The Path of Cunning

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Editorial: Neo-Sensibilism, PC survival and GURPS

John Dallman

I used "neo-sensibilism" in issue #5 and Roger asked me to write about it.

The term was coined, as far as I know, by Diana Cox, during a low-level AD&D game I was watching. She has a pretty flexible relationship with the English language and invents new words fairly often.

Unwrapping this one, it means "Being a D&D-style adventurer is clearly not a sensible thing to do. Setting that aside, let us try to be sensible about how we approach problems."

Some gamers feel that's boring, that you should throw yourself into every challenge without thought or planning. I disagree: I want my characters to be *people*, not playing pieces in a complicated skirmish wargame. Real people, faced with stressful situations or serious danger, tend to think quite fast about what to do and how best to do it. Reproducing that is an important part of being immersed in a character, for me.

This is a pretty natural way of playing RPGs where characters have a small number of hit points, but effective defensive options. I learned it playing RuneQuest before I encountered **GURPS**. Games that operate by hit point attrition are more forgiving of impulsive play.

Doing dangerous things

Even if you aren't doing D&D-style adventures, most RPGs deal with situations where there's danger, violence, and people prepared to use them for nefarious purposes. PCs have to deal with this, but there's usually no need to be foolish about it.

An example: in a D&D game in a rationalised fantasy setting, we captured a ship on which the people who'd caused a huge epidemic were

fleeing. We'd boarded it from a flying carpet, having found the ship via detection magic.

One of the party, who knew how to sail, wanted to take command and do dramatic sailing. She was the *only* PC who knew how to sail, the surviving crew would genuinely rather die than help us, it was the middle of the night, and we could hear ocean waves breaking on the shore nearby. The neo-sensibilist choice was to drop anchor, and that was what we did.

Participate in a functioning society

Early D&D had a pulp/western sensibility, where the PCs were the only people with agency and motivation to right wrongs. Everyone else was either helpless or corrupt, under the control of the ultimate enemy. This also fits Gondor during the War of the Ring, and a simplified US-patriotic view of the Vietnam War.

If characters are actually in that kind of situation, then they have to deal with it. But if you're in a wainscot or secret-history game then there's a functioning society around you, and if you're in a frontier settlement setting, *creating* a society is usually part of the game.

In a functioning society, being a vigilante as legally difficult, at best, and killing people is a huge problem. A case where neo-sensibilism worked well: the 1930s party of female occult

investigators had someone trying to kill them. Firebombs through the front windows of the house and rifle fire at anyone who came out made that pretty clear. After the attacker had been subdued, and given first aid to keep her alive, we called the police. They were very happy to arrest her, since they'd been after her for a while, and had hopes of getting leads to a gang from her.

I find post-apocalypse games, which are designed around the lack of civilisation, quite un-appealing. I have no illusions about my personal ability to survive in them. Building a new community is clearly the thing to do, but very little of that is going to be action and adventure. Superhero games sometimes create another level of society, super-powered, which can mostly ignore ordinary people, and that isn't appealing either.

Duties and related concepts

I'm quite fond of playing **GURPS** in settings where the characters have larger objectives than wealth, power and fame. They have a cause of some kind that they follow, sometimes because they work for an organisation whose purpose it is, or because they have a shared ideal or objective.

Being unthinkingly brave in a cause isn't the act of a real person. Even fanatics experience fear when there's time for it; they can just override it. You could play characters who just can't foresee the possibility of personal danger or death, but that limits their thinking a lot.

Being part of a society is implicit in most of those objectives. Trying to make the society, or the world, better grows out of many of them. When the original group of characters in *Irresponsible & Right* learned that all wolves were werewolves and sapient in wolf form, they applied the power they had as part of wartime counter-intelligence in the UK to getting the wolves from zoos treated better. As the player of a character with Fanaticism (Patriotism), I regarded them as fellow-citizens who'd been mistaken for animals[1].

The UK's wolves got a substantial park in Scotland, which was easy enough because there weren't many, and none who had been living in the wild. The large numbers of wolves living wild in Alaska, Canada and Siberia were a different problem, and it was a huge relief to discover that the new Soviet government had a reasonable plan for that.

Stick to your objectives

Some gamers can get absorbed in a fight, and lose track of the reasons for it. A decade ago, I played a large convention D&D game with about twelve players who needed to form three teams. Two teams were needed to hold back enemies coming out of eight tunnels into a huge chamber where there was a vehicle. The third team needed to board the vehicle, solve the mystery and find the McGuffin before the enemies overwhelmed them. The first piece of neo-sensibilism was in picking that team, the best puzzle-solvers we had.

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[1] The wolves had always been sapient. That had been true for a few decades. Reality quakes make history complicated.

The defence team I was in was neo-sensibilist, and very conscious that they had *four* tunnels to block, but only for half an hour or so. They got ingenious about that and succeeded. The other defence team got stuck into a very enjoyable fight in their first tunnel and ignored their other three, until they got surrounded. Some gamers — who feel that everything should be about the PCs — might see that as valid play, but it seems foolish to me. The enemy command were apparently feeding them opponents to keep them busy, and the other three tunnels open.

The first team tried to do things about those other tunnels once they had blocked their own, but things were getting out of hand when the third team solved the mystery, and we could all get out of there.

Use psychology

If you play in a neo-sensibilist manner, and the GM runs the setting in the same way, there may be a bit less drama, but there's a lot more plausibility.

Trying to frighten or overawe opponents stands some chance of working, giving you a chance of triumphing when you can't do it by brute force. An opponent in a situation that seems hopeless who is offered a way out that allows survival, and a chance to try again ought to at least consider the idea, unless they're fanatical or have some other very strong motive.

Overcoming adversity by ingenuity has always been the side of heroism that appealed most to me, and dates back to the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.
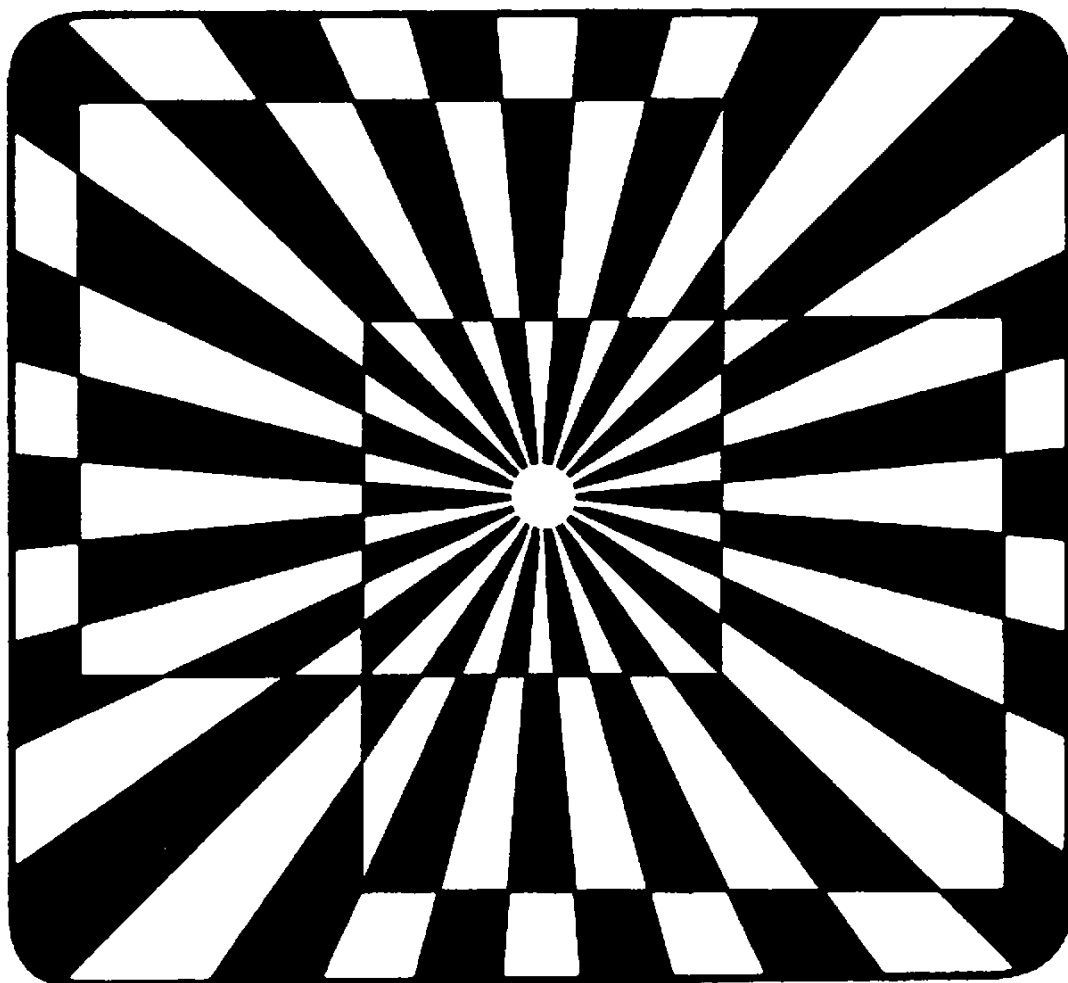
Infinite Worlds: Worlds of Atomic Horror: Designer's Notes

Matt Wehmeier

GURPS Atomic Horror has always held a special place in my heart. Without it, I likely would not have discovered **GURPS** at all. I found the book in the games store at the Woodfield Mall when I was around fourteen years old, and I bought it before I even knew it required the **Basic Set**. The opportunity to write the spiritual successor to a sourcebook that holds so much personal significance is an honor I will carry proudly for the rest of my life.

In preparation for writing the supplement, I watched a dozen movies from the 1950s and 1960s. The highlights were *The Blob*, *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *Dr. Strangelove* (one of my all-time favorites), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, the 1986 *Little Shop of Horrors*, and *The Thing from Another World*. Middling entries included *Them!* (about giant ants), *Red Nightmare* (a short anti-communist propaganda film), and *Monster from the Ocean Floor*, which I

George

don't remember. *Gog* was rather unremarkable as a film, but it provided the quote on p. 5 and at one point a character describes a satellite as a "baby space station" (this was several years before Sputnik). *Attack of the 50 Foot Woman* was disappointing, as was the infamously bad *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. I am far too averse to horror to have seen any of the remakes.

Background and Mechanics

Chrome Tech

In an early draft of the supplement, I included a "radthrower" that would shoot high-intensity radiation as a weapon, akin to a flamethrower, that could be used on the battlefield or against atomic monsters. I was quickly assured by my playtesters that such a weapon would not work the way I had intended, so it ended up on the cutting room floor. The "Atomic Hand Grenade" (whose name was partly inspired by Monty Python's "Holy Hand Grenade") was one fantastical weapon that stayed in, however.

I like the idea of replacing the M16 rifle on Atom-2 with a wood-bodied weapon that looks more like the M14. It better captures the feeling of 1960s soldiers in steel bucket helmets shooting at a giant bug rather than the very Vietnam-coded M16 and its modern successors. I got the nickname "Viper" for the M20 watching the gun battles on the Moon in *For All Mankind*. It was inspired by a combination of the absolute silence in the vacuum of the Moon and Forrest Gump's exclamation ("Something bit me!") when he was shot in his eponymous movie. The "P" in AKP-76 stands for "пространство" (Romanized as "prostrantsvo"), the Russian word for outer space. Shoutout to my sibling James for their help with the physics and practicalities of guns in space.

The Computers and Robots section was finalized just before the explosion in popularity of AI image generators and large language models, so none of that information was included in the final supplement. I'm still rather skeptical that our society is as close to developing artificial general intelligence as some claim, so I don't know how much I would have changed it.

Aliens

Aliens are always tricky to create, especially because such a dizzying variety have been imagined over the last century, with norms based in hundreds of established tropes. In such a crowded field it can be difficult to come up with ideas that feel novel.

To give an example of the difficulty, the Arton were originally shaped like five-armed starfish that sit at the base of the neck. I'm not much of a comics fan, so it was very helpfully pointed out to me in playtesting that this would be too similar to Starro the Conquerer, a mind-controlling starfish alien from the DC universe.

I'm not sure what stopped the Greys' expansion, as referenced on p. 16. All I know for sure is that it's a horrible "something" out there that the Greys do not want to mess with. I can confirm it is absolutely related to the strange signals from Tau Ceti on Atom-5. Perhaps whatever creatures, entity, or entities are out there have already overrun our arm of the galaxy on that worldline, and the Soviets and their communist allies will someday have to fight off an invasion of Earth…

If I were to make any edits to the supplement today, I would add a quirk that the Greys are intensely private about eating. They would no more "share a meal" together than a modern Westerner would want to socialize in the communal toilets of Ancient Rome. Bland, functional food is available for Greys to take and eat privately.

It was important that the Greys give material support to the Caxoids to prevent their ships and planets from being decimated by Atlantean's TL10 particle batteries. Turning this conflict into a proxy war also introduced some welcome political complexity to the situation. It is probably also unrealistic that the Caxoids could challenge the TL10 Atlanteans with an economy fueled by TL6 mining, agriculture, and industry, but I like the idea of Caxoid worlds being a very weird mix of mostly familiar technology, production techniques, and quasi-feudal caste-based social structures alongside strange landscapes, reptilian animals, and the insectoid Caxoids themselves.

Infinite Worlds

Given my contribution history to Steve Jackson Games, it should come as no surprise that Infinite Worlds is one of my favorite fictional settings of all time. I consider it an honor that I have contributed to the canon, and I also consider it a responsibility not to disrupt the balance of the setting.

The Infinite Worlds provide a vast multiverse to explore and a robust structure for adventures that span myriad Earths. There are only a few rules, one of which is to be found on **GURPS Infinite Worlds**, p. 72: No faster-than-light travel.

This is a large part of the reason why the Atom Skerry is a proper skerry and not just a cluster of worldlines. All Atom parallels have elements that could be highly disruptive if introduced into the canon of Infinite Worlds, and I wanted to make it as difficult as possible for those elements to "break out" and become commonplace across worlds. This is the meta-explanation as to why alien FTL doesn't work outside the skerry.

No one knows what would happen if an FTL drive carries a conveyor to another star system and makes a jump to a timeline outside the

skerry, and Infinity isn't eager to try due to the high risk of discovery by the Atlanteans or the Greys. It's possible that the stars don't "line up" in other timelines in the way the Earths do, and the conveyor would just end up lightyears away from any star. Such a trip would also be quite dangerous due to the natural parachronic "fog" around the Atom Skerry.

This is also why so much interference is caused by anti-oz radiation on Earth: it allows Infinity to jump in without fearing immediate detection by an alien ship orbiting thousands of miles above the planet. The possibility of being discovered in this way isn't zero, but it isn't the campaign-ender it might otherwise be. The skerry also allows for Atomite "time travel" without giving locals access to the entirety of Quantum 5.

Mutations

Originally, I had regular oz particles (perhaps with their charge "inverted" by the skerry) as the cause of the Atom Skerry's weirdness. In the playtest, one contributor reminded me that anti-oz particles exist in **GURPS Technomancer** and are known to negate magic. From there, I concluded that they would be the perfect explanation for mutations.

The first draft of the supplement included a much more complex numbers-based system for mutations, but I'm not an expert on "crunch" by any means and the rules were eventually simplified to the final form seen in print. It would have taken far too much time and effort (not to mention extensive playtesting) to make the original system work, so I am quite happy with the decision to pare it down significantly.

History

I don't want to talk too much about my personal politics here, but I will reveal that I believe strongly in the power of international cooperation. From the Outer Space Treaty to SALT and the Helsinki Accords to the Camp David Accords, we saw throughout the Cold War era that amazing things can happen when leaders put aside their hubris and nationalism for the good of their own people and of the world at large. Obviously, the entire world is moving very swiftly in the opposite direction. Like those who advocated and fought to stop the Cold War before it started, I am deeply concerned where the present currents will lead us.

