

Exoculture

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Introduction

Exotics.

Even the word gives most people the creeps.

Full borgs, now those you can sort of understand. After all, a lot of poor sods don't have a choice, they grasp Borgdom as their final chance at life when their bodies are too frail or too smashed to hold on. And yeah, some of them go crazy in the process, but it's a familiar kind of crazy, it's the kind of crazy you see in your local Boostergangers after they get their second cyberlimb. Something you can almost relate to.

But Exotics, what is it that drives them? After all, they're all electives, people who've willingly chosen to leave humanity behind. How the hell do you relate to something like that? Borg extremists sometimes call their transition a natural evolution, their new cybernetic bodies a superior version of Mankind. If this is true, then the Exos are moving not up, but sideways along that same evolutionary scale.

The media loves them, of course. They're hot, trendy, they're **news**. First it was news agencies running the occasional story on the subculture, then it suddenly became en vogue to introduce Exo characters into everyone's daytime soaps. Next thing you know, they're a part of the cavalcade of faces looking down at you from the billboards. Adriana Kessler, the new mannequin for *Victoria's Secret*, white lace against black scales.

How did it happen? And why? Who are they? And why?

History of Exotic Biosculpts

It was Biotechnica who started it all, with their limitless skill at DNA tampering applied to the service of human vanity. Ever since regular plastic surgery had become commonplace and passé, the search was on for new boundaries and thrills. New standards of beauty, now that the old ones were available to anyone who walked into their local Bodyshoppe.

Another part of the equation were the first exos, bored rich Euro-socialites who'd gotten their first botox treatments at sixteen and had their first facelift two years later. Thrillseekers ever looking to beat each other's achievements. When news of exotic bodysculpts hit the market, they pounced. First, it was little things, like cat eyes or pointed ears, but as the science advanced, so did their appetite for more and more augmentations.

By 2016, the trend had been set. After the otherwise unremarkable French ambassador got his "Big Cat" package, suddenly he was a media sensation. In exotics, people saw a chance to be someone else at a fundamental level, to be outrageous, to be different, to be both more and less than human.

Europe might have gone for it first, but the US was quick to follow, with media celebrities like MTV's Lionel Thomason and WNS sports anchor Paula Clausevitz showing the way. Inexorably, Exos solidified their the place as an artificially created minority all over the world.

As with every hot newtech item, exotic biosculpts eventually moved to within the financial reach of the middle class by 2020. With the Biotechnica monopoly on exotic conversions challenged only recently, prices are still high, but with other biotech corps entering their own products into the arena, that's about to change.

Like Full Borgs, exos are becoming an ethnic group of their own. There's magazines, clubs, social networks, products and television ads, all aimed specifically at them. And like all ethnic groups, they've attracted their fair share of hatemongers and nutjobs after them, but more on those a bit later...

Why Do It?

As the technology has slowly infiltrated more and more levels of society, people of all walks of life have found the means for exotic conversion within their reach, and have embraced it, each for their own reasons.

Unlike other breeds of extreme cyberware, nobody is forced into an Exotic mod (although rumors of illegal Playbeings-made-to-order are unusually pernicious), which is one reason why many in the public treat them with reservation.

Vanity

For the first Exos, getting modified was all about self-expression and uniqueness, an effort to stand out among their social circle. A lot of these people went for relatively low-key bodysculpts, such as new eyes and minor skin alterations. The various minor exotic packages were first pioneered with this group and several became very popular in certain social circles (the Elf cosmetic surgery package is the most popular of this group, although the Bunny is a close second).

As a rule, Exotics of this group do not see themselves very differently from the masses of unmodified humanity, and they tend to stay relatively subtle with their exo-forms. A lot of the time there's significant peer pressure to choose "socially acceptable" conversion packages.

Another similar breed are the attention-junkies. Many media personalities turned Exo fit into this category. Sometimes it's a publicity stunt designed to elevate tired vidstars back into the spotlight, sometimes the flight of fancy of a drug-addled braindance jockey. Neither tend to have very good long-term prospects.

