that make a successful killer. She prefers stilettos, garottes and hatpins to guns or bare hands, but isn't picky in a pinch. (Chats glibly about famous political assassinations.)

Trustable, 3 dice, People just naturally tend to trust Madeleine, even against their better judgment. She has no compunctions about misusing this trust. (Smiles at people she doesn't know.)

Agent Toad, Alto-Ubican Agent

Agent Toad is responsible for maintaining the Alto-Ubican computer nexus in The Edge. His operations are disguised as the Asperity Union Company, an organization with no immediately visible purpose. He doesn't know it, but he is helping to maintain the virtual Alto-Ubica. He thinks he's monitoring the Alto-Ubican economy and protecting it against foreign companies' incursions.

Grotesquely fat man in a powered wheelchair, apparent age 38, 180 kg, wide lipless mouth.

Languages: Alto-Ubican, Danish, Al Amarjan patois

Attack: 1 die, x1 damage

Defense: 1 die

Hit Points: 22 (sheer mass)

Traits:

The characters obtain a hint as to the true nature of Alto-Ubica, possibly from the ravings of a far-gone Legate. Soon after, they realize that someone is following them. Then they start to disappear, one by one. One character hails a taxi, and drives off into oblivion. Another goes home for dinner and vanishes. A third walks into a sauna and never walks out....

Computer Expert, 4 dice, Agent Toad has spent his entire life with the Alto-Ubicans' computers, and by now he could reassemble and reprogram them blindfolded. (Hardware manuals kept in wheelchair carry rack.)

Economist, 3 dice, Toad is pretty good at analyzing market trends and playing the stock market, even though most of his experience comes from a fictitious economy. (Wears accountant's visor.)

Grossly Fat, 1 die, Agent Toad's addiction to junk food has synergized with his sedentary lifestyle to turn him into the blobby mass of flesh he is today. He has trouble moving without his motorized wheelchair, and rolls only one die on any physical task except those benefited by his huge, immobile mass, for which he gets three dice. Crushing someone directly beneath him or floating are good examples. (Incredibly fat.)

Uncomfortable Around People, penalty die, Agent Toad tends to prefer nice, efficient, predictable numbers to people. He takes a penalty die in any social situation. (Stammers a lot.)

Story Ideas

1) Agent Toad has a problem. A Gladstein Mover has managed to tap the AltoNet somewhere in the Edge. He doesn't know how she's gotten connected to his computer systems, but can tell that she's there because all his economic forecasts are being interfered with. He involves a technically-oriented character as a troubleshooter, to track down the tap. Little does Toad know that the Mover is busily brainwashing the entire (virtual) Alto-Ubican city of Orstgobnik. Soon after the characters start their investigation, their lives are complicated to no end by oddly faceless Alto-Ubican agents who seem to literally appear out of thin air....

2) Legate Kapovic finally goes rogue and flees to Al Amarja, Madeleine Zenabu hot on his trail. His plan is to bring his vision Alto-Ubica into the real world, starting with the Edge. He must have tools to carry out his plan, and the characters are perfectly positioned to take on the role....

3) The characters obtain a hint as to the true nature of Alto-Ubica, possibly from the ravings of a far-gone Legate. Soon after, they realize that someone is following them. Then they start to disappear, one by one. One character hails a taxi, and drives off into oblivion. Another goes home for dinner and vanishes. A third walks into a sauna and never walks out. Soon, all of the characters are gone...

The vanished characters notice nothing, at least initially. Then the one in the taxi realizes that he doesn't recognize any of the streets. The one eating dinner looks out the window and realizes that his bedroom is where his office should be. The third walks out of the sauna into a different health club. They have all been taken to Alto-Ubica....

4) An Alto-Ubican acquaintance of the characters, possibly an exchange student at D'Aubainne University, becomes homesick and is desperate to return home. He's already tried and failed to find either aircraft or ships heading to his homeland, and is becoming desperate. He asks the characters to help him petition the Alto-Ubican Legate, who is currently visiting Al Amarja....



Involuntary measure

This is planned to be an on-going column detailing new places and new faces for Al Amarja. Send in your favorite GMC or a description of the place your PCs hang out. Remember, a detailed Edge is a good Edge.

Alice at Directory Enquiries

If you pick up a telephone on the island of Al Amarja and dial 236 (DIR on the many old Bakelite phones that still exist on the island, brought in a job lot when British Telecom were updating their stock) you will reach Al Amarja Telephone and Telegraph's Directory Enquiries. Normally one of AATT's regular operators will reply. She will, like most Directory Operators the world over, be polite, efficient and bored out of her mind. ("Hell...low, AATT. Which numbah do you you requiyah?")

However, every so often you may be answered by Alice. Ahe always answers by greeting the caller by name and asking how he/she is and what she can do for them. ("Hello, Doctor Nicorell, and what can I do for you this morning? Oh, and is your back better? You should have known better than to throw that Peace Officer through the window at your age.") If anyone asks, she will tell them that here name is Alice but give no more details. ("It's company policy

not to give personal information.") She appears to be an aging maiden lady; kindly, concerned and trying to be helpful. She will chide the erring ("Now you should know better than to mix hash with alcohol at your age, Rodney!" "How did you know my name's Rodney? *Nobody knows my name's Rodney!*" "There's no need to shout, young man.") and encourage the worthy. ("Congratulations on winning the Peace Force Medal, Officer Sprogworthy!")

Alice seems to know everything that goes on throughout the Edge but only if it happens near a telephone. She will answer all questions she can that don't seem to involve hurting anyone for as long as the caller is polite and appreciative. She will cut off anyone who is rude, demanding or who overstays their welcome ("I do have other callers, you know!") and will never be heard from (by that person) again.

Obviously, Alice is a very useful Plot Device and it is a lovely sight to see a player realise that the anonymous voice at the other end of the phone knows who she is and what she's been up to. Alice can even volunteer information to people she really likes. ("I think you ought to know that the caretaker has entered your flat and is looking for your briefcase.")

Attempts to discover just who and what Alice is will be frustrated by the fact that the location of AATT's Exchange building has been declared a State Secret by Her Exaltedness, Monique D'Aubainne, Historic Liberator and Current Shepherdess of Al Amarja on the grounds that it could be a target for terrorists.

Continued on page 19.

Al Amarja Today

The only news you need to read!

Canada makes nukes! P E A C E

HALIFAX, NOVO SCOTIA: (ELPA) Sources in Canadian parliament denied today the recent discovery of nuclear weapons technology being used in Novo Scotia. On Tuesday a Halifax city garbage truck was forced to pull over and dump its cargo on the streets when smoke was seen to be emanating from the rear of the truck. The fire department made a routine sweep for radioactivity and discovered elevated levels of dangerous radiation.

Health officials quarantined the entire city today and clean-up crews were sent in by the government. Local authorities warned residents to stay in their basements and boil water before drinking. The Halifax hospital is conducting thorough screenings of all residents to check

for signs of contamination. Doctors warn that the smallest particle of deadly plutonium can lead to a lingering, cancerous death.