I say this not to pontificate, but to give some context for the approach I took to the supplement at large, to the historical questions I addressed in the alternate history and Cold War sections, and to the fantastical aliens and organizations I created to flesh out the skerry.

The International Science Foundation

In doing the early research for the supplement, I read the Pulitzer-winning biography of Robert Oppenheimer, *American Prometheus* by Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin. It was an invaluable insight into Oppenheimer's life, and it also gave me a perspective on the early Cold War that I hadn't quite expected. This was the origin of the "Bohr's World" infobox in Chapter 4, and it served as partial inspiration for the International Science Foundation.

A lot of people in the late 1940s were eager to avoid the Cold War, including both Albert Einstein and Oppenheimer. They believed that the end of the most horrific war in human history and the creation of the most destructive weapon ever devised required the creation of a fundamentally new type of world system to maintain global peace. Einstein went as far as saying that the U.N. should enforce such a peace "by a military power that is exclusively under its control," one that would presumably be large enough to stand up to both the U.S. and the USSR.

This effort culminated in former Vice President Henry Wallace's 1948 Presidential Campaign as nominee for the Progressive Party, during which he received over a million votes. Many of those who advocated for cooperation with Russia were accused of communist sympathies and severely punished, and prominent advocates for peace (including Oppenheimer and Wallace) later recanted their positions after concluding that the Soviets would not have accepted or respected the kind of international cooperation they proposed.

It has been fashionable for decades among historians to characterize these efforts as hopelessly naïve, a (perhaps) well-meaning but severely misguided attempt to negotiate with an enemy that refused to deal fairly and valued oppression for its own sake. As in the original supplement, I will leave it to the reader to draw their own conclusions, but I wanted to highlight a movement that has been deliberately excluded from many histories of the Cold War.

If I were to make any changes to this section today, I would likely make the ISF a more purely science-focused organization with a more amorphous "science solves all problems" ideology that is placed under constant pressure by governments to abandon their ideals and reveal dangerous secrets in the name of national security. Such an openly political and anti-Cold War organization as is currently described in the supplement would likely have faced much more scrutiny from the U.S. government in 1959, no matter what Eisenhower said. I think this would read as more compelling and less "naïve," and it could round out the theme of scientists having to make very unfair moral choices that are imposed on them by the state.

The Cold War

The introduction to Chapter 4 was important to get right. Anyone who's ever taken an American history class that touches on the Cold War will recognize the broad strokes of the "Let Freedom Ring" section, which provides important background information for any understanding of the period.

Conversely, I hope that readers will have learned something from "In Defense of the Revolution" that they might not have known. I tried to write it from a Soviet perspective without either propagandizing in favor of Soviet socialism or shying away from the brutality of the USSR, particularly under Stalin. I wanted to highlight the meaningful difference between the unrepentant mass killings of the Stalin years and the less violent (but still quite repressive) policies and actions of the Soviet state in the years following his death. I also wanted to give some small insight into the way Soviet leaders thought about their own circumstances. They saw themselves as the embattled but righteous defenders of state socialism, which most of them genuinely believed was a better form of society than capitalism.

ODESSA

While it is appropriate from a historical perspective to attempt to understand the USSR on its own terms, at least to a degree, the same cannot be said for the Third Reich. I won't belabor that point, but it strongly informed my approach to ODESSA.
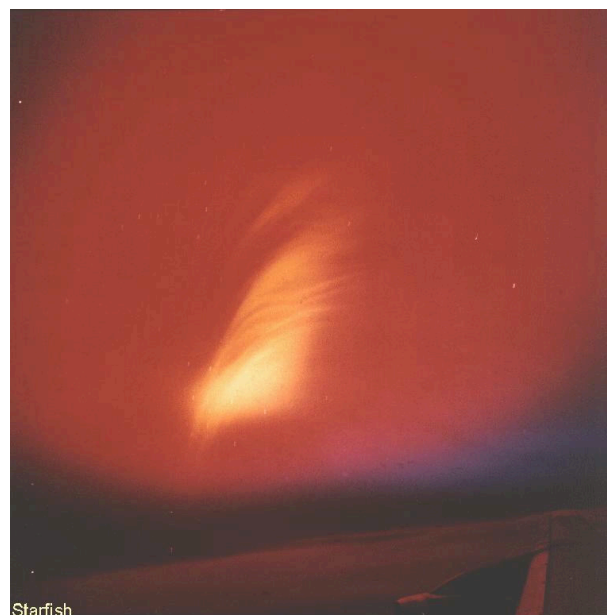
Starfish

I used the ODESSA section to expand on some of the ideas from the original *Atomic Horror* and other supplements, notably **GURPS WWII: Weird War II**. I tried to touch on as many Fourth Reich tropes as possible without indulging too much in the sadism and madness that such an organization would certainly exhibit.

Alternate History

I wanted Atom-1 to be as close as possible to Homeline's 1959 to make it easy to incorporate almost any existing Atomic Horror adventure based in "reality" into the Infinite Worlds setting. The date of 1959 was chosen because it is right in the middle of the sci-fi B-movie frenzy. It also locks in the Cuban Revolution while avoiding the significant shift in American politics and foreign policy brought by the election of John F. Kennedy the next year. I avoided mentioning Kennedy at all in the supplement, and I imagine that he never become president on any timeline in the skerry, as indirectly alluded to on p. 27.

Atom-3 was primarily intended as a site for ISF scientists to interact with their past selves and for Infinity scientists to investigate the Roswell crash.

Atom-4 was a natural fit for the skerry given the prevalence of atomic weapons throughout the supplement. So many of the existing post-apocalyptic worldlines in **GURPS** have an aesthetic inspired by the fiction of the 1990s or later, so I figured it would be a good balance to have a menagerie of 1950s-inspired atomic monstrosities readily accessible from the other Atom parallels.

Late in the editing process, I imagined a global conflict brewing in the Southern Hemisphere on Atom-4, with openly communist post-Apartheid South Africa pressing north into the Congo and Tanzania as the resource-starved dictatorships of Argentina and Brazil scramble

to arm the surviving warlords of Central Africa. Alas, the layout for the supplement was already complete, and it would have been too disruptive a change for me to request.

Atom-5 is easily the strangest of the five Atom timelines. I was inspired to write it by both the 1984 version of *Red Dawn* (one of my favorite movies as a teenager) and the stories in the original **Atomic Horror**, pp. 8, 68, in which communists (or aliens disguised as communists) cordon off a Midwestern town and establish a microcosm of the USSR in the American heartland.

It is, of course, extremely implausible to think that the Soviets could launch an invasion of any part of the continental United States, much less occupy the entire country for any length of time. This is why I imply that the timeline was created as-is by a reality quake. It also serves as a nice mirror image to both Reich-5 and the joint German-Japanese occupation of the U.S. imagined in *The Man in the High Castle*.

On Atom-5, I imagine that Hawaii might serve as a base for the U.S. government-in-exile, defended by the remnants of the U.S. Navy (including nuclear-armed carriers and submarines) that weren't destroyed or captured in the takeover. The "tropical paradise" setting would be a nice contrast to the siege mentality that would likely dominate the last bastion of anti-communist America.

Atom-2

Atom-2 was designed as a retro-futuristic society that is still relatively grounded in reality, more like pre-apocalypse *Fallout* than *The Jetsons*. I deliberately avoided too many specifics on aesthetics and cultural phenomena to allow people to read their own stories onto the world. I also wanted to avoid locking readers into a *Pleasantville*-style society in which women are expected to wear blue swing dresses and men in

gray suits smoke at the dinner table. It is still the year 2001, after all.

In shaping the timeline for Atom-2, I started with the question: "How might an (American) observer in 1959 imagine the year 2001?" I specify an American observer because, realistically, there were forces in motion that made many of the broad strokes of the 1960s inevitable by the divergence point of 1959. For example, it was almost certainly too late to avoid the Sino-Soviet split by that time given the strained relationship between Khrushchev and Mao, and I doubt the Civil Rights and counterculture movements could realistically have been curtailed as completely as they were on Atom-2.

Similarly, it's theoretically possible, though rather unlikely, that the Vietnam War could have been avoided in the way I describe. I deliberately handwaved a very clean takeover of South Vietnam by Ho Chi Minh to add some alternate historical flair, focusing instead on a subsequent "domino" (to use the American Cold Warrior parlance) in Indonesia.

In 1965, the Indonesian Army initiated a wave of mass killings against suspected communists, anti-government dissidents, and ethnic minorities that resulted in the murder of between 500,000 and three million people. It was one of the most brutal instances of anti-communist violence in the Cold War era. The notion that these killings could have been avoided was one of the inspirations for the Indonesian War.

The Middle East

One of the biggest divergences of Atom-2′s timeline from our history (aside from the surviving Soviet Union, continued Cold War, and space colonies, of course) is the history of the Middle East. I imagine the primary allies of the U.S. on Atom-2 would be Saudi Arabia, the

other Persian Gulf monarchies, the Republic of Iraq (which experienced a U.S.-backed anti-communist counter-coup in 1963), and Israel, while the Soviets serve as patrons for Egypt, Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, South Yemen, and to some degree Libya (which under Gaddafi will always be a bit of a wild card). Atom-2 also (unrealistically) avoids the debacle of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which I will excuse by stating that an observer in 1959 is unlikely to predict the Mujahideen.

I imagined Atom-2′s Egypt as the Cuba of the Middle East. It is both committed to Marxist-Leninist socialism and far enough from Moscow that Soviet tanks can't roll into Cairo, the same way they can't roll into Havana if the Soviet Politburo disagrees with the actions of either state. I hint at a strong independent foreign policy for Egypt in their sending advisors to aid the African National Congress on p. 36, and I explicitly state that Cuba and Egypt are closely aligned.

Khaled Mohieddin was a real left-wing lieutenant of Nasser, and I imagine he might have taken Anwar Sadat's place in history if Soviet influence in the country had been greater. I also really like the idea that Castro and Mohieddin are not only close political allies but also get along well on a personal level. They go golfing together, call each other on the telephone, etc.

Albania

The bit about Hoxhaist Albania on p. 30 was a throwaway line I added relatively late in the editing process as a nod to the fascinating (and horrific) story of communist Albania. Isolated

from and mistrustful even of other communist states, the dictatorship of Enver Hoxha was brutal even by the standards of the post-Stalin Soviet Union. Fans of *The Simpsons* may remember the early episode in which the eponymous family hosts an Albanian exchange student tasked with spying on the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant to bring atomic secrets back to his home country. It would be equivalent to their hosting a North Korean child-spy today.

Hoxha was so paranoid that he considered a joint U.S.-Soviet invasion of the country an inevitability, and the Albanian state spent an inordinate percentage of the country's very limited resources constructing a network of over one hundred thousand concrete bunkers to defend against such an attack. It is only fitting that they would also possess a small arsenal of nuclear weapons on Atom-2. My favorite tidbit from my readings on this era is that Hoxha's successors were so bitter toward the USSR that they declared Moscow's condolences upon Hoxha's death in 1985 insulting and "unacceptable."

Outer Space

I tried to keep space travel on Atom-2 grounded in reality as much as possible. It is slightly implausible that nuclear rocket engines would be as economical as they are in Atom-2's 2001, but this is relatively easy to overlook. Space

stations capable of hosting a thousand occupants aren't particularly likely by that time either, but I figured it was important to make space travel common enough that non-astronaut adventurers could make an excursion to the Moon.

In a less 1950s-inspired supplement I certainly would have given the proto-European Union a station instead of the U.K. If France, West Germany, and Italy built an orbital facility I imagine it would be called "EuroStation" or something similar. This is another small detail I would add if I were making edits today.

The real Chinese space program often uses poetic names from Chinese mythology (e.g., *Chang'e* and *Yutu* for their lunar program), but my research suggested that a rigidly Maoist Chinese government would opt for strictly secular, political imagery. I therefore went with "Revolution" and "Vanguard." Shoutout to Sandy S. for helping confirm the Chinese translations for the names of these stations.

Miscellany

The bioluminescent colony of psychic mushrooms in the Amazon on p. 26 was a late addition. I imagine them as glowing in intense shades of blue and purple, capable of using both spores and psionic waves to influence and control animals (and humans) that stumble too close to their secluded glens. They are not malicious or evil. They only want to be left alone, and they know the dangers humans could pose to them. Even if one group of humans understands and respects them, others will come who do not. When pulverized and snorted, the mushrooms become a very powerful psi drug with severe side effects, including psychosis. The powder can even temporarily empower non-psis. Perhaps Hans Giesler is seeking the mushrooms to sell to ODESSA?

I'm convinced that Archie Howell (p. 29) is the perfect name for a fictional U.S. Senator from Minnesota. I imagined him as a Korean War veteran who became a Democratic representative soon after returning stateside. He won his Senate seat in 1970 and was 48 when he died. It's actually quite a tragic story to think about too much, so I'll leave it there. I may have been subconsciously influenced by the name of Canadian hockey player Gordie Howe, but I only discovered this recently. Howell's death also brings to mind the real story of Representative Mickey Leland, a Democratic congressman who died in a plane crash in Ethiopia in 1989 while on a mission to advance his lifelong goal of ending hunger and severe poverty in Africa and around the world.

Most of the nuclear-armed states on Atom-2 listed on p. 30 either had real early-stage nuclear weapons programs or considered developing them during the Cold War. I was originally going to include Mexico on the list, but I reconsidered upon reading that the Mexican government has been a consistent advocate for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation for many decades.

Errata

I was both fortunate and diligent enough to avoid the most obvious typos and errors that might have crept into the supplement. That said, there are some small gremlins that made it through editing. None has been large enough to request a digital "reprint," but I figured I'd note them here for my own peace of mind.

p. 4: Kip's transmission to Liberty Station should state "Mayday" three times instead of two.

p. 12: It would have been useful to note more explicitly that cycler orbits can theoretically be established between any two bodies with significant gravity, not just the examples listed.

p. 24: In the "Currency Conversion" box, "rubles" shouldn't be capitalized.

p. 30: The reference to "Germany" in relation to the European Space Agency should be to "West Germany."

p. 36: "Martin" is not a Dutch name, though it is common in Germany. The standard Dutch version would be "Martijn." I have a feeling Wolkatz/van Timmerman would have caught that.

p. 37: The more common spelling of the name in German is "Seehofer" rather than "Seehoffer." German doesn't use double consonants as often as English does.

p. 37: The citation should read "***Pyramid #3/117: Hot Spots***, pp. 17-22" instead of "Hotspots and Locations." I have been making that error longer than I care to admit.

p. 43: The idea of marching up to the KGB and politely asking to "share" a groundbreaking and potentially dangerous scientific discovery in what they consider to be their territorial waters probably takes the idea of cooperation a bit too far. Today, I'd tweak the section to give a different third option.

p. 44: It should be "Ark of the Covenant" rather than "Arc of the Covenant." This isn't Flatland. I will note that Flatland does now exist in the Infinite Worlds canon, though nearly every detail of the worldline is left to the imagination (***Pyramid #4/3: Sci-Fi/Tech I***, p. 22).

