



watching the security cameras mounted in their child's day-care in a third.

Many matrix services are public and accessible, such as some databases, social clubs, game rooms, or PR offices. Others are semi-private—dating services and stock market trading sites, for example—available to the public in exchange for a one-time or subscription fee. Others are private, layered with IC and security measures and patrolled by corporate hackers. These hosts contain the deepest, darkest secrets of corporations and other entities.

### The Astral Plane

The astral plane is another reality entirely. Some magicians can perceive its depths or project their consciousness therein. Those who take astral form can move through the astral plane at the speed of thought, but few magicians can stay within this realm for longer than a few hours. The astral plane is the home of spirits, beings of quicksilver and shadow, a realm of mystery and danger. It parallels our own physical plane, and auras of living creatures and magic are reflected upon it, where those skilled in the Art can analyze them. The theory goes that the astral is actually sustained by the life force of the Earth and its creatures. From the astral plane, a magician can read the emotional imprints that linger on various items. Sufficiently strong feelings may even pollute the astral atmosphere. Sterile corporate offices, murder scenes, and toxic dumping grounds, to give just a few examples, all have their own distinct (and unpleasant) astral "flavor."

Beyond the astral plane are the metaplanes, realms of magic accessible only by initiated magicians. Little is known about the metaplanes—of which there may be an unlimited number, or only one, depending on whose theories you believe. Initiated magicians can travel to any metaplane they choose, though some have strict entrance requirements.

### Beyond the Basics

*Shadowrun* contains many more interesting settings, too numerous to mention more than a few here. Players may find themselves in corporate arcologies, self-contained and self-sustainable mini-cities that house thousands of corporate citizens; Awakened lands, where metahumans and dragons work together to purify the often polluted Earth; or the cold edge of space, where humanity is slowly populating numerous orbital habitats while it plans for more. Most metahumans consider the vast urban sprawls to be their home, whether it be the glittering skyscraper penthouses of the corporate elite, the winding homogenous mazes of a corporate housing enclave, or the warzone atmosphere of a blighted ghetto that the police long ago surrendered to gangs. Even corporate thugs and cops fear to tread in many of the sprawl's shadow regions.