When asked for his opinion, ex-prime minister Brian Mulroneysaid, "Nukes, eh? If I thought we had any, I wouldn't have resigned." Other government officials were strangely silent on the issue. American border guards reacted to the news, "Them hosers was probably just tryin' to melt the ice." refering to the glacier attack that still plagues Canada.

Other nuclear powers, through ambassadors at the UN, were surprised and shocked when told about the Canadian threat. Middle Eastern ambassadors hoped that nuclear availability would lower prices.

Baffled!

In the third such incident this week, Peace Force officers responded to an alarm at the Baubles & Brilliants jewelry store in the Gold Barrio last night. Though Peace forces remained on the scene for several hours, they failed to apprehend anyone and an anonymous source confirmed that this was another crime perpetrated by the Reappearing Bandit!

The Peace Force asks anyone with information that would lead to the apprehension of this dangerous villain to call their 24-hour tip number (772102). A reward of \$500,000 is offered by the Al Amarja Jewelry Consortium for the capture of this criminal.

Brit Rail Tweet asks advice! Nephew screws up!

Union to battle practice

LONDON, ENGLAND: (NOWP) British Rail Corporation announced plans this month to practice bondage on its workers. In an effort to determine how close its maintenance workers should stand to the tracks when working with new trains whose speed reaches over 200 kph, some of its workers will be tied to posts 2 to 3 meters from the track so their reactions can be measured as the trains speed by.

Jonathan Tweet (pictured below) would like your comments on the alternate damage rule given on p. 27 of OTE. The current standard rules require subtraction and multiplication, whereas the alternate rule substitutes a die roll for that math. He's considering presenting the currently "alternate" rule as the standard rule in the future because it seems simpler. Your comments?



File illustration of the OTE author.

This is an official mea culpa from me, John Nephew, for an error in the credits of the *Players' Survival Guide*. I somehow managed to forget to credit Jay Ferm for the superb new maps of Al Amarja and the Edge that he produced and which are included in the PSG. Although Mark Frein helped edit the work, this blunder is entirely my responsibility. (I did layout and dealt with Jay, and was the last to see the book before it went to press; I should have caught it.) I extend to Jay both thanks for his fine work, and apologies for my error.

Little Scratches

Serving the community since 1940.

Want to get rich quick? Just send \$20 and a SASE to Bob Jones c/o Cesar's Hotel .

Officer, I can explain!—The Italian Rapscaillon.

Marksmen with crossbow sought for confidential employment. Low risk. 132591

Read minds after only hours of training. SOBs rack their balls to train you well. Ha ha. Call 101619

.....
I hate Total Taxi

.....
Call on Alice and she will save you!

Where have all the pretty buggies gone? There are only ugly bugs now.—Reinfield

Don't mess with the Dogfaces. Ask Bert "Stumpy" McClaine.

MZ: Time to go home, now. HK.

Rekmanda has returned! His power is ascending and his followers grow. Do not deny your selves the afterlife. Watch "Rekmandathon" 8:00 P.M. Monday nights on AXTC

.....
GNU EWE—Complete make-over, fast and CONFIDENTIAL.

.....
Aardvark—Explicate target M on the Eleventy First. Blue moonbeam is lonely. SIRRACH 14122489.—Zoner.

Why the Sunken face? I am happy a Spanish man asked me how I felt and I replied Bienvenidos. He asked for the time and I told him it was 235.—Bingo

I have a flower growing from my left ear. I think I'll have another beer.—Kimjo

Do you have difficult legal problems. Is government oppression getting you down? Do you feel that your personal liberties are in jeopardy? If any of the above statements are true and you're an Italian, then your in luck. The newly founded Sicilian Protection Agency his here to help you. Contact SPA at 230065 or visit their offices at 1 Plaza of Gold.

Sure I can levitate. But I just do it because my bed gives me a backache. Quit bothering me!

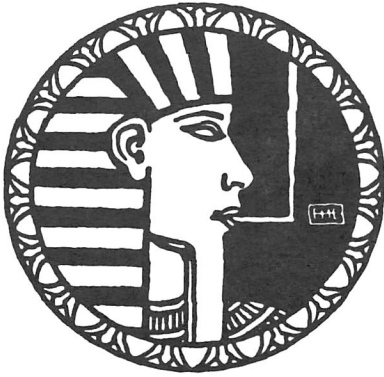
The problem with this island is that all the good P.I.s make enough money to retire after a year, and the bad ones don't survive long enough to be useful.

.....
To the inept fools at the "docks" last night. We have the device. Nyah, Nyah, Nyah.—Three Cool Guys
.....



d—Turn on debugging output. (Neither particularly interesting nor recommended.)

The Gold Line is undergoing minor repairs to assure efficient function. Please use alternate routes.



EdgeWork

Subscribe this valuable resource for *Over the Edge* today! What you do with it when you get it is *your* business....



Get the excitement of *EdgeWork* delivered to your doorstep. Enjoy *EdgeWork* in the privacy of your own home! This fanzine is a forum for all the material that may not be suitable for "mainstream" OTE but that is recognized as valuable to the masses of OTE players. While Atlas Games distributes *EdgeWork*, Peter Hentges has full, independent editorial control, giving *EdgeWork* the raw edge that simply can not come from a "house organ."

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Northfield, MN 55057.

Material planned for the next issue of *EdgeWork* includes:

- ⊗ Another copy of *Al Amarja Today*, "The only news you need to read!"
- ⊗ More fascinating new people and places to expand your vision of the Edge.
- ⊗ A letter column featuring the demented ravings of the readership!

Possible explanations for Alice

Alice is a mutant, crippled and confined to a wheelchair but able to spread her mind out along the telephone wire.

All the telephone enquiries at AATT are handled by Artificial Intelligences. Alice is an experimental program that has succeeded better than her creators know.

Alice is the Goddess of Telephones. An emerging diety, once a human telephone operator but now growing in power every time a caller thanks her for her aid. Soon perhaps someone will receive a revelation and stickers calling on the people of the world to acknowledge her will start to appear in phone-booths. If this version is true, those who are rude to Alice will never be able to dial a number correctly again but will have all their calls forwarded to a Chinese laundry in Buenos Aires.

Alice is a tulpa, growing in skill and knowledge as more and more people expect and receive her more than perfect assistance.

(Contributed by Michael Cule)

Butheina Zuhar— Palestinian Terrorist

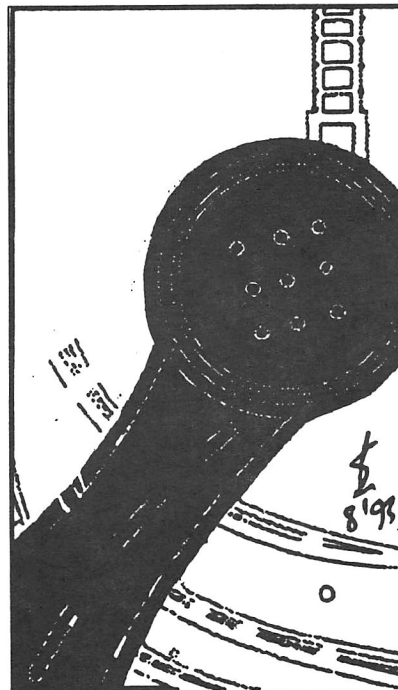
A refugee from the occupied territories in Israel, Butheina fled to the United States as a teenager. She arrived on a tourist visa, but had no intention of leaving when it expired. Life proved difficult, however, especially as tighter immigration laws in the later '80s made it more difficult for illegal aliens to find legitimate work.