Easter Eggs

p. 4: In the intro to Chapter 1, I imagined that Kip got to name the *Betty Sue* when he first made captain. Betty Sue isn't Kip's wife or girlfriend, just an old crush that never really went anywhere whom he still remembers fondly. Any resemblance to real people or events is entirely coincidental.

p. 4: The final line of the story is a reference to the theme song of the 1960s TV sitcom *Gilligan's Island*.

p. 22: The "canonical" Roswell explanation was inspired by a combination of the Army base escape from the *Futurama* episode "Roswell That Ends Well" and the opening cutscene of *Destroy All Humans!*

p. 23: Shabowsky is named for Günter Schabowski, the unlucky East German functionary whose botched press conference provided the final impetus for the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989. It's quite an interesting story that I would highly recommend looking up.

p. 28: "Welcome to the World of Tomorrow" is a reference to Terry the Cryonicist's melodramatic catchphrase in *Futurama*.

p. 30: Li Jingquan was a real communist official in Sichuan province in western China in the 1960s. He became leader of the Chinese Communist Party on Atom-4 following the atomic bombing of Beijing and other major population centers.

p. 31: GOSKOM is named for a contraction of the Russian words "Государственный Компьютер" (Romanized as "Gosudarstvennyy Kompyuter"), meaning "State Computer."

p. 36: "Pashtunistan" is one name for the majority-Pashtun region that spans southern Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan; this region includes the Khyber Pass. I will leave it to the imagination exactly what kind of monster the "ripper" is.

p. 37: I invented new German politicians for this section to avoid any legal issues depicting living people. German first names are often pulled from other European languages, and I felt the very gruff, Nordic sound of "Gustav Fromm" was appropriate for a stuffy East German career bureaucrat. There is a real

German politician named Horst Seehofer, which I did not know at the time of writing.

p. 42: "Military strategists likewise maintain a suspicious number of war plans that involve Soviet troops dropping onto major American cities from indestructible rigid airships." This is my favorite line in the supplement. I love the implication that defense planners very thinly disguised multiple UFO-centric war plans as truly ridiculous Soviet invasion contingencies to discourage casual observers from asking too many questions.

p. 42: Vitaly Fedorchuk, H. Stuart Knight, and U.E. Baughman were all real people who served as senior officers in the KGB and U.S. Secret Service, respectively.

p. 42: Crawfordsville, Indiana is a stop on the Amtrak route between Chicago and Indianapolis, which I pass through every time I go to visit family.

p. 45: "Nazis on the Moon" was one of the earliest **GURPS** campaigns I attempted to run. It didn't last long at all, but the name stuck with me.
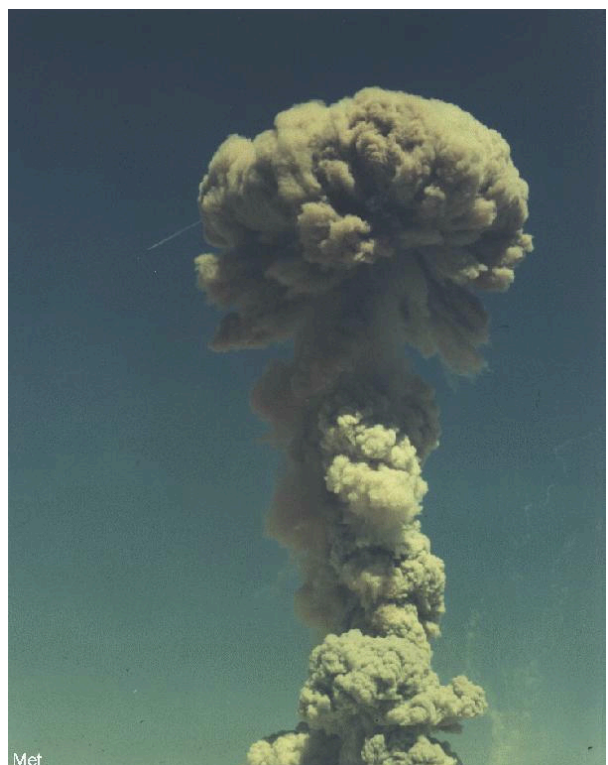
Easier Time Use

Roger Bell_West

Some campaigns have long game-time durations or significant downtime between adventures, long enough that characters can see significant advances from Improvement Through Study (pp. B292-294). But while the Time Use Sheet (p. B499 and B569) can work well, it can be excessively complex.

Many games I run and play in deal with characters who are generally "on duty" for something like office hours, though most of those duties aren't considered interesting enough to be worth playing through. For these, I developed a variant approach to time tracking.

Usable hours for study are those that are not consumed by adventuring, sleep, or other activities. Ignoring variant sleep needs (since my characters are mostly human-like and I haven't played one who differed in this) and other traits affecting free time, I rule a blanket 8 hours of sleep and 4 hours of non-productive activity per day, leaving 12 hours that can be dedicated to self-improvement.

I then go on to invent "weekdays" (eight hours of office presence, during which the organisation may provide training, plus four hours of free time) and "weekend days" (twelve hours of free time); this is obviously a European 20th century model, and should be adjusted for other periods. It's helpful to have a list of skills and learnable advantages (such as languages) that the organisation is set up to teach; work hours can be counted as "Education" for any of those. "Self-Teaching" has a wider range of possibilities, and non-work hours can typically be used for that. (Learning on the Job, Intensive Training and Adventuring are not covered by this system.) If characters are teaching *each other* skills, and this is something I've seen happen

quite a bit in this sort of campaign, this can also be Education, happening in either sort of time.

So the character picks things to learn on both the work and the non-work tracks. (A character who's spending time upgrading firearms, or producing custom ammunition, may dedicate one or another sort of hours to this too; these are Long Tasks in the Time Use terminology.) Then, when the length of period of downtime between adventures is known, the GM determines how many week- and weekend days were available; 5 and 2 per week, respectively, if there were no special events.

Each weekday produces 8 work hours and 4 non-work; each weekend day, 12 non-work. A full week thus produces 40 and 44 hours respectively. These are then applied at appropriate conversion rates to the characters' training queues.
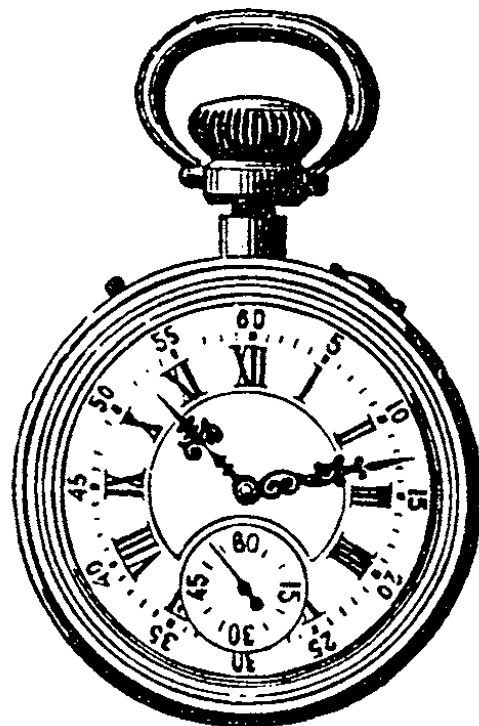
This abstracts things significantly from needing to schedule specific activities on specific dates (something probably too close to real life to be fun for most of us), while still providing a framework for roughly how much someone should be able to learn in a given span of time.

Effects of Specific Traits

Of course, most characters are not and should not be obsessive about self-improvement. That's for the GM to allot. The Time Use Sheet accounts for Extra Sleep and Less Sleep, but many other traits should be taken into account too.

Addiction: if the subject of the addiction is illegal, this should consume at least one non-work hour per week.

Allies and Dependents: if the relationship is a social one, you should probably spend time with the people you rely on, or who rely on you.

Chronic Depression: I don't expect to see many PCs with this, but they should probably make separate self-control rolls for each time slot (workday, evening, weekend), or apply the Self-Control Multiplier with a base of all available time.

Chummy: at least one non-work hour per day is likely to be spent in congenial company; see Compulsive Carousing.

Compulsive Behaviour (and Lecherousness): some of these, like Gambling or Carousing, will consume a fraction of non-work time See the Self-Control Multiplier value. But these hours can be considered "Learning on the Job" for a relevant skill, if any.

Disciplines of Faith: depends on the Discipline, but most of these except perhaps Ritualism will consume all non-work hours.

Increased/Reduced Consumption: change the "Meals" value up or down by one hour per week for each level.

Laziness: use the Self-Control Multiplier to do anything more than Carousing in non-work hours.

Slow Eater: add 31 hours to the "Meals" value.

Workaholic: shift 20 hours a week from non-work to work; you can borrow some of these from Sleep, but it won't end well.

Self-Control Multipliers

Rather than making individual self-control rolls, you can assume that rolls in the long term will average out and apply these multipliers to hours consumed by non-productive activities.

Self-Control Number	Multiplier
6	90%
9	60%
12	25%
15	5%

Ritual Path Magic for Monster Hunting in Florida!

John Dallman

Introduction

A few years ago, Roger ran a **GURPS Monster Hunters** campaign set in "Florida!," the *slightly* exaggerated version of the Sunshine State from Carl Hiaasen and Tim Dorsey's fiction. He wrote about it in issue #3 ("Starting a Monster Hunters Campaign"). I played the Witch in that group, and developed some rituals that seem with recording.

They don't quite match the assumptions of the standard Monster Hunters campaign, since the players preferred to solve the mysteries ourselves, rather than use the clue-accumulation mechanics. They may be useful for other kinds of campaign that use Ritual Path Magic.

Play style

Because we were solving the mystery as we went along, and the televisual style stressed action, Natasha Fletcher didn't get to do very much preparation of powerful charms that were specific to the scenario.[1] Instead, she made generally useful charms, and did most of the investigative casting *ad lib*, with her personal Mana Reserve and perhaps one gathering roll, if there was time.

Doing this without slowing down the game requires compiling a quick-reference sheet from Chapter 2 of **Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic** for numbers (see p. 46) and becoming very familiar with the casting rules. This isn't trivial, but if you manage it, you can do something rather wonderful. A near-instant creative magical response to a surprise situation can swing fights and stop problems before they get going.

This does make a Witch quite powerful. To do it, you need good Magery (Natasha had 5), Ritual Adept, and to pick the Paths you specialise in carefully. I had intended her to specialise in Path of Mind, but she turned out to be too ethical to exploit that to the full; Path of Magic would have been a better choice. A lot of the energy she gathered went into refilling her Mana Reserve, and being better at that would have helped.

This approach isn't very practical for non-Adepts, or characters with low Magery levels. They must use Charms, long rituals, and so on.

In-character knowledge of science provides ways of disabling weapons, breaking surveillance equipment, and so on. Natasha was a high-school biology teacher, after having abandoned a medical degree, and had occasional trouble from creationist parents. She was also clear that transmuting elements required Greater effects, although you can do all sorts of things to molecules with Lesser workings.

A Witch played this way may overshadow the other characters. It can be worth diverting some points into survival-orientated advantages, like upgrading Luck to Extraordinary Luck, or buying an Extra Life.

Even playing a capable Witch, I didn't try to use offensive magic much. It is expensive, and guns, blades, and our weretiger were adequate for the combats we engaged in. The TV series the characters were appearing in was more David Lynch than Michael Bay.

Improvisations

Unofficial investigators don't get to use number-plate tracking systems, and those don't exist in Florida swamps anyway:

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[1] There were a few. Transmuting 50 tons of yoghurt to napalm can't be done on-the-fly.

Find Numberplate Lesser Sense Matter (2), radius 30 miles (5), total 7.

The first actual fight in the campaign involved a release of Sarin gas. It seemed to have been being made for a terrorist operation, but was released when the characters showed up, as a way of silencing the enemy's pawns, and hopefully the meddling outsiders.

What's That Gas? Lesser Sense Matter (2), range 10 yards (4), total 6.

Decontamination Lesser Destroy Matter (5), weight 10lb (0), radius 5 yards (4), total 9.

Protection from Specific Poison Lesser Strengthen Body (3), Resistance (Immunity) (5), duration 30 minutes (2) weight 300lb (3), total 13.

The next case started with a missing person, whom we managed to source a picture of:

Where's Celestina? Lesser Sense Body (2), 100 miles radius (6), total 8.

We found her easily enough, manacled in a soundproofed outbuilding of a church, with another young woman in another cell.

Remove Manacles Lesser Transform Matter (8), weight 10lb (0), total 8. Lets you stretch a manacle enough to work a foot out, while leaving it unchanged afterwards.

The other young woman was a bit of a surprise. She said she was Tiffany Adams, a cheerleader who'd gone missing eight years earlier. She looked like her news photo — too much so, for someone who'd been a prisoner that long — and she still thought it was 2011. Natasha asked to take her pulse:

How old is that body? Lesser Sense Body (2).

The answer was 347 years, and if we'd taken more notice of that, we'd have saved some lives and trouble, because she was some kind of skin-changer. But we didn't; the characters were new to this kind of stuff, and she was convincingly upset. You can't get everything right.

The next case started with a tip-off, from someone who we eventually concluded was opposed to the enemy of the first scenario. There was a death aura in part of Saint Vincent's, the largest hospital in town. Two of the party went in with detection charms (below) to locate the area. Next day we infiltrated the hospital and got to the right storeroom to find the zombies, and their controller.

Magical Disguise Lesser Transform Body (8), duration 6 hours (5), total 13.

There were quite a few zombies:

Damage Zombies Lesser Destroy Undead 5, 5 yard radius (4), 7 yard range (3), 2d damage (4), total 16.

There was no need to worry about catching friends in this, and it was worth taking 2HP to get the range, area and damage. I realised while writing this article that I should have included subject weight. Ah, well. All Natasha did in the rest of that fight was defend with her quarterstaff, although that did some damage to zombies.

Rituals

Scrying with Crossroads

You start with Lesser Create Crossroads (6) for a view through space, or Greater Create Crossroads (6, ×3) for a view through space *and* time into the past. That creates a small and limited one-way "gate" that can only pass information, and Lesser Sense Crossroads (2) to see through it. That's the way that Christopher R. Rice and Jason "PK" Levine came up with. I added the time option.

That gets you a rotatable viewpoint at a fixed location, and it takes information-spell range costs through space and time, paid separately. It also needs to pay for duration.

Area of Effect

Adding this allows the viewpoint to move through space within the purchased area. Since we don't have area-in-time costs, a viewpoint can't be moved around through time, it just moves forward at the usual rate of time. This means you have to sit and watch it for its duration, and if you want rewind, zoom, slow-motion, or suchlike, you need to do that with Mind effects at your end.

Detectability

Adding Lesser Control Magic (5), then +25% of the total cost allows no magical signature at the far end (based on "No Psychic Signature" from *GURPS Psionic Powers*, p. 20). I didn't worry about doing that on views through time, because opening that can of worms would allow signalling to the past and changing events there.

No looking forwards

This cannot look into the future, which is the province of Divination (*T:RPM*, p. 24).

Example Castings

Watching the death under supernatural control of a bike messenger. We had time and place of death from security-camera footage, so it went:

Greater Create Crossroads (6, ×3), Lesser Sense Crossroads (2), range in time 10 days (4), range in space 1 mile (1), duration 1 hour (3), total 16×3 = 48.

Looking into a specific room in a hospital, for which we had architect's plans, in the present, made very difficult to detect:

Lesser Create Crossroads (6), Lesser Sense Crossroads (2), range in space ½ mile (1), duration 10 minutes (1), area effect 7 yards radius (6), Lesser Sense Energy (2), Night Vision 9 (9), Lesser Control Magic (5), sub-total 32, +25% no Magical Signature, total 40.

Dating an event

This is much simpler than viewing through time. Lesser Sense Crossroads (2), with modifiers for range, duration and area of effect suffices.

Example casting

When was that wall damaged? Lesser Sense Crossroads (2), range 7 yards (3), time range 10 days (4), total 9.

Deactivating ammunition

This can be done by making the primers inert. It's a favourite of Natasha's, because idiots in Florida! often have SMGs or assault rifles. Note that it is *not selective*: catching the party in it deactivates their ammunition too.

Example casting

The first casting, improvised when suddenly necessary: Lesser Destroy Matter (5), weight 10lb (0), 3 yards radius (2), range 7 yards (3), duration 1 hour (3), total 13.

Were-clothes

Our weretiger, Jade, returned to human form (an attractive small Chinese woman) without clothing. That was awkward for the TV program, and relatively easy to fix.
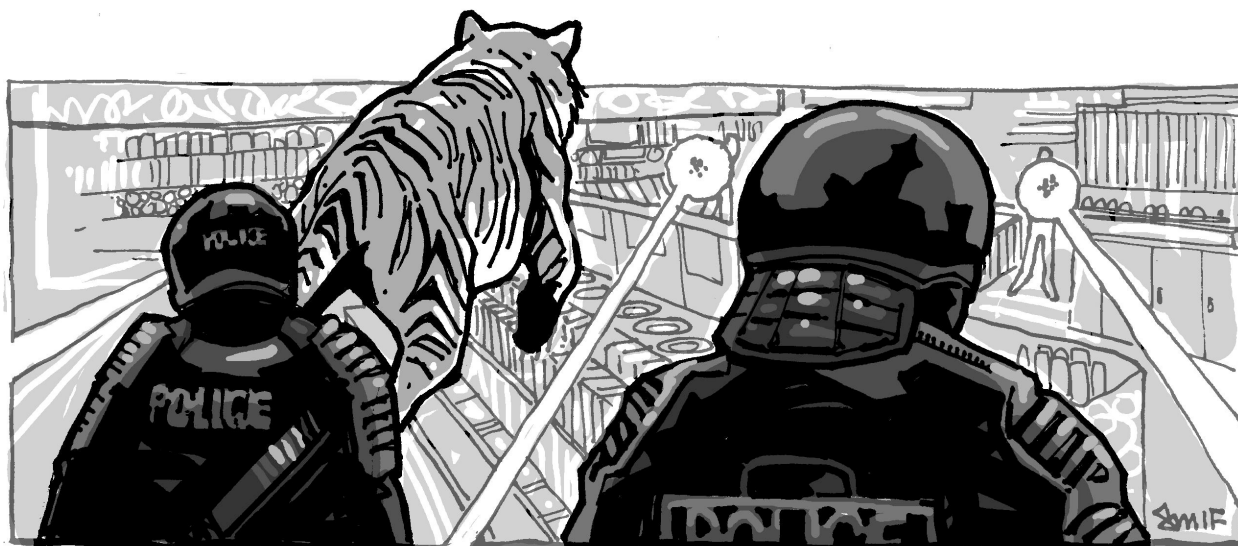
Example casting

Greater Create Crossroads 6 (6, ×3), Payload 1, Cosmic +50% (2), duration 1 month (10), total 18×3 = 54.

That got human Jade, with ST 11, her 2.4lb Basic Lift of equipment, enough for a Lycra mini-dress and ballet flats. Lycanthropes tend to have vast physical confidence. The duration was inevitably a lunar month, expiring at new moon. It can be dispelled and is detectable as ongoing magic.

Boosting a skill

There are a lot of places in an investigation where being much better at Stealth for a while will just *remove* problems.

Example casting

Lesser Strengthen Mind (3), duration 6 hours (5), narrow bonus of +5 (16), total 24.

Recording a mental image

The traditional way for magicians to do this is Artist (Drawing). After failing that utterly, Natasha grabbed a Polaroid camera that Jesus, our Techie, had in his workshop.

Example casting

Lesser Strengthen Mind (3), Photographic Memory (5), Lesser Transform Matter (8), total 16.

Charms

Detection charms

One way to make a detection device than a non-magician can use is a small elongated object, such as a door-key, which gets warmer and colder as you get closer to the target, and as you point it in the right direction. That doesn't give away your infiltrator to bystanders, and an unfamiliar person dressed as a contract cleaner, holding a key and looking for somewhere in the hospital is easy to ignore.

Example charm

Lesser Sense (Magic, Spirit, or whatever) (2), Lesser Control Magic for a charm (5), Lesser Control Magic for no magical signature (5), duration 6 hours (5), information radius 200 yards (0), sub-total 17, +25% total 22.

Stunning opponents

Mental and physical stuns don't last long, but they are very advantageous at the start of a fight. Natasha specialised in mental stuns, which were

effective on low-Will giant albino alligators[2], and don't need Subject Weight modifiers.

Example charm

Lesser Destroy Mind (5), range 10 yards (4), Lesser Control Magic for a charm (5), total 14.

Silencing a gun

Silencing, not suppressing. Natasha did this with Lesser Destroy Energy, as a charm on the gun, activated when the trigger was pulled. The effect is a narrow cone, with the point behind the breech, extending for 10 yards. This removes the sound of the action operating, the firing, and the bullet in flight while it's within the cone, and the bullet impact, if that's within the cone. It works just as well on a revolver as a semi-automatic pistol.

Example charm

Greater Destroy Energy (5, ×3), 10 minutes duration (1), area of effect 10-yard cone (much smaller than a 5-yard radius sphere) (4), Lesser Control Magic for a charm (5), total 15×3 = 45.

Deactivating *lots* of ammunition

A charm to take out all the ammunition on a housing estate, dropped from an expendable drone. The residents of the estate had all been recruited into the kind of cult that makes it

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[2]Weirdness Magnet is a real nuisance in Florida!, although very thematically appropriate.

seem reasonable to kill all the men and stockpile assault rifles to defend the cult priestess.

Lesser Destroy Matter (5), weight 100lb (2), 800 yards radius (14), duration 3 hours (4), Lesser Control Magic for a charm (5), total 30.

Healing

Since this was a TL8 game, 2d healing was possible with Lesser Restore Body, and charms of that were worth handing out to the other characters.

Jade was our leading hand-to-hand fighter, and got wounded fairly often. Natasha concluded that since lycanthropes usually have less hit points in human than animal form, with damage adjusted proportionally, one should heal the larger amount of damage to restore them to proper health. That meant charms needed to handle 1,000lb of tiger, not just 300lb of human.
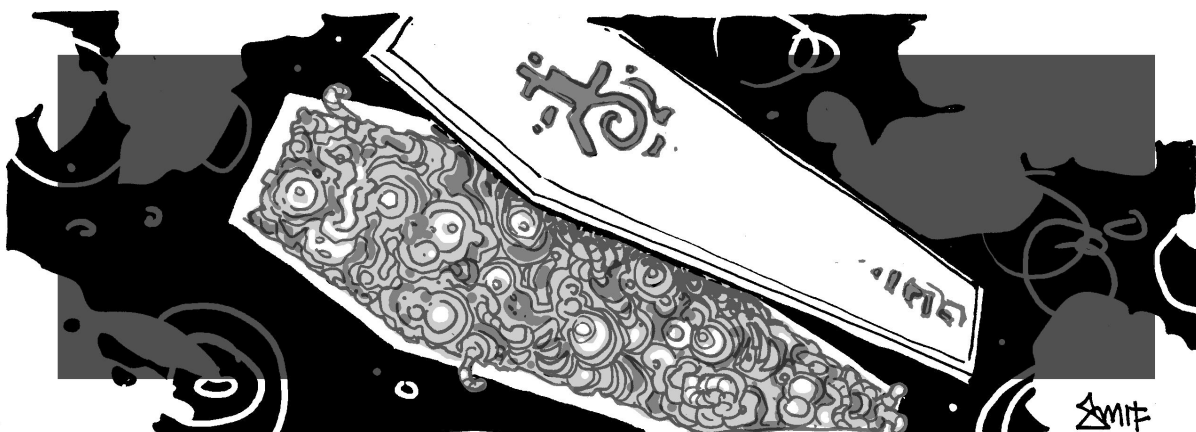
Example charm

Lesser Restore Body (4), 2d healing (4), Weight 1,000lb (4), Lesser Control Magic for a charm (5), total 17.

Fixing a car

Cars get damaged a lot in Florida! campaigns. We used Jesus' station waggon a lot, since it would hold everyone and equipment, and repairing it became a running gag.

Example charm

Greater Restore Matter (4, ×3), weight 5 tons (6), Lesser Control Magic for a charm (5), total 15×3=45.

Mana Batteries

Near the end of the campaign, Natasha used Christopher R. Rice's [Mana Batteries](#) on an experimental basis. The only one that was made came in very handy for re-attaching a severed hand to Juan, our Experiment.

Abuses of RPM

Being an un-ethical magician in Florida! has considerable money-making potential. Making and selling large quantities of stuff that will be used up before its duration expires, such as gasoline or cocaine, is the obvious start.

Supplying criminals with silenced weapons, and information derived from scrying, is an obvious next step. From there, giving people reasonably subtle new abilities and skill boosts is another stage. Giving people new disadvantages at someone else's request is *definitely* on the slippery slope to damnation.

Ideas that didn't get used

There are a lot of tricks that you can do to, or with, modern smartphones. Igniting the batteries. Disabling them utterly for a known duration by transforming the dopant in the semiconductors into something else. Inflicting

Facebook addiction (Cheap, legal, totally addictive [-10]) for a few hours.

"Snap out of it, Jade!"

Jade was a very effective combatant, but her mental defences were not spectacular. Natasha realised how bad it would be if Jade got mind-controlled and prepared for it.

Example charm

Greater Restore Mind (4, ×3), range 2 yards (0). Lesser Control Magic for a charm (5), total 9×3=27, plus another 54 energy to help overcome the effect on Jade.

Charms for Men in Black

"No need to hurt anyone" Greater Control Mind (5, ×3), Affliction (Pacifism, (Self-Defence Only) [-15]) (3), range 2 yards (0), duration 10 minutes (1), total 9×3=27.

"Just the facts, please" Greater Control Mind (5, ×3), Affliction (Truthfulness, no Self-Control Roll, [-12]) (3), range 2 yards (0), duration 10 minutes (1), total 9×3=27.

"This is all straightforward" Greater Control Mind (5, ×3), Affliction (Gullibility, no SCR, [-25]) (5), range 2 yards (0), duration 2 weeks (10), total 20×3=60.

"Your magic has been revoked" Greater Destroy Magic (5, ×3), remove Magery [65] and Ritual Adept [40] (21), duration 1 year (21), total 47×3=141.

Two Creatures of the Night

Scott Maykrantz

After reading *The Path of Cunning*, I decided I wanted to join in the fun. Looking through my old ***Creatures of the Night*** book (1993) I wrote up about fifteen new ones.

Each of these little horrors is a work in progress and I'm eager for feedback. If you have better ideas for names, I'd like to hear them; I need to brainstorm a lot to come up with good names. Anything else you want to comment on will be appreciated.

Sometimes I create a creature and — after a little time goes by — I realize where I got the idea. There are cases where my inspiration is too similar to the creature I created and I have to dump it or do a major rewrite. If you notice any similarities between these creatures and others from comic books, movies, TV shows, etc., please let me know.

I have a large backlog of ***GURPS*** material that I've never submitted to Pyramid or used in a book proposal. I'll dig into that pile for future issues, along with more creatures.

You can reach me at: spmaykrantz@gmail.com

Endominant Slug

An endominant slug looks like a deflated leather ball about one foot long. On one end there is a single eye surrounded by six wormy tendrils. They seek out sapients and take control of their minds by affixing their soft bodies to the back of the victim's head. Once an endominant slug has attached itself, it begins sucking the life out of its host. Eventually, it must find a new victim.

They call themselves the "tzendeshi." If they are a known species in the setting, this might be one of their alternate names.

ST: 1   **HP:** 6   **Speed:** 6
DX: 1   **Will:** 22   **Move:** 1/2
IQ: 15   **Per:** 13   **Weight:** 5 lbs.
HT: 13   **FP:** 18   **SM:** –2
Dodge: 1   **Parry:** n/a   **DR:** 0
Bite (15): 1d-5.

Traits: Affliction 7 (HT-6; Paralysis; Follow-Up, Bite; Contact Agent); Callous; Clinging (Switchable, Accessibility, not while Slippery); Common Sense; Danger Sense; Dark Vision (Color Vision); Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Draining (requires calories from host; see description); Hard to Kill 3; High Pain Threshold; Injury Tolerance (No Head, No Neck); Intuition; Invertebrate; Megalomania; Mind Control (Accessibility, Must be in constant physical contact, Must have tendrils extended into the victim's skin, Victim must be sapient, Only one victim at a time; Extended Duration, 30x; No Memory); Mind Reading (Sensory, Only current host); Mind Reading (Racial); Mindlink (10-99 people; Only endominant slugs); Mute; No Sense of Smell/Taste; One Eye; Pyrophobia (6); Resistant to Metabolic Hazards (+8); Slippery 4 (Switchable, Accessibility, not while using Clinging); Telesend (Racial); Vermiform.

Skills: Area Knowledge (local area)-15; Area Knowledge (the building, vehicle, tunnels, etc it currently resides in)-18; Brawling-15; Current Affairs (Politics)-19; Savoir-Faire-16.

Notes: Draining is 1 FP or HP per day, not 2 HP (p. B132). As long as the slug is attached, the loss can never be healed except by supernatural (or ultra-tech) means.

The slugs can see in total darkness. They view their surroundings with binocular vision if they are attached to a host. They can also sense danger, including the feeling they might get

stepped on. They communicate with each other through telepathic means (racial Mind Reading and Telesend). To communicate with others, they need to speak through a host.

They are afraid of fire. They will cringe before torches or flinch if someone nearby lights a cigarette. Fire doesn't do any extra damage, but the slugs can't tolerate exposure to flames. When controlling a host, this fear is evident in the host's reaction to fire — he might have had no problem with fire before, but now that an endominant slug is attached to him, he's scared to death of anything bigger than a candle flame.

A slug can secrete two different fluids from its skin, one to make it slippery, and a different one to make it sticky. It uses the former when someone is trying to grab it. It uses the latter when it attaches itself to a host or climbs up a wall.

The skills listed here are for a slug that has been able to learn about its surroundings, most likely by doing something simple like using the Internet via its host. It wants to rise in Status and Rank, so it learns how to behave among community leaders (and organized crime).
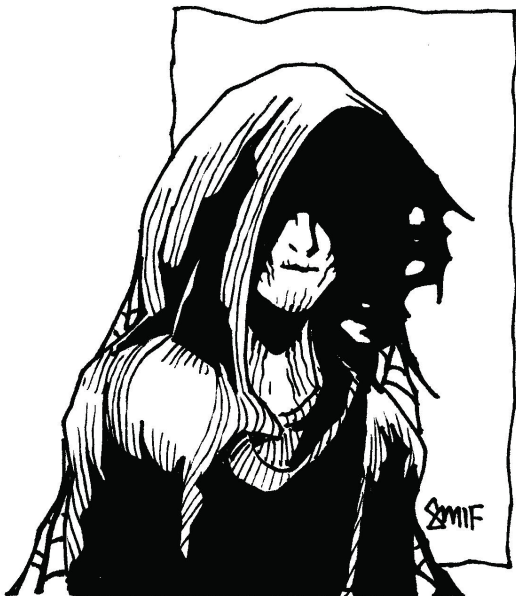
Taking Control

The slug attempts to control the mind of a potential host by causing paralysis with a bite. The bite can't be made on any surface covering the host, even sheer fabric. It must touch skin.

Once the victim is paralyzed and helpless, the slug slithers up to the head and burrows the tips of its tendrils into the skin at the back of the skull. Then it affixes itself to the back of the neck, fastened strongly enough to stay attached even if the host is punched or tackled. The creature can see through the host's eyes, smell and taste, feel with the host's skin, hear in any way the host has, and speak.

Endominant slugs are very intelligent, so they choose their hosts wisely. They like tall hosts that give them a good view. They want the victim to be someone who can wear a hooded garment without attracting attention. They are interested in hosts with high Status, Rank, and similar social advantages. It's also helpful if the host knows some combat skills to defend themselves.

You can let one of the campaign NPCs get taken over by an endominant slug. The player character heroes might realize that their buddy's brain isn't working right. Maybe they blame alcohol or another drug. But if they examine him, they'll find the helpless little creature. At that point, they might decide to befriend the slug and leave the NPC under its control. Maybe the slug has valuable skills that it can use through the host. The PCs would benefit if they made it their ally. Maybe the NPC had a personality that no one could stand, and the group enjoys this respite from him.

If an endominant slug takes control of a PC, the player could roleplay the slug — an intelligent, megalomaniacal, physically vulnerable, secretive, and scheming little creature. Sounds like fun.

Mind Control

To establish control, the slug must place itself against the back of the target's head, then concentrate for a second. This is followed by a Quick Contest of the target's IQ and the slug's Will. If the target loses, it is now a host body under the slug's control. The control lasts until:

(a) The slug chooses to end it.