Then Butheina found what seemed to be a promising job. With other young women from the Middle East, Butheina would be paid to drink and converse with businessmen and others who wanted to learn, or polish their knowledge of, Arabic. She didn't

like drinking (the Koran forbids alcohol), but the money was good and she desperately needed it.

One night a businessman with whom she'd been speaking offered her a ride home. She accepted. Once on the road, he suggested they stop by his place for one more drink. Butheina became afraid, but didn't know how to turn him down without making a scene. He took her to his condominium and raped her. The next morning he told that if she filed charges, not only would she be laughed out of court; she would find herself arrested for being an illegal alien, for working without a green card, and for prostitution. The businessman had government connections, he said, and could make sure this happened. He laughed, called her a "sand-nigger whore," and dumped her out on the street.

This disillusioning experience gave Butheina a new view on the West, and in particular its regard for women. Once she thought Western culture was "liberating;" now she realizes that the only liberty it confers is the freedom to be abused and enslaved by vice and evil men. It was a mistake for



her to forsake the Koran by drinking and having commerce with strangers. Now she knows better—but the price of this knowledge was more than any woman should pay.

Butheina has since become involved in radical Muslim groups, struggling against Western secularism and Zionism, and trying to establish strict Islamic law in the lands of Believers. She has been trained in Iran, Libya and the Sudan, and has been active in Lebanon, Jerusalem's West Bank, Egypt and Algeria.

In Butheina's eyes, this is a feminist cause, to preserve women's dignity under the Law of the Prophet. When actually enforced, it will rein in the predatory nature of men.

Al Amarja is a meeting ground and base for several Islamic terrorist cells (and plenty of non-Islamic ones!). With its libertarian (indeed, almost non-existent) immigration policy it is a welcoming shore for Palestinians and other expatriates. Butheina's missions often bring her to the Edge, where she may encounter player characters. Her cause may bring her to cooperate with or struggle against them.

Whether a sister in arms or an implacable foe, Butheina is not a character to be slighted, nor easily distracted from her chosen path.

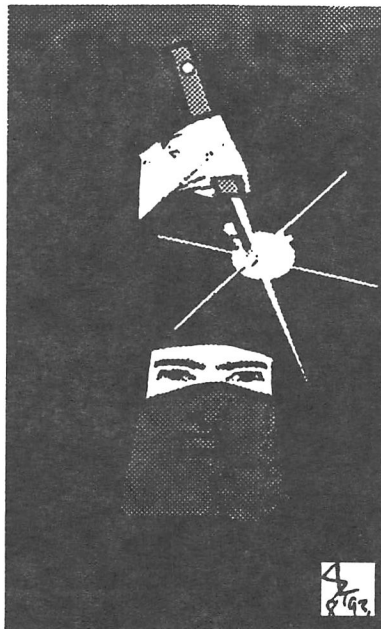
Palestinian woman, age 27, 175 cm, 60 kg, black hair, deceptively gentle, large brown eyes. Dresses in "street camo" (Western garb) on operations; otherwise prefers traditional Muslim women's garb.

Languages: Arabic, English.

Attack: 2 or 4 dice, X2 damage (knife)

Defense: 2 or 4 dice

Hit Points: 24 (resolute)



Traits

Anti-Western—Bitterly opposed to American hegemony and Western materialism. (Refers to USA as "the Great Satan".)

Devoted Muslim, 3 dice—Knows the Koran and Shari'a intimately, as well as the writings of many great Islamic thinkers from Ibn Sina to Khomeini. (Wears traditional garb except when on missions.)

Terrorist, 4 dice—Familiar with guns, knives, explosives, security systems, and basic espionage skills (eluding pursuers, debugging rooms, conducting surveillance, etc.). (Carries a concealed knife at all times.)

Good Physical Conditioning, 3 dice—Butheina follows a strict dietary regimen and exercises frequently, to maintain superior physical form. (Lean and muscular, although this is often concealed by her clothing.)

Self-Reliant, bonus die—Butheina knows she can only depend on herself. No Western men are to be trusted, and even her comrades are of dubious

value—most of them are soft and morally corrupted by the insidious and far-reaching tendrils of satanic Western culture. In a desperate situation (GM's judgement), Butheina should receive a bonus die on crucial rolls as she calls on her inner reserves on strength and faith. In effect, this works much like PCs' bonus dice. (Unshakeably calm.)

Butheina's connections on Al Amarja have been left deliberately vague. Given the background of *Over the Edge*, it is likely that whatever organization she works for is in some way infiltrated, manipulated, or dominated by some other force for which religion is one of many fronts. Her terrorist cell might unknowingly serve the Movers (for whom terrorists are a valuable tool), the Mr. LeThuys (who like the chaos and fear generated by terrorist acts), or even the Throckmortons (whose control freak nature helps them get along with almost any religion's zealots).

Story Ideas

⊗ Butheina comes to Al Amarja to make contact with an Algerian terrorist cell. Along the way she learns of a notorious brothel in the Flowers barrio and resolves to bring the righteous wrath of Allah down upon it. She invites sympathetic PCs to join her effort. If they help her, she may return the favor with future aid.

⊗ Plans of the PCs go awry when an important contact turns up dead. It turns out this man was Butheina's rapist, and she has scored gruesome vengeance upon him.

(Contributed by John Nephew.)

Dr. Ernst Moebius— Fringe Scientist.

Ernst Moebius was born to a Jewish family in 1941. His parents fled Berlin in 1936, due to the increasing Nazi hostility, and moved to Endinburgh (Scotland). His father, a watchmaker, bought a small jewelry shop. From an early age, Ernst was fascinated by the mechanics of watches, and desired to find out how everything worked. His great intelligence, reliance on spectacles and small stature led to him being treated as a swot or "geek" by the other children in his class. To compensate, Ernst developed a strong sense of humor, generally revolving around practical jokes. After leaving school, Ernst attended Cambridge University, taking Mathematics (applied) as a first degree (graduating in 1961), and then gaining a doctorate in Mathematics (completed in 1964).

Ernst began developing theories relating to the nature of space-time, and the effect of an observer on it at Cambridge; these were the core of his doctorate. He was offered a lectureship early in 1965 at Cambridge, but shortly after this one of the older professors in the faculty disputed his theories and compared Ernst unfavourably with the hippies/new agers whose mystical ideas were just beginning to become fashionable. The resulting, rather vicious, "debate" or slanging match was only ended when a practical joke involving the afore-mentioned older Professor's cat (called Waldo), an air tight box, a small quantity of fissile material and a powerfull particle accelerator apparently went tragically wrong (for the cat). This so upset the older professor he had Ernst black-balled from all reputable universities.