(b) The host receives a command that conflicts with his personal convictions. If this happens, roll another Quick Contest of his IQ and the slug's Will. If he wins, he breaks the control.

(c) The duration ends.

At any time, the slug can switch on the Puppet limitation, giving the host Slave Mentality. The host loses all initiative and does nothing until he receives a command.

Endominant slugs cannot use Mind Control on more than one target at a time.

While Attached

The endominant slug doesn't eat like a regular animal. As long as it stays attached, it drains the calories it needs from the host. Even if the host eats a lot, he can't keep up — he gets skinny and eventually dies from malnutrition. In game terms, the host loses 1 FP per day that cannot be regained except through some sort of supernatural means (e.g., psionic healing or a regeneration spell). When he reaches 1 FP, he begins losing HP at the same rate. An average human would die after 29 days.

The chemicals exchanged between the creature and the host have the strange effect of softening the host's skull. On the second day the slug is attached, the host's skull DR drops by 1. A week after that, DR drops by 1 again. This continues until the DR reaches 0. This doesn't cause any change in the function of the host — his head doesn't deflate or anything like that — but he can no longer rely on that extra DR to protect his brain.

A slug will always command its host to find an appropriate disguise that will hide the creature. The most common is a hood. The host could also wrap his skull in bandages, keeping the face exposed, or wear a wig. If the host can't find anything, he will do what he can to keep the slug out of sight, like hide in the shadows or only let people look directly at his face. In some game worlds, superpowers and magic will be available, like using an illusion spell or ability to create the illusion of a clear, unremarkable neck.

It sees through the host's eyes and speaks using his mouth. Attaching to a host that has heightened senses is a great gift to the slug, allowing it see, hear, or smell better than a regular human. In a campaign where slugs are treated as a sapient species, they always know the most common languages at Native level.

Endominant slugs are mean and power-hungry, as noted through their Megalomaniac and Callous traits. You can make them worse by adding Bloodlust, Bully, Greed, Intolerance, Jealousy, Sadism, or Selfish.

The slug can detach at any time. If the body it is controlling it no longer useful — or safe — it will try to switch immediately from one host to another. The smartest and most resourceful endominant slugs can attach themselves to a whole string of hosts, one after another, for months. The slugs help their brothers in this endeavor — they use their own mind-controlled host to place someone in a vulnerable position so another slug can bite them, paralyze them, and take control. The slugs are very competitive with each other, but smart enough to know this mutual aid is in their own best interests. It's complicated.

Variant: Small Slugs

Normally, a slug is about the size of a deflated volleyball. But you could change the slugs to little creatures just a few inches long. At this size, they can nestle in the base of the skull at

the back of the neck, or hide behind an ear. Attaching to the top of the head allows the slug to be hidden by a hat. David Cronenberg did something like this with his first movie, *Shivers* (1975), except the slugs wanted sex instead of world domination.

Adventures and Encounters

They are found in temperate areas, almost always within a day's slither of potential victims. The endominant slugs are not suited for desert or arctic climates. They can survive in swamps, but are arrogant and consider that kind of environment beneath them.

In the campaign, the endominant slugs can be one of these three types of creatures:

(1) They are dangerous little monsters. This is suitable for almost any genre.

(2) They are a sapient soecies, but the general public does not know they exist. This might be the best option for a **GURPS Horror** campaign. The PCs can encounter more than one slug, possibly discovering a hidden base of operations.

(3) They are a known species. This is a good option for a science fiction campaign. In this case, the endominant slugs are one of many alien species that humans can encounter in their adventures. They might have hosts created for them, like in a cloning vat. If the slugs are a species, the GM might treat them as NPCs — NPCs attached to another NPC.

If they are a species, you can take this a step further by adding subspecies, signifying each type with a color. Maybe the green ones have superior Mind Control, but tend to be less intelligent. The blue ones remove Megalomania and Callous and replace them with Chummy; they are the friendly ones. You can alter attributes, secondary characteristics, size, skills, and traits for each color.

Similar to subspecies is the concept of age. Although they are all one species, the older tzendeshi have superior abilities. You could use the stats here as your baseline, an average-aged specimen. For an elder, improve stats like Per, Will, and HT. Then lower those same stats below the baseline to create a young one.

There are lots of adventure possibilities, in a variety of genres.

Bobby

Modern day suburban TL7 or TL8

An endominant slug takes control of Bobby, a teenager who is home from school, feeling ill. Somehow, this control unleashes Bobby's latent psionic powers. He can read minds, zap people with electro-shocks, and tip over trucks with a thought. The slug wants total control of the town, starting with the school. Now, when Bobby goes to class, he always wears his hoodie.

The player characters are investigators of the paranormal who got an anonymous tip that someone in the community has psionic powers.

They arrive in town disguised as salesmen (or whatever cover works best) and use this excuse to investigate the school, individual homes, the local hospital, etc. If they do it right, they can find the psionic kid. But do they find the slug? If they blow their cover, the slug will use the kid and his powers to go after the PCs.

Further complicating matters, this kid might not be the only one in town with psionic powers. There might be another who wants to help the PCs. Maybe when they are in a tight spot, sure they are going to die, the second kid intervenes and saves them.

And who gave them that anonymous tip that started this whole thing?

Clotted Swine

This large, wild pig is a supernatural magnet for contagious diseases. It is riddled with illness but continues to live, ignoring all of the diseases' effects. If someone bothers it, it can panic and release some of the illnesses it harbors, potentially making everyone nearby sick.

ST: 15   **HP:** 15   **Speed:** 4.
DX: 9   **Will:** 12   **Move:** 4.
IQ: 5   **Per:** 10   **Weight:** 320 lbs.
HT: 15   **FP:** 15   **SM:** +1 (2 hexes).
Dodge: n/a   **Parry:** n/a   **DR:** 2.

Traits: Bad Smell; Bad Temper (9); Cowardice; Discriminatory Smell; Disease Attack (Area Effect 10, Uncontrollable); DR 2 (Tough skin); Fearfulness 5; Hideous; Infravision; Immunity to Disease*, Quadruped; Sleepy; Weirdness Magnet (Just diseases); Wild Animal; Wounded.

Skills: none.

Notes: * The swine can catch diseases, but it is immune to their effects.

The clotted swine lives in a burrow that it digs for itself, like an oversized badger. If humans live in the area, it will choose a location close to where they discard their refuse. It keeps to itself, sleeping, occasionally eating, and passively collecting any contagious disease that exists within ten miles. It can catch a cold from someone in the same neighborhood, become infected with smallpox from someone a mile away, and contract polio from someone ten miles away. These acquisitions are not cumulative — i.e., if the creature gets polio, an additional exposure doesn't give it double polio.

The swine's appearance reflects the amount — and deadliness — of the diseases it harbors. A clotted swine with nothing more than a few open sores and large rashes probably harbors only one disease, and is Hideous (-4 to reaction rolls). If it has rotting flesh and multiple open sores, it is Monstrous (-5 to reactions). One that harbors six or more is Horrific (-6 to reactions). At this level, a Fright Check is necessary the first time someone sees it.

If you don't bother it, you are probably safe. It doesn't emit disease while it sits alone, quietly snoozing or rooting through the garbage. But if it becomes frightened, it is attacked, or it is captured, the creature starts to emit the diseases it harbors. This happens as a reflex caused by fear — the swine has no control over what diseases it releases or when.

If anyone interacts with it, roll a reaction, at –6. It is cowardly and fearful, so any negative result triggers it and it emits one illness. If it is left alone. them 30 seconds later, it calms down. If not, it emits another one. This continues until the swine is left alone or it runs out of illnesses. (Note that it can still defend itself with a bite — and it will.) The GM chooses which diseases the creature has and the order in which they are released.

Anyone within 50 yards can become infected. Roll against HT with the penalty listed at the beginning of each disease description. A failed roll means the individual has contracted the disease.

A touch is even worse than scaring it. It you make skin-to-skin contact, you need to make a successful HT roll — at the penalty listed for the disease — to avoid acquiring one of its illnesses. (If your roll is a critical failure, you acquire two.) If it bites you, the roll is at an additional –3. The most dangerous situation is to be near it when it has an open wound. Any contact with the wound prompts a HT roll with the listed penalty, with an added –5. On a failure, you acquire two contagious diseases. On a critical failure, you contract three.
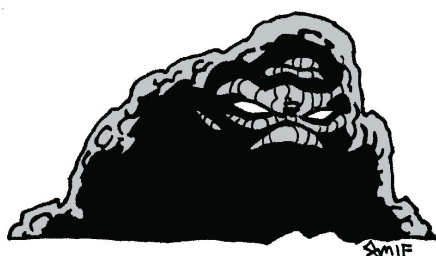
Exposure Table

Exposure	Modifier to HT roll	Failure	Critical Failure
Touch, skin-to-skin	–1	Catch a disease	Catch two diseases.
It bites you	–3	Catch a disease	Catch two diseases.
Touch an open wound	–5	Catch two diseases	Catch three diseases.

Adventures and Encounters

It inhabits temperate regions, where it rarely suffers extremes of heat or wintery cold. It is usually encountered alone.

Before the adventure begins, decide what diseases the clotted swine carries. Choose at least three from the list below. You can design your own, of course. See p. B442-43 for disease rules.

Real Diseases

Bubonic and Pneumonic Plague: See *GURPS Bio-Tech*, p. 113.

Common cold: Respiratory. 8-hour delay. HT-3. 1 point of Fatigue damage every hour until you reach one third of your base FP. At that point, you lose 1 hit point and 1 FP every hour until one of them reaches zero. Then you can start healing.

Dengue Fever: Respiratory. 12-hour delay, HT-3, 1 point toxic damage, daily intervals, 21 cycles. Symptoms: ST cut in half (round down) after losing a third of HP.

Ebola: See *Bio-Tech*, p. 113.

Influenza: See *Bio-Tech*, p. 114.

Malaria: Respiratory; 72-hour delay, HT-2, 1 point of toxic damage, daily interval, 30 cycles.

Symptoms: DX-4 and IQ-2 after losing one third of HP. DX-2 and IQ-4 after losing half HP.

Rabies: 24-hour delay, HT-8, 2 points of toxic damage, 6-hour interval, 12 cycles. Moderate pain after second cycle. Thirsty after losing one-third of HP. Sickened by water at the same time. Roll HT-10 to avoid retching when drinking water. ST drops down to 3 after losing half of HP. Collapse after losing two-thirds.

Smallpox: 48-hour delay, HT-4, 1 point of toxic damage, daily interval, 30 cycles. Moderate pain after losing 2/3rds of your HP.

Fictional Diseases

Sorceritis*: 12-hour delay, HT-1, 1 point toxic damage, 24-hour interval with 12 cycles, contagious only to people with Magery. At the end of every 12 hour period while infected, roll against HT-5. Failure results in the temporary loss of one level of Magery. You regain all lost levels after you've been cured of the disease. Highly contagious.

Jacob's Curse*: Contact/Respiratory. 12-hour delay. HT-3, 1 point of toxic damage, 24-hour interval, 6 cycles. Symptoms: After losing 1/3 of HP, gain Magic Susceptibility 3. After losing half HP, Magic Susceptibility rises to 5. After losing 2/3 HP, reduce ST and DX by –3.

Manatosis*: Respiratory/Blood. No delay, HT-1, 2 points toxic damage, 2-hour cycle with 6 cycles. Symptoms: after losing one third of HP, become comatose in high mana zones, paralyzed in normal mana, or ST-5 and DX-5 in low mana. No effect in no mana zones.

Grey Bile: Contact; HT-4; 12-hour delay; 1 point of toxic damage; 12-hour interval with 8 cycles. Symptoms: –1 to ST and nausea after loss of 1/3 HP; an additional –1 ST and Repulsion (fresh food) after loss of 1/2 HP; a third –1 ST and Easy to Kill 2 after loss of 2/3 HP. Highly contagious.

Seaborne Shakes: 24-hour delay, HT-3, 1 point of toxic damage, 12-hour interval with 12 cycles. After losing one third of your HP, you suffer from tremors in your hands, reducing your DX by 8 for 3d+10 minutes. These occur every 1d-1 hours (count zero as half an hour). After losing half your HP, you become seasick (p. B436). You stay that way until you've healed all lost HP.

Somnambulant Pyrotosis: Respiratory; 12-hour delay, HT-2, 1 point toxic damage, 12-hour interval, 8 cycles. Symptoms: After losing one third of HP, you have Sleepwalker (6) (p. B154) and Pyromania (6) (p. B150). You like to set fires while sleepwalking! This continues until the disease completes its final cycle or you are cured.

* For fantasy campaigns.
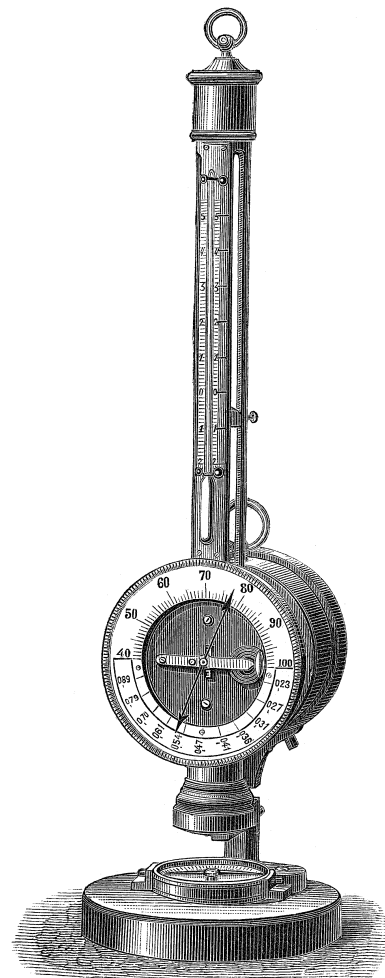
William H. Stoddard

I'm glad to see you taking care to note that actor stance is necessary, but not sufficient, for immersive play. You're quite correct that I don't play immersively. But I certainly think I do play in actor stance, choosing only actions that are consistent with my character's knowledge and motivation.

I think that it's possible to do this without assuming the subjective point of view of one's character. When I play a character, I do so in third person, so to speak: I constantly ask myself "What would he [or she] do in this situation?" But I'm not playing a *character* who asks that question. Indeed, for the most part, when I think of an action for my character, I have them perform it, without further thought or analysis. I'm an introvert myself, and spend a lot of time looking at social interactions from somewhere back inside my head; but I'm not *playing* introverts (usually), and acting on my first thought helps me portray a more impulsive, less introspective character.

So what am I thinking about? Part of it is coming up with lines and actions that will give the other players something to take off from (which I suppose is kind of director stance). Part of it is coming up with things that will entertain the other players, or be memorable for

them. I'm still proud, for example, of the time I was playing a Dzur hunter and duellist who wasn't very bright (I modeled him partly on Bertie Wooster!), and one of the other player characters left the party, and came back in disguise, which my character failed to see through. The other player characters started a pool on how long it would take my character to figure it out, and I said, "The horse! My friends, I know not what you are wagering on, but I would gladly stake an Imperial!" And they all broke up, and one of them was still quoting it years later…

I suppose what I'm doing is somewhat in the spirit of Olivier's reputed quip to Hoffman, "Why don't you just try acting?" (after Hoffman had gone without sleep for a long time to portray a character who had been going without sleep). In fact, I might suggest that the immersive play you describe is not actually in actor stance but in what might be called experiencer stance (or perhaps even audience stance): it's born of a desire to fall into the narrative/drama of the game. I like to do that when I'm watching a movie; if I'm consciously looking at the screen and thinking "Hmmm, nice chocolate frogs," I don't feel that the movie has succeeded. But when I'm playing, part of me is a conscious craftsman trying to do something with the medium and the premise.

Which doesn't prevent me from having inspirations about what my character would say or do; indeed, I have them also when I'm playing NPCs as part of GMing — indeed, one of the moments I hope for is the moment when one of the NPCs "comes to life" and I know what they're going to say or do without having to think about it, because they've found their own voice.

This may be just as strange and hard to figure out for you as immersive play was the first time I encountered it. But I hope my testimony is of some interest.

Roger: *I think "actor" is an ambiguous term, because it covers both Hoffman and Olivier, though I think it's intended to imply the improviser, someone briefed only on a character outline and coming up with their own lines on the spot.*
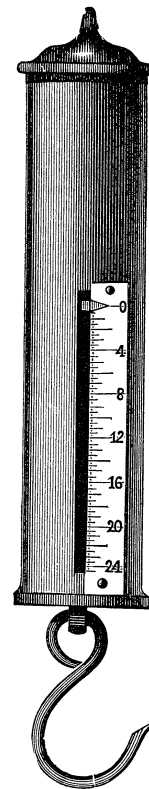
What you're calling "actor stance" above I tend to regard as necessary for actual role-playing, rather than tactical wargaming or puzzle-solving. For example I have no ground-in respect for kings or gods, so if I'm going to play a character in a fantasy world rather than me in a silly hat I have to modify my character's actions from what I might personally do. For me the most rewarding way to do that is to fall into their thoughts, though I certainly wouldn't argue that that's best for everyone.

John: *Our experiences may not be all that different. The point when an NPC "comes to life" for Bill seems much like the point where I can get immersed in a character. The awareness of what they say or do without thought on my part is the key element, for me.*

We Also Heard From

David L. Pulver, Paul Blackwell, Owen Smith, and Bridget Wilkinson,

Thanks to Bill Burns, Michael Cule, and Amanda "Dr Bob" Kear for help with distribution and publicity.

GURPS Community Contacts

- SJ Games GURPS page: http://www.sjgames.com/gurps/
- SJ Games GURPS forum: http://forums.sjgames.com/forumdisplay.php?f=13
- GURPSDay blog index: https://gamingballistic.com/gurpsday/
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- Stack Exchange GURPS: https://rpg.stackexchange.com/questions/tagged/gurps
- GURPS Discord: https://discord.gg/JFefHh9CXB

Beyond Molecular Nanotechnology

John Dallman

The ideas of molecular nanotechnology, as conceived by K. Eric Drexler, are reasonably well known. In the real world, it seems unlikely that nanomachines can be made that are drastically more efficient than biological systems that do similar work. Quite simply, supplying energy and removing heat fast enough to keep a dense cluster of nanomachines running without frying itself is very hard.

We don't need to worry too much about that for games, and it's fun to think about even smaller and faster scales of technology.

Atomic Picotechnology

This would be technology involving moving parts within an individual atom. The obvious way to do this is to replace electrons with muons or other heavier leptons, which potentially allows cold fusion to actually work.

Nuclear Femtotechnology

This builds machines out of individual nucleons, protons and neutrons. It's quite challenging to build but it runs *very* fast, and there's plenty of energy available to a correctly designed machine.

Quark Attotechnology

This builds machines out of quarks, rather than nucleons. Its drawback is the high operating temperature (about 10^{10}K) necessary to keep the quarks from grouping into composite particles.

Quantum Quectotechnology

This consists of building machines out of quantum foam, or the strings of M-theory. It seems extremely impossible at present, and I've only ever run across one fictional technology that could best be explained using it. But

quantum mechanics didn't make much sense when it was discovered.
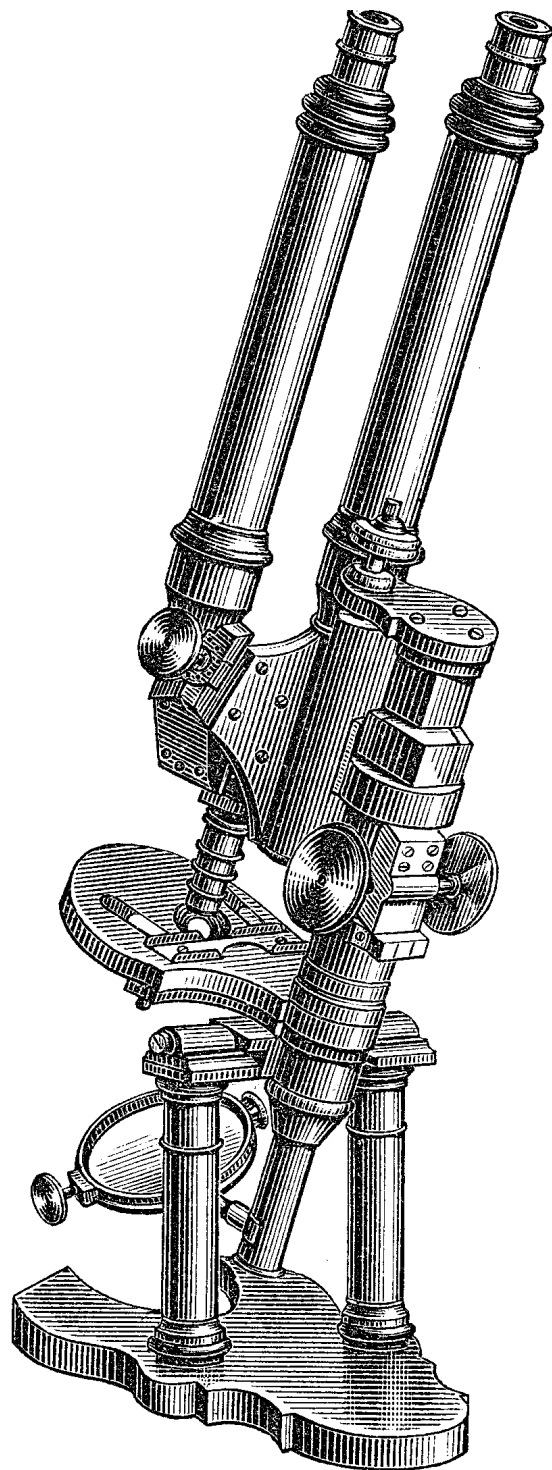
Humourmancy

Shimmin Beg

Fundamentals

Classical scholars — notably Hippocrates and Galen — ascribed many aspects of health and emotion to four fundamental bodily fluids, or "humours": blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. Different proportions gave rise to different personality traits and ailments. Galen named four of these combinations after their dominant fluids, linking each of them to a season; later scholars assigned them to the four classical elements.

Choleric: Dominated by yellow bile, thought to come from the gallbladder. Warm and dry, associated with fire and summer. Gives rise to a decisive, somewhat rash temperament and tendency to anger easily.

Melancholy: Dominated by black bile, supposedly from the spleen. Cold and dry, associated with earth and autumn. Produces a depressive, pessimistic, but supportive temperament.

Phlegmatic: Dominated by phlegm, from the lungs and brain. Cold and wet, associated with water and winter. Leads to a calm, cautious, serious temperament.

Sanguinous: Dominated by blood. Warm and wet, associated with air and spring. Gives rise to an enthusiastic, friendly, optimistic temperament.

A humourmancer is a wizard who trains to control their own bodily humours. By inducing a bias towards one specific humour, they make it easier to cast associated spells. The side-effect is an unstable personality that shifts between extremes as spellcasting dictates. Unsurprisingly, humourmancers are often social outcasts, as others find their erratic natures irritating.

Humourmancy in GURPS

Humourmancy involves manipulating the four classical humours to produce magical effects. Many are physiological or psychological effects, but the elemental associations of each humour allow humourmancers some mastery of the four elements.

Ironically, the art requires breaking the common precepts of humoural medicine: a humourmancer must imbalance their humours towards the type of magic they wish to utilise. Thus, to wield spells associated with steadfastness, cold, and water, the mage must increase the phlegmatic humour, at the expense of any spells associated with the other three. Since each shift takes one minute of concentration, humourmancers must plan carefully and lack the flexibility of some mages.
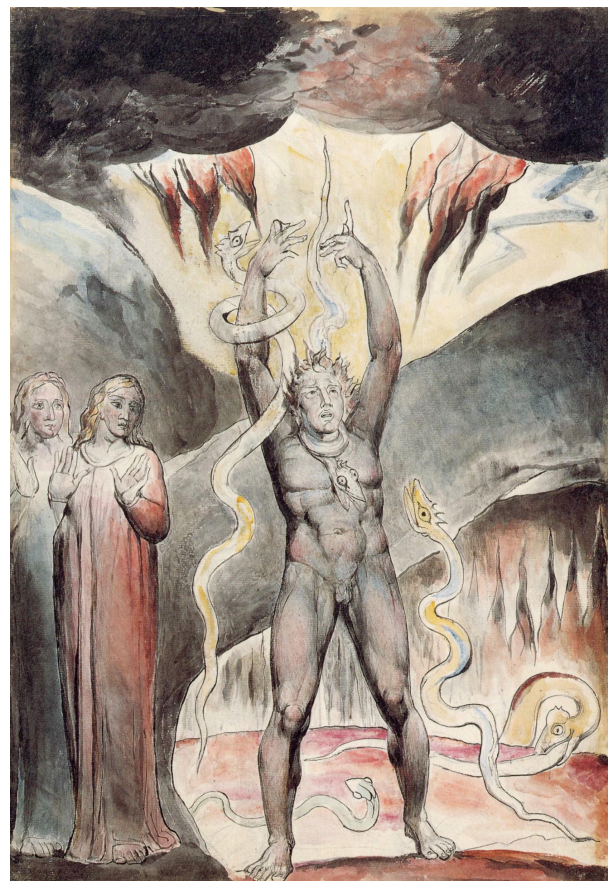
Mechanically, Humourmancy is a form of ritual magic (p. B242, **GURPS Thaumatology,** p. 72) based on Body Control (the skill, not the College!). Each temperament/college is an HT/Very Hard skill, with *no* default, and each spell is an *Average* technique. It also requires the new Temperament Shift meta-trait.

Unless specified otherwise, spells default to the college at a penalty equal to their normal number of prerequisites. Spells with a large number of spell prerequisites reduce the penalty by requiring higher levels of Body Control and a more stringent temperament shift. Magery, attribute, and other prerequisites are unchanged.

Building a Humourmancer

Humourmancy relies on the Body Control skill (p. B181) as its core skill. Rather than Trained by a Master, a humourmancer qualifies for Body Control by learning Breath Control, Diagnosis/TL2, Esoteric Medicine (Humoural), and Meditation at attribute+0 or better.

Humoural Magery is purchased with One temperament at a time (-10%) and Required Disadvantage, Temperament Shift (-10%).

Temperament Shift   -10 points

Prerequisites: Body Control and Esoteric Medicine (Humoural).

Your personality alters to reflect the balance of your humours. By concentrating for 1 minute, you can intensify a specific humour at the cost of others. Whenever you assume a temperament, you gain the corresponding disadvantage below. When you have *no* temperament, limited spell access and the loss of Magery is its own disadvantage. You can still cast spells with Magery prerequisites, but receive no bonus from Magery. When adopting a humour, you may choose to adopt the first, second, or third stage of intensity.

The first stage grants access to Mild spells, and gives modifiers of ±2 and self-control rolls of 15 or less (see below). The second stage requires all prerequisite skills at 12+; the modifiers increase to ±4 and self-control rolls are at 12 or less, but you can learn and cast Intermediate spells. The third stage requires prerequisite skills at 14+; the modifiers increase to ±6 and self-control rolls are at 9 or less, but you can learn and cast Advanced spells. Note that the cost of the disadvantage does not change.

Sanguine: You are energetic, optimistic, and sociable. You react to others at +2, and others have +2 on Empathy, Body Language, and Psychology rolls to sense your intentions. Whenever you show unreasonable caution (in the GM's opinion) or encounter someone new, you must succeed at a self-control roll of 15 or less, if you fail, you assume you can handle the situation and that the strangers are amenable to social interaction, no matter how unwelcoming they seem.

Choleric: You are impulsive and prone to emotional outbursts. In stressful situations, when forced to wait, or during lengthy discussions, you must succeed at a self-control roll of 15 or less. If you fail, you either lose your temper and lash out (verbally or physically), or take action *immediately*. All your other self-control rolls are at -2. Those who notice your volatility react to you at -2.

Melancholic: You are apathetic and pessimistic. Others react to you at -2 in situations where your lack of enthusiasm is apparent, though this never spurs them to violence. Whenever you believe the odds are against you, you are at -2 to all skill rolls, unless you succeed at a self-control roll of 15 or less. Similarly, you must roll to motivate yourself outside immediate, urgent situations, if you fail, you tend to take the path of least resistance.

Phlegmatic: You are calm — even cold — and dispassionate. While you understand jokes, you

barely react to them and *you* are earnest at all times. You take -2 on reaction rolls in social situations, or whenever your serious nature becomes apparent. You also roll at -2 on creative skills, and any attempt to inspire or demonstrate emotion. However, you roll at +2 to restore calm to a situation.

Humoural Aspects

The four aspects are modelled by combining limited versions of thematic disadvantages, each adding up to 10 points.

Choleric Aspect is a mixture of Bad Temper and Impulsiveness. Melancholic Aspect combines Low Self-Image with Killjoy. Phlegmatic Aspect is No Sense of Humour plus anti-Charisma. Sanguine Aspect is a combination of Easy to Read, Overconfidence, and Xenophilia.

At levels 2 and 3, the value of the disadvantages increases by -10. However, it also incorporates a 10/20 point Unusual Background that grants reduced defaults for spells with a high number of prerequisites, leading to no net change.
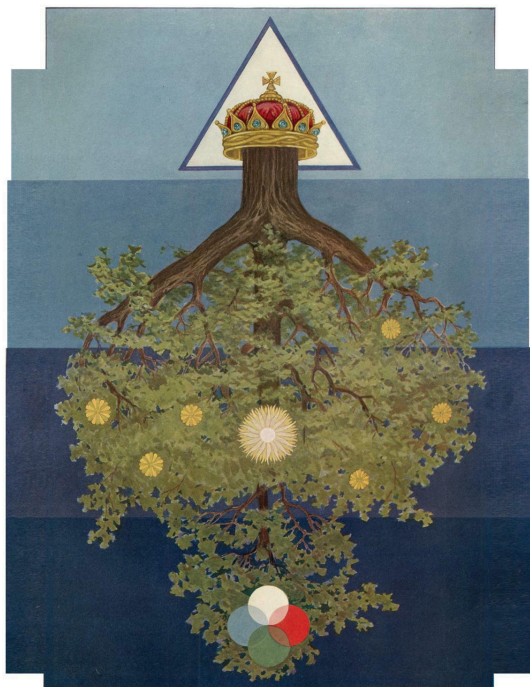
Humoural Magic and the Temperamental Colleges

The foundation of humourmancy is physiological magic: altering the body and the brain. Mages learn a core of spells from the Body Control college (and a few others). By intensifying a specific humour within their body, they can also gain access to spells associated with that humour. The more unbalanced their humours are, the more difficult the spells they can accomplish.

Spells associated with one of the four temperaments can *only* be cast while maintaining the appropriate Temperament Shift. Emotion Control is associated with all four temperaments, defaults to the *current* temperament, and can only impose emotions associated with that temperament.

Humoural Colleges

In all cases, where no default is specified, use the spell's normal number of prerequisites.

Physiological Spells

These spells can be cast regardless of the mage's current temperament or its stage. The college skill is Physiological College (HT/Very Hard).

Mild: Agonize; Clumsiness; Debility; Frailty; Grace; Hinder; Hold Breath; Hunger; Might; Nauseate; Paralyze Limb; Retch; Sensitize; Stop Paralysis; Stop Spasm; Thirst; Vigor.

Intermediate: Breathe Air (Phy.-1); Breathe Water (Phy.-1); Choke (Phy.-1); Drunkenness (Phy.-3); Pain (Phy.-2); Sickness (Phy.-4); Slow Healing (Phy.-2); Spasm (Phy.-1); Strike Numb (Phy.-1); Strike Barren (Phy.-3); Stun (Phy.-3).

Advanced: Age (Phy.-4); Corpulence (Phy.-12); Gauntness (Phy.-8); Halt Aging (Phy.-6); Pestilence (Phy.-3); Stop Healing (Phy.-3); Suspended Animation (Phy.-2).