Ernst has thus taken up a professor-ship at D'Aubaine University, it being the only university he could find with the

enough resources to make use of his theories that would take him on. It was here that he performed a particle accelerator experiment, using himself as the subject. This experiment left him disorientated both spacially and temporally, and was also caused the manifestation of his fringe trait.

Ernst realises he is often overbearing when dealing with his areas of expertise, and that people find him patronising. He tries (but fails) to compensate for this. He often apologises for his attitude and blames it on his pet cat, waking him up in the middle of the night for a feed. He is a romantic at heart and is still looking for the right lady, although since he is incredibly shy around women.

Short thin balding middle aged man (52), with thick rimmed spectacles. Looks a bit like a cheerful Woody Allen would. Has a soft Endinburgh accent. When navigating his way around the Edge Dr. Moebius often carries a sextant, a compass, a city map (sites of importance to him marked with longitude and latitude), and an extremely accurate watch.

Dr. Moebius will often be found in or around the university. Due to the nature of his flaw, you can probably have him turn up almost anywhere and at any time, asking for directions, if your plot requires it.

Languages: British (Scottish) English, German, Hebrew and Arabic

Attack: 2 dice

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 14 (Weedy frame)

Fringe Pool: 4 shots

Traits

Fringe Scientist, 3 dice—Ernst specialises in mathematics relating to the Geometry of space-time, and how an observers perception of such can alter it. This includes full familiarity with general relativity,

quantum mechanics, and the general maths and physics which one would expect a genius in the field to know. (Carries a pencil stub and scraps of paper covered with incomprehensible formulae.)

Moebius warp, 2 dice—Moebius can temporarily warp the local geometry of space-time. This is manifested as a “rewinding” of reality for Moebius; he exits one room, crosses a corridor, and enters another room unconnected to the first, he then exits the first room. The warp “rewound” reality for Moebius back to the point where he was just leaving the first room. This affect is limited to himself and can only be used to “rewind” reality by up to twenty seconds or so. Moebius must not be directly observed by others at both the start and end points of his warp (their perception of him “fixes” him in space-time). (Appears unexpectedly.)

Ancient Astronomy, 2 dice—An interest in the astronomical techniques of the Ancients (ie. ancient Mesopotamians, Moghul observatories in India, etc). This developed from his interest in time

and how the ancients measured it. (Reads Arabic, has lots of old books.)

Spacio-temporal confusion—The same experiment that gave Dr. Moebius his “warp” power, also totally scrambled his perception of space and time. He has trouble pinpointing where he is, what time it is, where he’s going, whether he’s got there or just been. This does not mean that Moebius is completely scatter-brained, or that he cannot maintain a clear purpose, but that he has no internal time sense, and he suffers from a kind of chronic spacial dyslexia. He simply cannot find his way between two points if they are connected by anything more complicated than a straight line. Perversely, Dr. Moebius has no problem imagining n-dimensional constructs in his head, and applying his rather esoteric maths to abstract problems. It is only in his perceptual interface to the “real” world that problems arise. This flaw often includes the involuntary use of his “warp.” (e.g., Dr. Moebius came out of his office, then Dr. Moebius came out of his

office.) (always checking clocks, his watch, reading signs and notices, and asking people a. the date, b. the time, and c. where he is) (2 penalty dice when applicable; in some situations Dr. Moebius may be completely helpless).

Story ideas

Any adventure in which there are dimension altering/warping effects can have the characters directed to Dr.

Moebius of D’Aubaine university for more information. Also for consideration:

⊗ Dr. Moebius has developed a device that allows others to perform his Moebius warp. The device looks like a motor cycle helmet with an opaque visor, and is completely sound proof. It works by projecting the sounds and vision from the outside world onto the wearers visual and aural senses, and warping them repeatedly until the wearer gains the same perceptual insights as Ernst. The user has no control over these warps and the helmet can only be activated for 20 minutes before it’s batteries run out. The user suffers from the same spacio-temporal confusion as Moebius for as long as the user was exposed to the activated helmet.

This helmet has been stolen by some conspiracy for some unfathomable purpose, but it has then been stolen again by a petty crook, who has been using it to stage robberies. Since the robberies by the “Re-appearing Robber,” the Peace Force, people from the faculty of Maths (and the competing faculty of Physics), the original conspiracy, several other conspiracies and the D’Aubaine family have all been trying to get hold of the helmet for various purposes.

⊗ The players meet Ernst where ever they currently are, he is looking for his lost cat, and attempts to enlist their help. Unfortunately the cat, which answers to the name of Waldo, also has Moebius Warp ability, but to a much greater extent than Moebius (the GM gets to warp the cat where and whenever he feels like it).

This would be a good introduction to Ernst Moebius, especially if you take care to prevent his and his cat’s fringe powers from being too obvious.

(Contributed by Matthew Bassett.)



Al Amarja Underground

While on a trip to Europe, Peter Hentges, your esteemed editor, was impressed by the efficiency, extent and oddness of the train system. In particular the metro of Barcelona and Madrid drew his attention and inspired this article.

In May of this year I vacationed in Spain. One thing that struck me as part of the particularly European flavor of the country was its system of train travel. Particularly in Barcelona and Madrid, the cities are served by a metro system that also connects to the national railway system giving you access to large amounts of the country by rail. The trains run efficiently for the most part and are kept vigilantly clean by the agencies running them.

One of the things I also noticed was the striking similarities between Al Amarja and Barcelona. Knowing that Jonathan Tweet spent some time in Barcelona, this was not wholly unexpected. One thing that Barcelona has, however, that I feel is lacking in Al Amarja is the metro. The city is criss-crossed by metro lines giving quick and cheap access to almost all of the city. Given Al Amarja's connections to Barcelona and Italy (a country known for its trains), it seemed to me that this was a glaring oversight in the background of the island and its culture.

And so I created Al Amarja Underground (AAU or the Underground). AAU adds a lot to the background of The Edge. It is yet another place for the "bizarre normality" of Al Amarja to be expressed. The Underground is a new secret for the PCs to discover and something else for the various conspiracies and organizations on the island to try and exploit for their own gain.

Layout

The Edge is served by five underground rail lines. These lines make it possible for a traveler to reach nearly any location in The Edge. An AAU station is probably within a few blocks of any desired destination. (Finding the station is something else, see Operations below.) Certain barrios have less service due to their lower ridership demands but the Underground penetrates nearly every level of Edge society.

The main terminals of the system are located in the Plaza of Flowers and the Sunken Plaza. Four of the five lines of the subway serve, as one of their termini, the Plaza of Flowers. This landmark of the Edge is also your key to the rest of the city via AAU. Direct connections take you from Flowers

The stops along the lines occasionally change due to continuing improvements and repairs to the Underground system. (Consult the most recent maps within the AAU system for complete details.)

to the Great Men, Justice, Four Points, Sunken and Science barrios along a variety of paths that are sure to be close to your final destination. From the connection to Sunken, Underground transfers connect you to the Gold and Broken Wings barrios. Furthermore, there is direct service from Flowers to the D'Aubainne International Airport, providing transport to the rest of the world.

Sunken Plaza houses the other main terminal of the AAU system. All but one of the Underground lines run through Sunken Plaza. This center of international life in the Edge is also your connection to the high finance district of the Gold Barrio and the sophisticated shopping and entertainment of Broken Wings. Also reaching the

Edge through Sunken are the commuter lines that connect the Burbs to the city. The Airport line and Science line also run through Sunken connecting the AAU terminal to these cultural centers of the Edge.

Each of the five lines has a number of stops along its route. These stops occasionally change due to continuing improvements and repairs to the Underground system. (Consult the most recent maps within the AAU system for complete details.) The major stops of the five lines are:

Airport Line: Airport, Sunken Plaza Station, Plaza of Four Cardinal Points, Plaza of Flowers.

Normal Line: Plaza of Broken Wings, Plaza of Gold, Sunken Plaza, Burbs Transfer Station.

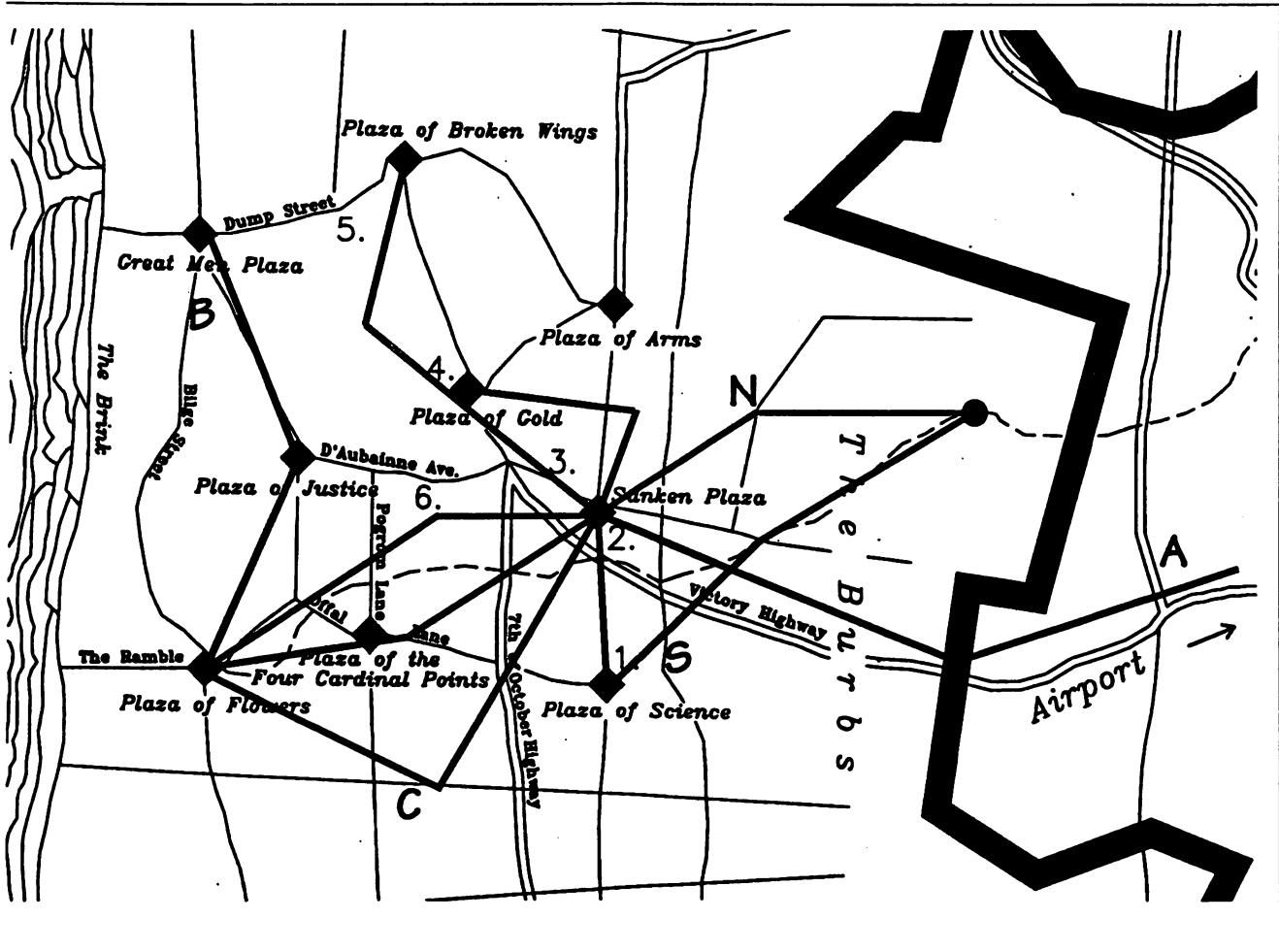
Brink Line: Great Men Plaza, Plaza of Justice, Plaza of Flowers.

Central Line: Plaza of Gold, Sunken Plaza, Plaza of Flowers.

Science Line: Burbs Transfer Station, Plaza of Science, Sunken Plaza, D'Aubainne Hospital and Trauma Center, Plaza of Flowers.

Operations

The people of Al Amarja are accustomed to a high degree of personal liberty. The government knows that it simply could not get away with construction projects that would infringe on the rights of individuals. Projects that occur at frequent intervals in the United States (like freeway expansions that drive people out of their homes and devalue neighborhoods) would incite wide-spread

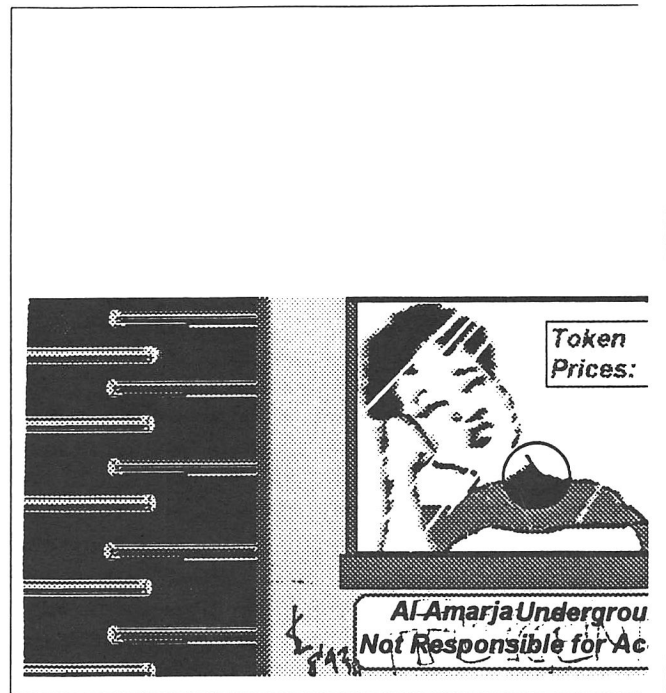


Al Amarja Underground, most probable routes

riots on Al Amarja. Therefore, the implementation of the Underground system had to be meshed into the structure of Al Amarja without interrupting the normal flow of the society. This is one of the reasons that the Underground was chosen as the public transportation of choice. (No messy fights over right-of-way.) Still, the problem of Underground stations plagued the government until they came up with a unique solution.