Healing Spells

These spells can be cast regardless of the mage's current temperament or its stage. The college skill is Healing College (HT/Very Hard).

Mild: Awaken; Body-Reading; Lend Energy; Lend Vitality; Minor Healing; Recover Energy; Relieve Sickness; Resist Disease; Resist Pain; Resist Poison; Neutralize Poison; Sense Life; Stop Bleeding*.

Intermediate: Cure Disease (Hea.-1); Instant Neutralize Poison (Hea.); Major Healing (Hea.); Relieve Addiction (Hea.).

Advanced: Cleansing (Hea.-3); Great Healing (Hea.-2); Healing Slumber (Hea.-3); Regeneration (Hea.-3).

* Also a Sanguine spell; use the better default.

Choleric Spells

Mild: Berserker; Bless Plants; Blossom; Bravery; Create Fire; Deflect Energy; Dehydrate; Destroy Water; Emotion Control (Aspected); Fast Fire; Foolishness; Ignite Fire; Loyalty; Melt Ice; Plant Growth*; Seek Fire; Shape Fire; Warmth; Vexation. *With Animal Empathy:* Animal Control; Beast-Rouser; Master.

Intermediate: Body of Flames (Cho.-5); Breathe Fire (Cho.-4); Burning Touch (Cho.-3); Command (Cho.-3); Essential Flame (Cho.-1); Fast Plant Growth*; Fireball; Flame Jet; Strengthen Will (Cho.-2); Warm (Cho.-3). With Charisma or Voice: Lesser Geas (Cho.-4); Madness (Cho.-2).

Advanced: Explosive Fireball (Cho.-3); Fire Cloud (Cho.-3); Great Hallucination (Cho.-5); Hallucination (Cho.-4); Rain of Fire (Cho.). With Diagnosis/TL2 at 14+: Burning Death (Cho.-4).

* Also a Sanguine spell; use the better default.

Melancholic Spells

Mild: Break Rock; Cool*; Cold*; Condense Steam; Create Earth; Daze; Dull Sense; Dullness; Earth to Stone; Earth Vision; Emotion Control (Aspected); Harvest; Hide; Increase Burden; Long March; Predict Earth Movement; Resist Cold; Seek Earth; Seek Landform; Seek Pass; Shape Earth; Slow; Stone to Earth; Walk Through Earth. *With Animal Empathy:* Beast-Soother.

Intermediate: Body of Stone (Mel.-5); Coolness (Mel.-4); Entombment (Mel.-2); Essential Earth (Mel.-2); Mass Daze (Mel.-3); Mass Sleep (Mel.-4); Purify Earth (Mel.-4); Sleep (Mel.-1); Stone to Flesh (Mel.-4); Weaken Will (Mel.-1).

Advanced: Avoid (Mel.-1); Earthquake (Mel.-3). With Chronic Depression, disadvantageous Destiny, or Unluckiness: Curse (Mel.-12). With Cursed: Curse (Mel.-7).

* Also a Phlegmatic spell; use the better default.

Phlegmatic Spells

Mild: Armor; Blight; Cold*; Cool*; Create Ice; Create Water; Deflect Missiles; Emotion Control (Aspected); Extinguish Fire; Fireproof; Fog; Freeze; Frost; Hold Fast; Hush; Ice Slick; Icy Touch; Purify Water; Rain; Resist Sound; Resist Water; Seek Coastline; Seek Water; Shade; Shape Water; Silence; Slow Fall; Slow Fire; Snow Shoes; Umbrella; Walk On Water; Walk Through Water; Water Vision; Whirlpool; Wither Plant.

Intermediate: Bladeturning (Plg.-3); Body of Water (Plg.-4); Current (Plg.-1); Essential Water (Plg.-2); Frostbite (Plg.-1); Hail (Plg.-3); Iron Arm (Plg.-3); Mage-Stealth (Plg.-3); Peaceful Sleep (Plg.-4); Relieve Madness (Plg.-5); Resist Pressure (Plg.-4); Resist Radiation (Plg.-2); Vigil (Plg.-5); Snow (Plg.-2); Snow Jet (Plg.-1); Swim (Plg.-2); Tide (Plg.-3); Water Jet; Waves (Plg.-4).

Advanced: Icy Breath (Plg.-2); Rain of Ice Daggers (Plg.-6).

* Also a Melancholic spell; use the better default.

Sanguine Spells

Mild: Boil Water (San.-5); Borrow Language; Bravery*; Concussion; Create Air; Create Plant; Destroy Air; Devitalize Air; Emotion Control (Aspected); Lend Language; Lighten Burden; Persuasion; Plant Growth; Purify Air; Quick March; Seek Air; Sense Emotion; Shape Air; Stop Bleeding†; Walk on Air; Wall of Wind; Wind.

Intermediate: Air Jet; Air Vortex (San.-2); Clouds (San.-4); Create Steam (San.-4); Earth to Air (San.-4); Essential Air (San.-1); Fast Plant Growth; Gift of Tongues (San.-5); Predict Weather (San.-4); Presence (San.-2); Resist Lightning (San.-1); Shocking Touch (San.-3); Steam Jet (San.-5); Weaken Blood (San.-1); Windstorm (San.-1).

Advanced: Atmosphere Dome (San.-4); Breathe Steam (San.-4); Geyser (San.-5); Weather Dome (San.-3). With Blessed or Luck: Bless (San.-12). With Very Blessed or Extraordinary Luck: Bless (San.-7).

* Also a Choleric spell; use the better default.

† Also a Healing spell; use the better default.

Traits for Humourmancers

Most humourmancers will have high levels of HT and corresponding FP. Since high IQ isn't required, they're better suited to a physical role than a scholarly one, the bonus FP can support Extra Effort and armor as well as magic.

It's thematic for traits to be tied to temperament. A simple way to model this is a -20% Accessibility limitation. Alternatively, create a package of four advantage or disadvantages, add the -20% limitation, and buy the cheaper three as Alternative Abilities (×1/5 cost). Note that while you *can* buy traits that are partially included in Temperament Shift (above) in this way, you should reduce the cost accordingly — a -50% limitation. Thematic traits for each temperament include:

Choleric: Berserk; Bloodlust; Charisma; Compulsive Behavior; Curious; Daredevil; Indomitable; Loner; On the Edge; Selfish; Stubbornness.

Melancholic: Chronic Depression; Common Sense; Deep Sleeper; Extra Sleep; Guilt Complex; Hidebound; High Pain Threshold; Laziness; Shyness.

Phlegmatic: Callous; Fearlessness; Hidebound; Incurious; Low Empathy; Oblivious; Single-Minded; Unfazeable.

Sanguine: Charitable; Chummy; Compulsive Behavior; Cultural Adaptability; Intuition; Selfless; Social Chameleon.

Humoural magic suggests Alcohol Tolerance, Immunity to (Specific Disease or Poison), No Hangover, or Sea Legs. It also justifies exotic perks, such as No Degeneration in Zero-G, Parthenogenesis, Perfume, Reproductive Control, and Sanitized Metabolism. For advantages, Metabolism Control is an obvious choice, also consider Breath-Holding, Fit or Very Fit, Recovery, Reduced Consumption, Resistance to Metabolic Hazards, Temperature Tolerance, and Universal Digestion. Conversely, tinkering with body chemistry might impose Bad Smell, Increased Consumption, or Unusual Biochemistry.

Note that personality traits often indicate poor control of one's humours — a severe hindrance for a humourmancer. A humourmancer who is by nature irritable and stubborn lacks the balance for true mastery of the art, and should restrict themself to Choleric spells until they buy off the disadvantage!

Talent *see p. B89*

Humour Instinct: Body Control; Body Language; Diagnosis/TL2; Esoteric Medicine (Humoural); Psychology (Applied). *Reaction Bonus:* Hypochondriacs, health fad enthusiasts, and patients. *Alternative benefit:* +1/level to resist external emotional influence. Note: the bonus to Body Control does not improve spell defaults — use Magery for that!

Principles of Humoural Techniques

Each level of Temperament Shift achieved reduces the default penalties for higher-level spells by 5. In a few cases, additional advantages are required as prerequisites, and reduce defaults further. Finally, spells that are normally Very Hard have their default lowered by 1 to compensate.

A few spells that are more distantly linked to the humoural theme don't benefit from this reduction, or require a higher level of Temperament Shift than normal, representing the increased difficulty humourmancers have in learning them. Fire Cloud and Rain of Fire are examples of this — both flashy attack spells that involve bursts of fire created at a distance. Conversely, a few spells have their defaults improved because they closely match the theme, such as Boil Water.

New Strands of Irresponsible & Right

John Dallman

As I wrote in "Concluding Irresponsible & Right" in issue #5, Roger's **Weird War II** campaign has reached its end, and two new strands of it have started, with the same group of players. Both rewound to the start of the war, or close to it.

Preliminary thoughts

"Strand" seems like the right term for these campaigns in a shared setting. Each PC is a thread — their experiences are all a little different, but closely entwined — and we want to keep them from being tangled with the first strand, or each other, to avoid retroactive continuity changes. It's conceivable that Zyg and myself, the respective GMs of *Neutral Currents* and *Lions, Tigers and Dragons*, will arrange for their respective sets of characters to interact at some point, but this isn't in my current plans.

I've run brief games in other people's settings, but this is the first time I've done something so large while worrying about continuity with events where I was a player.

I've found I like running games at TL6-7. I find it reasonably easy to understand the technology and society of the period, because I grew up during TL7, and learned a lot from my father who grew up during TL6. It's also a good period for occult games, because having a reliable, scientifically describable magic is much easier than it would be at TL8, when a lot more physics is nailed down.

I thought about what became *Lions, Tigers and Dragons* during the final years of *Irresponsible and Right*,. At first I tried to devise a WWI game but I could could not make it gel; intelligence and counter-intelligence were very different during that war.

The choice of the China-Burma-India theatre came out of thinking as Pete Argas, who realised that the vast array of mystic practices in India would make it a magical powerhouse, and was puzzled as to why the British were still in nominal control in early 1945.

Once I switched to thinking as a GM, the answer rapidly became "to avoid frightening Churchill and the Conservative Party into doing something foolish, and to keep the equipment and intelligence flowing until the Japanese are defeated." The right organisation to employ the characters became clear with a little research, the Delhi Intelligence Bureau of the Indian Imperial Police. DIB was the equivalent of MI5 in India, and there was potential for intelligence sharing that the original *I&R* characters didn't need to know about.

Phil Masters provided a character who can see the future, a little, so I don't need to worry about providing information some other way. In any case, the events I'll be dealing with are less known to middle-aged Englishmen than the material used in *I&R*.

I could not find a historical DIB officer who was credible as the head of a magical cell in the way Maxwell Knight was for MI5, so I created a fictional one. He's the son of one of Roger's NPCs, who had been exposed to the Golden Dawn in England, and uses an idea that grows out of Robert Peel's principles of policing. The police serve the law and the people, not the government, when those conflict.

Players' notes

Phil Masters

Having been playing the ritual magician in *Irresponsible and Right*, I was inclined to try something different in the follow-up games. I'm

enough of an old-school gamer that my character concepts were largely built around their power sets, and enough of a dramatist that I wanted those powers to be at least a little weird and arcane. I have this feeling that magic should be *magical*.

Which said, the character power concept for John's India-based game was something called "magical" mostly by default, as magic is the source of all paranormal abilities in this setting. It was an abuse of the **GURPS** rules that had crossed my mind some time previously; somebody who used the Snatcher advantage to reach through *time* and acquire equipment beyond the local tech level, with whatever benefits that implied. Fortunately, *Irresponsible and Right* had brought in some time-related shenanigans, so I decided to throw in a reference to a plot element from that; a locus of temporal disruption in the Levant. That implied a character who would have passed through that region in the campaign's fairly recent past, so that was where I started thinking about the actual character.

I understood from what John had said that the party could feature both Indian and European
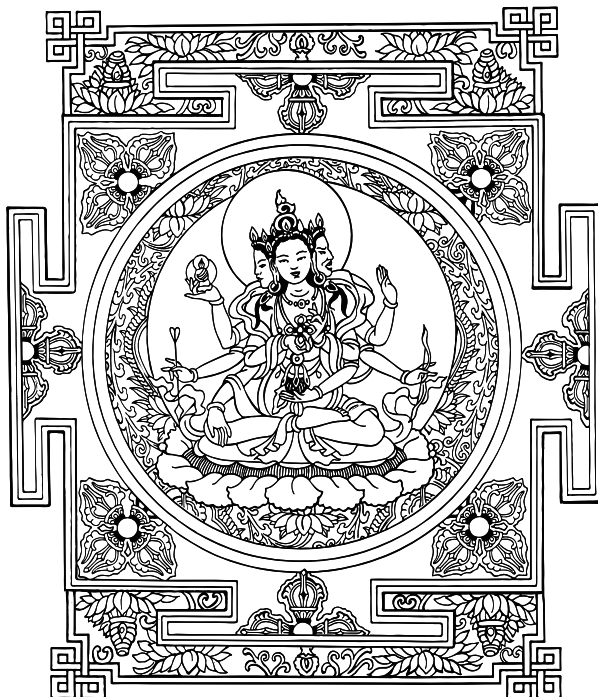
characters, and I assumed that we'd want some of the latter for practical social purposes. As it turned out, I'm playing the only one. As I wasn't entirely sure of my ability to play an Indian character anyway, my thoughts turned to the great tradition of eccentric British female travellers in the East, and to the proliferation of archaeology in the '30s. Thus was born the hard-drinking, bloody-minded Hannah McDavis, who'd become unmoored in time thanks to an odd incident near a dig with which she'd been assisting, and who'd gone on to India in search of anyone who might be able to advise her in any way. At some point, I think I tried to avoid thinking of her as played by Katharine Hepburn; as the picture on her character sheet shows, I failed miserably at that.

For *Neutral Currents*, on the other hand, I became determined to play a truly magic-working character. Having been playing a ritual magician who used Hermetic modifiers, I wanted something different; as the compiler of **GURPS Thaumatology**, I felt obliged to come up with something interesting. This meant the **GURPS** spell-based system, and a different way of getting round the limitations of the setting's initially low mana level — to wit, spirit-assisted magic with a couple of optional tweaks. But what spirit to call upon? Somewhere along the line, I plumped for the Egyptian pantheon, and what better choice for a European character in wartime than the god of northern barbarians and warfare? (Mr Sutton's back story was now looking much to much like that of a certain Marvel Comics superhero, but what the heck, Moon Knight was fairly obscure. Then, of course, Disney gave him his own TV series, hey ho.) So Mr Sutton emerged from the desert with a prior career in aviation logistics that allowed him to fit into the proposed campaign, a divine patron who'd *love* him to overuse those spells he now knew, and a totally unjustified reputation for cannibalism. We all have our ankh-crosses to bear.

John Dallman

Pete Argas had claimed an awful lot of the spotlight during *I&R*, and I wanted to step back a bit and let others lead the action. Colonel Kingsthorpe had been the only general-purpose magician among the original characters, and I wanted to learn how to use Path/Book magic with Decanic modifiers. I'd seen that generalist magicians weren't popular during the early character design for *Lions, Tigers & Dragons*, so there might not be one in *Neutral Currents* unless I played them.

I didn't follow all of Phil's visible design decisions, although I think he did a better job of point optimisation than me. I picked a Golden Dawn member to have learned from, who made the character a Scotsman from Edinburgh.

Having been an RAF officer in the 1930s was a justification for the necessary skills, although I wasn't expecting it to put me in command. Being a navigator and cartographer went with the IQ necessary for a magician, which meant high DX for a good pilot wasn't affordable. I was keen on Explorer talent at the time, although it hasn't been that useful in practice. Iain Ferguson's name is a nod to Iain Banks, whom I still miss.

Zyg

I've been interested in what a Zoroastrian tradition of magic would look like for a while. I had a go in *I&R*, with Captain Highfield, but I was still learning the **GURPS** system.