Underground terminals are located in the private homes and businesses of many people in the Edge. The government rents basements, back storage rooms and other un-used space to house a small ticket booth and cage-type turnstile. In this way, the government gains support for the Underground from a wide spectrum of the population and the people of Al Amarja do not feel that the government is imposing something on them. Because of these unique locations, however, finding Underground stations can be troublesome. No signs are posted and it is possible to frequent a store for years before realizing that the restroom marked "Out of Service" is actually the entrance to AAU.

Tickets for the Underground are only available at AAU stations and in vending machines around the Edge. The tickets are pale blue rectangles and sell for \$1, allowing an unlimited one-way journey. As long as you don't re-trace your path and don't leave the Underground, you can keep riding. The tickets show up irregularly in vending machines and, lacking any distinctive markings, are often mistaken for doses of LSD. To enter the Underground, the ticket is fed in to a slot on a box that reads the magnetic code embedded on a thin wire in the ticket and stamps the day and time on the



ticket. The box then releases the lock on the turnstile allowing entry to the Underground system.

Within the system, trains run at irregular but frequent intervals. Rarely do passengers have to wait more than 5 minutes for a train running in the direction they wish to travel and waits of 10 minutes are all but unknown. The trains run at 20 to 25 kph with stops at designated stations lasting a maximum of 30 seconds. As a train approaches a station a recorded message in two voices announces, (for example) "Proximity of station:," "Sunken Plaza." This allows passengers who wish to disembark to move toward the doors and get off quickly. It is possible to traverse a great expanse of the Edge in just a few minutes while riding the AAU. While this is convenient for some, it is vastly disorienting for others. In particular, new-comers to the island find the constant re-arrangement of routes and stops confusing.

Trains run from 0500 to 0200 each day. During the remaining three hours a special branch of the

Peace Force moves through the main areas of the underground “encouraging” vagrants and other inhabitants to leave the Underground system. The Peace Force is generally understanding of the concerns of burger passengers but firmly refuses to allow any of them to remain within the Underground stations. The Underground system is vast, however, and enterprising PCs may find ways to hide within the system while it is officially closed. During those three hours, cleaning crews sweep, wax and polish the stations and cars of the Underground system, preparing it for another day’s use.

One consequence of the efforts of the Peace Force is that the undesirable elements of society that often populate the Underground are expelled at relatively random points throughout the city. In most barrios the local enforcement agencies (Aries Gang, ΣOB brothers, Baboon Patrols, etc.) keep the inhabitants of the Underground from wandering too far from known Underground stations but some invariably slip by and may make mischief in more secluded areas of some barrios.

Weirdness

The Underground runs nearly everywhere in the Edge. Maps of the AAU system (*only* located *inside* the system) list the “most probable” paths and station stops. Re-routing of lines to secondary and tertiary tracks is frequent and attributed (officially) to “repairs

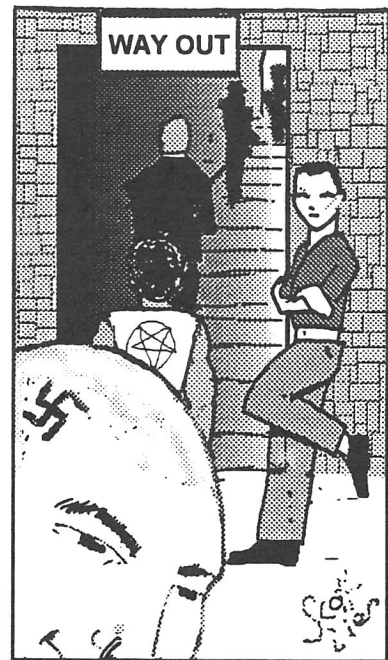
The AAU Terminals in Flowers and Sunken are vast mazes of underground hallways connecting the platforms.

and improvements.” The only conspicuous area not served by AAU is the Arms Plaza and surrounding barrio. But then you didn’t really want to go there, did you? Any other place in the Edge can be reached via AAU (at least within a couple of blocks). The amount of time that it takes you to get there, however, is highly variable. While the efficiency of the Underground system allows most people to traverse the city in a matter of minutes, the constant re-routing of system paths leads to the occasional trip time of a few hours to travel three blocks.

The Underground attracts many of the power groups on Al Amarja. Before the system was in place, many of these groups tried (consciously or not) to connect to chthonic power sources by tunneling into the earth below the Edge. The historical liberation of Al Amarja brought many of their underground activities to a halt but some still maintain connections to the Underground.

The Kergillians house some of their alien guards in sealed rooms beneath the E-Z Sleep Motel and they have been known to break out of their quarters and escape into the tunnels of the AAU. The Gladstein Cell of the Movers are convinced that the tunnels of the Underground mark out a secret, mystical symbol and believe that by forcing trains along certain paths, they can bring about certain consequences. The Cut-Ups frequently haunt the halls and

platforms of Underground stations, enjoying the randomness of the Underground system. The extra-dimensional entities at the airport are beginning to



extend their influence into the underground system. While their influence may be limited to their end of the Airport Line now, its expansion could lead to all sorts of interesting occurrences.

Apart from the over-ground conspiracies, the underground has its own bunch of loonies and strangeness. The Underground Terminals at the Plaza of Flowers and Sunken Plaza are vast mazes of underground hallways connecting the platforms of the various lines. These terminals house their own odd culture of art, shops, entertainers and regular inhabitants that is strangely unlike the rest of the Edge. There are news stands in the cavernous common areas where several hallways meet and escalators rise up from the platform level. In these newsstands, along with the usual fare, you can find out-dated newspapers and magazines from across the world. These periodicals cover topics from high finance to kiddie porn and include issues that report erroneous news events. If this is an attempt at humor, it is very well disguised in the bland prose

The disposable income that can be spent on transportation is likely to be fairly low in the Edge. Not everyone can afford to hire Total Taxis every time they run for groceries.

describing things like President Carter's re-election and subsequent assassination, the death of thousands during unemployment riots in a poor London district, and the discovery of a cure for AIDS in a South American hospital that involves only a regimen of vitamins.

Terminal connections at

the plazas (where you can switch trains) house a collection of oddness not found in places where the warm sun shines. In the long hallways between platforms you are likely to encounter all types of strange things. The fluorescent lights glare or flicker either harshly illuminating the sterile passages or plunging them into shadow. The walls are sometimes covered with abstract designs picked out in brick and tile and at other times are covered with the works of a popular Edge artist. In other places the posters plastered in layers form a bizarre collage of materials that draws the eye and is, in many ways, more engaging than the "art" on the walls.

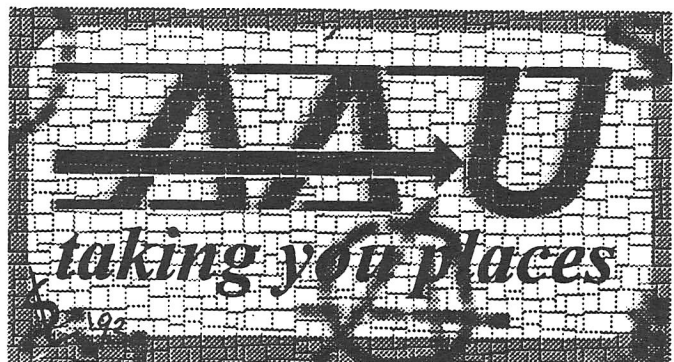
Also haunting these long passages are the people that make their living in the Underground. After traversing a few hundred meters of otherwise bland passageway you are likely to be met by a young man in faded blue jeans, sneakers and a blue-collar work shirt. He carries a new backpack that is bulging with oblong white boxes and as you approach he offers you a pack of cigarettes,

"Marlboros? Camels? Dollar a pack." From further down the hallway you can hear the faint screaming of an electric guitar (Velvet Underground maybe). You move quickly past the tough with the cigarettes and turn onto your platform only to jostle a smaller person wearing a top coat. As you turn to beg the persons pardon the figure bends and picks something up from the platform. You can't see the person's face as the hand extends, holding a wallet and a voice that harmonizes with the echoes of the electric guitar says, "You dropped this." Only after you thank the man, for the voice sounded vaguely masculine to you, do you realize that his fingers seemed to writhe as if they had no bones and that the patch on his overcoat marked him as a conductor of Al Amarja Underground.

Series Uses for AAU

As an addition to your series, the Al Amarja Underground provides a wealth of new opportunities. These are a few of my ideas as well as those suggested by people on the OTE Internet Mailing list and others.

First and foremost, AAU provides the PCs with a cheap, if sometimes unreliable, method of transportation around the Edge. Not everyone can afford to hire Total Taxis every time they want to go for groceries. Even the system of jitneys is closer to a taxi than is common in the European cities I visited. In all Spanish cities, the



buses acted like subways on wheels. They had designated stops and if you wanted off in-between, you waited until the next one and walked half-way back. The disposable income that can be spent on transportation is likely to be fairly low in the Edge. While most people enjoy a high standard of living off of tourist money and illicit business, they also spend a great deal more money on a variety of forms of entertainment. Transportation is something they would want cheap and easy.

Once you get your PCs hooked on the Underground as a means of transportation, it makes a perfect plot device. Get them into or out of danger by providing a handy AAU station in the phone booth of a local cafe. Have them arrive at their destination, "just in time" or "just too late" depending on the state of the "repairs" that Her Exaltedness has ordered for the system. A contact is flushed out of the Underground by the Peach Force sweep or disappears into the system and is never heard from



again. The possibilities are nearly as infinite as the possible paths the Underground can follow.

The Underground can serve as home for strange conspiracies or creatures of your design. (What are those cleaning crews, anyway?) In this way you can keep some things out of sight of the surface world and still allow them to effect things across the city. I'm sure that necromancers, demon worshipers, followers of the Great Worm and stranger things exist beyond the lights of the platforms. It is up to you to populate the tunnels with things from the dark corners of your imagination.

Other options include:

- The subway would make an ideal home for some 1500 year old benevolent Celtic wizard (now working as a cleaner), who managed to influence the design of the subway, so that it's route describes a huge magic rune/sigil that is all that stands between mankind and a horrible fate. (Matthew Bassett)
- Maybe the subway was designed by an oppenheimer and running the trains over makes it function as a massive psychic transmitter. Or something accidentally happens and the subway system falls into another dimension. (A story called "A Subway Named Moebius" has this happen.) (Martin Terman)
- I wonder about how the possible space competition underneath the Edge would work out. For example, the Agaras (from "New Faces") are already hanging out underground, and it isn't hard to imagine that there could be several other groups competing with them for

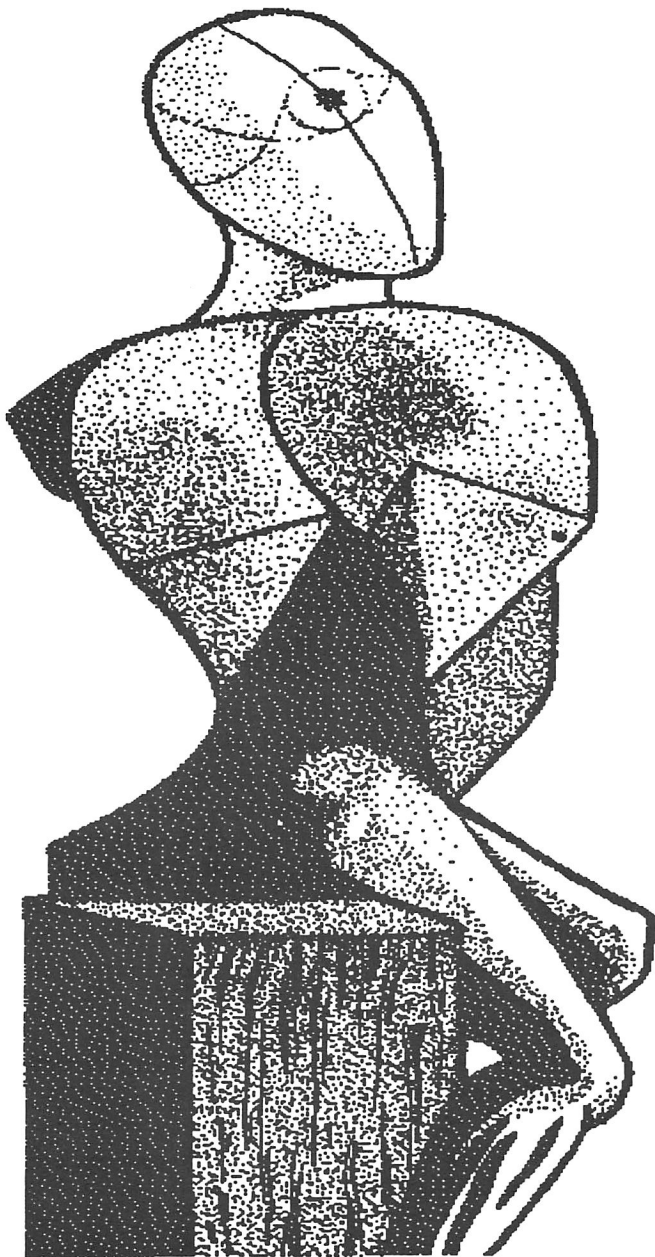
space. Just watch the peaceful rat-men desperately trying to herd their more vicious cousins out of the way as the steam-shovels descend to build the Underground. Imagine the horrified screams as isolated worker parties encounter those few rat-things that didn't get removed in time. Write with guilt alongside the Agaras as they contemplate the sins committed by their brethren. (Bruce Turner)