Finding any resources on Zoroastrianism in English is not easy. I've been using the material for a never produced BBC series *In the footsteps of Zoroaster* and a 1950's Oxford DPhil thesis.

Ardeshir Averi is another exploration of the idea. The Parsee community is concentrated around Bombay. So then the question was a merchant (which implied travel to Africa) or a local (in which case the theatre worked well as a calling). It all got a bit distracted (in a good way) when I added sufficient theatrical and performance skills to make him a very good Face. The idea to use Freddy Mercury as the character's portrait has worked really well for me . . . and I think for the other players. Like Iain Banks, someone else we lost too young.

I still feel I need to work out the details of Zoroastrian magic *a la* **GURPS**. By which I mean think through and cost specific spells/effects. The one insight from Captain Highfield is that with fire magic you don't need a big effect, just an effect in the right place. Say, next to a detonator…

Ingvar Mattsson

In the original *Irresponsible and Right* campaign, I played Ola Nordmann until his demise, when he became a ghost and attached to one of the other PCs in the campaign.

The Nordmann family are from Norway, and in fact "Ola Nordmann" is the name of the "standard Norwegian."

I thought it would be amusing to have a similar, but different, character for *Neutral Currents*. There are some things that the characters share (some relation-based disadvantages, some approaches to magic, some similar-ish powers).

On the power side, Ola had a (somewhat badly implemented, but Ola was also my first "not to be thrown away" **GURPS** character) Obscure (Sound). My thought with it was to make Ola, a pretty good rifle shot, harder to detect. Unfortunately, I did not spot that I needed to slap "defensive" on as a modifier, so instead of "stealthy" he was "pretty darned obviously over there somewhere." Svend instead has Obscure (Vision), with the defensive modifier, meaning that not only is he hard to spot in his obfuscation, but also the obfuscation itself is hard to spot.

Svend also got See Invisible and Medium from the start. This is so he's well-adapted for July 22nd, 1942, when the general hope is to have enough points that Svend can acquire Ola as a ghost Ally. Which would explain where Ola Nordmann was, when he was unavailable in *I&R*…

Other than that, I thought having a Nordmann brother who wasn't super-fond of boats, and instead went more towards engineering, would be amusing. This also explains why he has a decent level of German (both spoken and written, up until the late 30s, German really was the language of maths and engineering and any character that should have a higher education in maths or engineering should have written German at least at Literate.

Other than that, it was mostly finding skills that supported Svend's role as "coming from an engineering background" (the back story is that he started as a mining engineer, then accidentally ended up as an aircraft engineer, since materials science in the Nordic countriess comes pretty much from a mining/mountain engineer background).

For Parminder Singh Bajwa there were a few things. I wanted a character that was on the stealth/investigate/infiltrate end of things. I also wanted a character that had actual combat skills, just in case.

The latter lent itself very neatly to a Sikh character. The former, well, there were a few things. I didn't actually want Invisibility as much as I wanted "not noticed," so that informed the choice of camouflage in all its guises. And Social Chameleon, because why not. Nothing says "not noticed" like fitting right in…

The rest, well, a methodical character, with good memory, made for an excellent "why not mathematician." So a few points went into

computational and mathematical skills and advantages.

Next is of course "where" and there's certainly a cachet to having a degree from Cambridge or Oxford.

Next, our hero needed a few disadvantages to balance the point cost. As Sikh culture is very family-oriented, it felt that "ace and aro" were suitably embarrassing secrets. At some point, and I do not recall why, I put Connoisseur (Tea) on the sheet, and that eventually ended up with a Signature Item (a notebook and pen, for cataloguing the quality of all establishments where Parm has taken tea).

As I did not envision Parm as a fresh face in the DIB, I also put in a few police-oriented skills: Search, Observation, Interrogation, that sort of thing.

I guess design-wise, the two major influences are from Pete Argas, in the original *I&R* campaign, as well as from Kryztof Smith, from Roger's *I-Cops!* campaign.

David Cantrell

For the original campaign I wanted to get away from playing someone who mostly just beat people up, which is what I'd played in previous campaigns, so I deliberately built an older character. The original intention was for him to be a bit louche, hence the background in having his mystical powers awakened by a native (*shock!*) mistress when in the Indian civil service. I decided not to develop that side of him when introduced to the absolute scoundrel that was Vincent Alexander and instead focused more on powers over and communion with the natural world — in my head he was kind of a druid in tweed.

For *Neutral Currents* the character mostly came about because I knew it would be an aviation-heavy campaign so I googled for something like "strange books about aviation" looking for a

weird archetype and ended up reading John Grierson's book *Air Whaler*, about an Antarctic whaling ship that used aircraft for spotting whales at a distance. Much of Frank Worsley's skills and background fell out of just making him survive that, and the rest explain how he got the job in the first place (his apprenticeship at Supermarine working on the Schneider Trophy entrants) and how to make sure he was available to enter His Majesty's service at the right time — the character changed jobs to one based in Norway so that he wouldn't be somewhere in the southern ocean at the start of the war.

For *Lions, Tigers & Dragons* my original idea was to play the money man, and I started putting together a refugee from the Dutch East Indies who had escaped Jakarta with most of a shipping line. But we were starting too early for that. I then decided to go with someone a bit more actiony — it's been over ten years since I was last the beat-em-up guy! So I kept a bit of the nautical background by having a very early career at sea before transferring to the docks police, and made Constable Butt a wrestler.

He's a competent copper, with all the expected moral integrity and investigatory skills, but that's all he'll ever be. The intention was to develop him as an athlete but he seems to have accidentally become a Holy Man too.

Roger Bell_West

Jacky Bishop is mostly the product of my reading about pioneering female aviators, particularly Beryl Markham's *West With the Night*. As in so many fields of endeavour, women were heavily involved when it was new and dangerous, but got frozen out once it started to be routine and profitable. The main influence from *I&R* is Vin's list of aircraft, because I wanted to tie her into aviation history but in a way that mostly wouldn't overlap with him. So while Vin was flying Hughes' prototype fighters, Jacky was air racing, including coming

fourth in the MacRobertson race from England to Australia. That specific point was inspired by my realisation, as something of an aviation enthusiast particularly for this period, that I had no immediate idea of how anyone had done apart from the winner. So I put her in G-ACSR as Bernard Rubin's last-minute replacement from the motor racing world, instead of Owen Cathcart.

Nishchint Srikumar was inspired by Pete from the original campaign in the sense of being the invisible specialist, but also by Vin's charisma; they both have similar effects but in different ways (she is overlooked rather than actually invisible; and she's charismatic but only if she's able to take time to get into the right frame of mind, and doesn't start with a popular image as a film star). From a cultural point of view, she's a widowed Hindu of reasonably high status, at a time when Hindu culture is still looking for acceptable social roles for widows now that *sati* has been banned
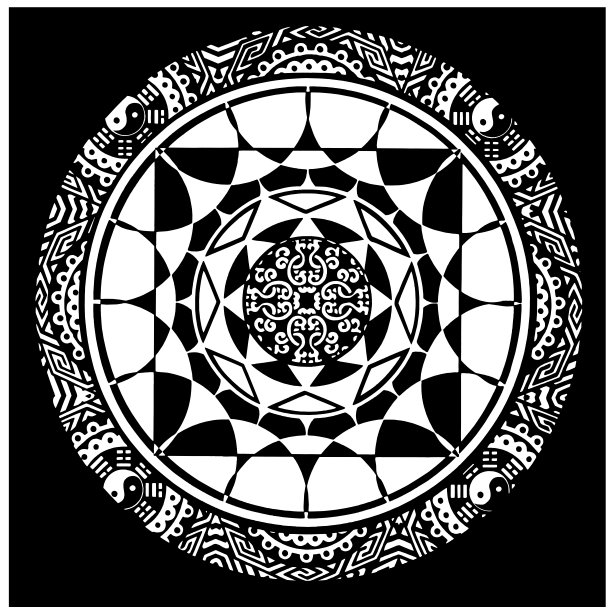
David Devereux

I think we need to start with Vin, because he was part of my life for twelve years and his journey informs the others. Vin was supposed — and originally designed — to be a monster.

What happens when someone's basically never heard the word "no" apply to them in any meaningful way? That was where Vin started. Beautiful, charming and loaded with the ability to make almost anyone love him on first sight. He could — and did — go anywhere. He shared a house with Errol Flynn and David Niven, he spent every night at the Cocoanut Grove, he slept with anyone that caught his eye. Frankly, without the limitation of his ability not working through a camera he'd have had no place in *I&R* because he'd be the biggest star in Hollywood — at least until his ego took him to come back and unseat Churchill.

He ran with the early Nazis (and in retrospect I've kicked myself over his last words[1] to Hitler: "I told you this was a bad idea" would have been so much better!), enough that when Hess showed up they were on first name terms. He only got out of Germany because he was afraid they'd come for him. He only came back to fight in the War because Niven guilt-tripped him into it. He was all about self-indulgence, even when his darker urges led to cold murder in front of the party, or torture just in the next room where everyone could still hear the screaming.

So what happened? That's been the thing that's been on my mind since John asked me to write this. I think it started with the Battle of Britain. He came out of that second (I think) in kills and the constant grind of it just wore down what had been the thrill of violence. We had one moment that took place on 12 September 1940 (Eagle Day, and what is now Battle of Britain Day) where the scenario was going on without Vin (despite me being in the room) because Vin was going up again and again. There was a moment where an exhausted Vin advised the party on what to do about Channel reconnaissance with the charts spread out on his Spitfire's wing while it was being refuelled and

rearmed ready for him to get back to the fight, and the next time they saw him in London he was sitting back at their briefing table fast asleep from exhaustion.

There are other moments: the RAF widow where everyone was shocked at him being sympathetic. He'd had to write a bunch of letters by then to the parents of kids who'd died on their first time up, the way so many did, and it was the first time he'd seen the other end of that line. Moments of horror from the party, where he was more pragmatically concerned with fitting in for protection (especially after the werewolf incident) also made a difference.

But then the Princess Charlotte happened. That started off as a patriotic grift, really, but turned into something more. From there he was actually trying (mostly) to be better; he wanted to live up to what she saw in him. The end of the war was unexpected, especially what I can only call the Final Boss Fight of the war, but again it seemed weirdly right.

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[1] "Sieg Heil."

So, that was Vin. Twelve years and by far one of my absolute favourites among the characters I've been lucky enough to play.

Now Smith… Oh my, Smith. Where Vin had never really committed to the part of monster, in Smith we have the utterly irredeemable. I'm going to get into spoilers here because I trust my fellow players and they're important to who (or what) Smith is. Smith started out as a Russian princess who got to see her entire family murdered, and managed to hide with servants who actually liked her enough to keep her out of Beria's hands. She's an absolute murder machine, set on Communists, and with almost every decent feeling burned out of her by design. Her one thing is helping White Russian refugees — anonymously — and her life as Smith came about thanks to things going sideways while murdering a magician mid-ritual.

Smith's disguise thing is shape-shifting, which he (I'm shifting to the male deliberately here, since post-change Smith lives as a man in the shape of a man) augments with skills as a servant. He's invisible as one can be without actual invisibility — someone who's pure wallpaper but absolutely and utterly driven by hate. The Crown are making use of him, as are the British Government, but he's using them, too, to help continue his war on Communism. What's going to happen with Barbarossa is anyone's guess, though: I'm not honestly sure right now, because the Nazis haven't really done anything to him and they're only in his sights because they're allied with the USSR. What I *have* done is let Zyg know that if he thinks having Smith arrested or killed works for the story I'm entirely comfortable going with that. Heck, he might even turn into a (rather terrifying) enemy for the party, knowing as he does their actual purpose.

And then there's Vijay, whose elevator pitch showed up in John's hundred words of 2023: the Punjabi Captain Scarlet. After Vin — and especially after capping Vin with Smith — I really needed to break out someone good for my own mental health. Someone with actual noble intent and the desire to make the world better for everyone. Vijay was the result. One of the two other great inspirations is Captain Nemo, although I turned the anti-imperialism down a notch, he's still very much about Indian independence after the war and making sure he does his part to keep it as free of bloodshed as it can possibly be. The last is G'Kar from *Babylon 5*, in terms of the journey from a man trying to do his job in spite of the world around him to the role of a religious leader. The future that his wife's going to organise alongside Mrs Srikumar, however, is a mystery to him: he wants to study, and maybe one day be wise enough to teach a little.

Vijay's big secret is that he really can't stand the English in India — he liked them well enough while he was at Cambridge (where he got better treatment than the average because his family is quite outrageously wealthy) and there are a few who seem to be more sensible than the average, but on the whole he'd be quite happy to plant his boot in the backside of almost every white face he sees. What he can't do, of course, is admit that: it would be rude! This, though, is the root of his political thinking: to get the sensible (as far as he's concerned) parties aligned enough so that when the war is over he can step back and let the leaders do what they need to do for the people.

And there we are, for now at least. Smith and Vijay have miles and miles to go, and I'm rather looking forward to seeing what becomes of them.

RPM Quick Reference

Energy	Duration	Damage	Weight	Range (/Speed)	Info Range	Radius	Effect
0	Moment	1d	10lb	2 yd(/sec)	200 yds/3 hrs	0 yd	
1	10 min	1d+1	30lb	3 yd(/sec)	½ mile/12 hrs	0 yd	
2	30 min	1d+2	100lb	5 yd(/sec)	1 mile/day	3 yd	Sense
3	1 hour	2d-1	300lb	7 yd(/sec)	3 miles/days	3 yd	Strengthen
4	3 hours	2d [FA/TL8]	1000lb	10 yd(/sec)	10 miles/days	5 yd	Restore
5	6 hours	2d+1	3000lb	15 yd(/sec)	30 miles/days	5 yd	Control, Destroy
6	12 hours	2d+2	5 tons	20 yd(/sec)	100 m/d	7 yd	Create
7	1 day	3d-1	15 tons	30 yd(/sec)	300 m/d	7 yd	
8	3 days	3d	50 tons	50 yd(/sec)	1,000 m/d	10 yd	Transform
9	1 week	3d+1	150 t	70 yd(/sec)	3,000 m/d	10 yd	
10	2 weeks	3d+2	450 t	100 yd(/sec)	10,000 m/d	15 yd	(cross-dimension)

Modifiers
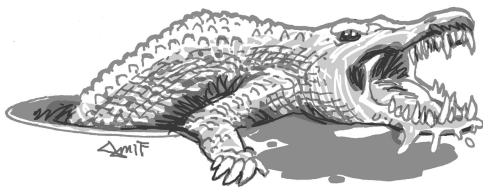
Count	Broad	Moderate	Narrow	Greater effects
±1	5	2	1	×3
±2	10	4	2	×5
±3	20	8	4	×7
±4	40	16	8	×9
±5	80	32	16	×11
Etc.	×2	×2	×2	+2

Notes

- You can't use magic to improve magic.
- Gathering ambient energy takes 5 seconds per attempt, for an Adept, or 5 minutes otherwise. After each 3 attempts, it's a cumulative –1 to skill.
- Sacrificing 2HP or 3FP is worth one energy point.
- Afflictions cost +1 for each +5% they're worth; Stunning is free.
- Altered Traits are +1 for [–5] or [1]. PK: *"If you find yourself needing to reference specific, named GURPS traits to describe the game mechanics of your spell, then it needs Altered Traits. If you find that you can describe those game mechanics using nothing more than general terms and references to spell effects, then it doesn't… unless the GM thinks that it needs them for game balance."*
- Area effects can exclude designated potential targets, and optionally areas around them, which costs +1 for two of them.
- Damage cost is multiplied by wounding modifier. "Internal/Direct" is like Malediction, DR does not help, use this on Unliving; "External/Indirect" works like Missile spells and does more damage.
- Extra energy can be added to make a spell harder to dispel, or to overcome existing spells.
- Healing uses the damage costs, up to 2xFirst Aid for the TL for Lesser effects.
- Charge for Speed in yards/second on the Range column.
- Weight is for the heaviest individual target if there is more than one in an area effect.

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