- Certainly most of the subway should be neat, clean, tidy, efficient, modern, etc., but what the public sees isn't even half of the system. I remember riding the T in Boston, and noticing that many times, there seemed to be large, cavernous spaces alongside the tracks (unlit, of course, to make them difficult to see). What were these spaces used for? Who built them? In the Edge, I'm certain there are many, many rail lines down there that the original designers never anticipated. Foolish burger who wander away from the well-lit platforms could find themselves lost forever in the winding, filthy tunnels. (Bruce Turner)
- The underground doesn't really exist. It is, however, something that turns up in dimensions close to and parallel to the Edge. (Such as The House from "House Call.") Alternatively, if you play a "your dead but don't know it" adventure, the underground is a good metaphor that shouldn't tip the "dead" PC off too quickly. (Woody)



Edge watcher

Peter Larsen, Minneapolis's own purveyor of perversity takes a quick look at some material you have to have for your OTE game.



What you're able to put into your *Over the Edge* campaign depends largely on what you're willing to put into yourself. For the best effects, you need a multi-layered approach, conspiracy hiding behind conspiracy, explanations and counter explanations, and a sense of lots of meaning piled up on top of itself. One way to get there is doing a lot of reading.

The following is a general list of books that may help you get a feel for Al Amarja. It's divided into three sections, with a short list of films at the end. First there's conspiracies, in fiction and real life, followed by notes on life underground, in or out of the Mediterranean. Lastly, we've got a random sampling of notes from the fringes of reason. Remember: after the first one, it's turtles all the way down.

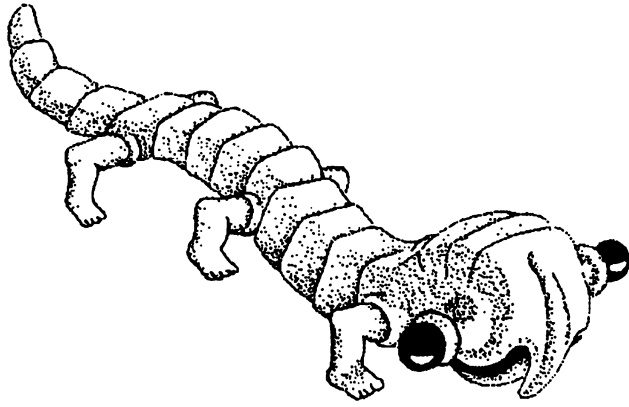
Conspiracies

Ballard, J.G. *Crash*, et al. A nightmare stylist, Ballard combines ennui and technology in very odd ways. *Crash* is the story of two men obsessed with the sexual implications of car crashes, and what they do about it.

Burroughs, William S. *Nova Express*, et al. Burroughs is a source for all manner of insane theories of conspiracies against humanity. Often hard to read, but worth it.

Eco, Umberto *Foucault's Pendulum* A conspiracy novel by one of the most elegant thinkers of our time. A meditation on the nature of conspiracies and the people that believe in them, plus a massively intricate conspiracy theory.

Lafferty, R.A. *Fourth Mansions* A wild, weird novel about how the world can be changed. Especially recommended for the way that the characters keep explaining the action over and over again. They



agree on what the sides of the conspiracy are called and what they are doing, but the whys and hows are hilariously different.

Pynchon, Thomas *The Crying of Lot 49*, et al. His quickest read, *Crying* shows you how to drive characters mad in a big hurry. Also a great example of how to make the humorous menacing and the macabre humorous.

Van Eden, Trevor and Thriller #1-7 A DC comic about a team of slightly super-powered people fighting against a strange and shifting conspiracy. Issues #8+ suck.

Wilson, Robert Anton *The Illuminatus! Trilogy*, et al. With or without co-writer, definitely the guru of the off-the-wall conspiracy crowd.

Life

Bowles, Paul *The Sheltering Sky*, et al. American expatriate leader in Morocco and writer of incredibly depressing stories about Westerners adrift in Africa.

Kerouac, Jack *Satori in Paris and Pic*, et al. One of those wacky beats, whose autobiographical writings give vivid images of life on the road. More useful for "feel" than for settings, Kerouac has some characters worth stealing.

Liddel, Jonathan *Bad Voltage* A cyberpunk novel, so it's a little advanced for OTE, but there's some great characters (Billy Hand the Art Terrorist, for example). The

moral and spiritual sense of the novel—society on the way down—is a must, and the soundtrack at the back would do well (with some North African music thrown in) for any OTE campaign.

Morgan, Ted

Literary Outlaw This biography of Burroughs spends a lot of time on his exile in Mexico and Morocco. There's enough color for a dozen campaigns, especially for those with lots of lowlives and junkies.

Woodlawn, Holly *A Low Life in High Heels* Transvestite, junky, Worhol superstar Holly lived the life in the '60s and '70s. Loads of great detail on living down but never quite out.

Shit of all Sorts

Brecher, Edward *Licit & Illicit Drugs* The Consumer's Union report on drugs, this book is a little out of date, since it was published in 1972, but most of the information is still timely. Since OTE is one of the few games to make drugs a central theme, the GM ought to have some better idea of what's what than the shit Hollywood hands out.

Cohn, Norman *Pursuit of the Millennium* A study of European Millennialist movements in the late Middle Ages, this books will give you an idea of just how weird people can get. A valuable sourcebook of real life crazed ideas.

Marcus, Greil *Lipstick Traces* Another study of the millennium, but this one takes Cohn's theories and applies them to the 20th century. What do the Sex Pistols have to do with Medieval Mystery Cults? If you only knew....

Parfrey, Adam *Apocalypse Culture* A book of interviews with a little of everything from the insane fringe. There's necrophiliacs, strange religion, conspiracy theories. It'll make you think and make you sick.

Juno and Vale *RE/Search* A 14-issue (so far) guide to weird social behavior. The most useful for GMs are probably #6/7 Industrial Culture Handbook, #11 Pranks, and #12 Modern Primitives. All the issues have fascinating and useful material, though.

Films

Closetland An Amnesty International film that tries a little too hard, but mostly succeeds. A menacing setting, useful for interrogations.

The Fourth Man Subtitles. A thriller with some supernatural overtones, there's a number of scenes that may or may not be psychic events. Excellent source material for how to manipulate characters with visions.

Pascalli's Island Mediterranean settings, and a complex story about betrayal. Ben Kingsly does a fine job as the agent who doesn't know who he's working for, or if he's really working for anyone.

Source

If you can't find any of this stuff in your local neighborhood book store, Dreamhaven Books of Minneapolis (Peter Larsen's employer) does mail order and will be happy to send you perverse stuff in the mail. Their address is 1309 SE 4th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55414. You can reach the Dreamhaven mail order department by calling (612) 379-0657 during Central Time business hours.

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