Body Modification

Back in the 20th century, this lot went for tattoos and piercings, nowadays the methods are different but the goal is the same: unbridled self-expression. Unlike the vanity-driven bunch, bodymodders are motivated by individuality, the desire to remake their own bodies exactly as they themselves see fit. Many of them are already using cyberware towards that end, so exotic modification is not that big of a leap.

Bodymodders typically span the entire spectrum of modification packages, with a preference towards customized shapes. For the hardcore bodymod fanatic, there is nothing, and I mean *nothing*, that's taboo. Extreme muscle and bone alterations, customized sexual implants, you name it. And what the bioware corps are too squeamish to do, they have done on the Street. Thanks to their penchant of cyberware and general voraciousness in their pursuit for the ultimate form, bodymodders are fairly susceptible to cyberpsychosis.

Bodymod exotics are the easiest to pick out of a crowd, and this category contains some of the more outrageous Exotic celebrities, such as the Playbeing courtesan **Samarcándë** (pg. 11) and the braindance sensation **Olaf Tyree**.

Fetishism / Spirituality

More so than the others, fetishists tend to be drawn to specific forms. Often this is an animal form

the person feels some kind of bond with, or finds attractive in some way. Despite the common preconception, this doesn't have to be sexual in any way.

Fetishists tend to be the most stable of Exos, in that they see the transition of a new form as the fulfilment of a lifelong ambition, and tend to adjust relatively well. They're also the most social of their kin, forming packs or communities with others with similar bodies. Exofetishists are the descendants of the "furry" subculture of the late 20th century, and the most numerous out of the general Exotic population.

A closely related group are those who consider Exotic modifications as an extension of their religious beliefs, getting closer to their totem animals. They often have links to Native American spirituality or various New Age nature-worshipping groups. The most famous of these include the Totem Warriors found in certain nomad packs, the subject of a hundred tall tales by fellow nomads, highway cops and truckers.

Exile

Exofetishists want to become something, the exiles want release from something. They're a loose class of people who for one reason or another wish to forego the bonds of humanity.

While the fetishist is most concerned about what they are to become, the exile are generally thinking more about what they wish to leave behind. They often go for the truly hardcore conversions merely to separate themselves from others that much more. A lot of exiles don't really have much in the way of plans once they get out of surgery, and some find themselves utterly unprepared for the transition.

Needless to say, exiles make up the majority of unsuccessful Exos, thanks to their pre-existing tendency towards being loners and the lack of a social support network to help them through.

Profession

Perhaps the rarest of Exos, the professionals have adopted their new bodies for reasons that are financial instead of personal. Since an exotic 'sculpt' is a one-way process, this is a Faustian bargain indeed. For some, such as the sensationally popular Snake Exotic lingerie model Adrianna Kessler, it has certainly paid off, though.

Professional Exos often work in the fashion or entertainment industries, and are often sculpted to physical perfection. It is not uncommon for a corporate sponsor to pay for the surgery of a promising talent in exchange for an exclusive 5-year contract. Given the fickle nature of employment in the field, many accept such Faustian bargains.

Since the exotic package chosen is often influenced by the employer's needs, especially in the case of corporate-sponsored individuals, there tends to be a significant degree of additional mental adjustment needed for professionals of this kind. In some cases, such as the sensational suicide of braindancer **Pieter van der Haag** in 2019, the perceived loss of self becomes intolerable.

Professional Exotics are typically found in the fashion and film industries, but by far the most significant group among them are braindancers. Exotic braindance is a hot commodity among the "Exotic fancier" subculture, giving a taste of "otherness" to those too timid or too poor to undergo the procedure themselves. Taking advantage of Exotics' reputation as shameless hedonists, these are

typically erotic in nature.

The Playbeings are a subgroup of the professional Exotic. As Exos designed for the express purpose of erotic gratification, they are much-in-demand "commodities" in the escort and braindance businesses. As such, becoming one is often an extremely lucrative proposition for those involved. Of course, there's the periodic rumor that people are abducted and turned into brainwashed Playbeings against their will, but Biotechnica (who holds exclusive rights to many of the key augmentations that make up a Playbeing package) persistently and empathically denies the possibility and points the blame at jealous competitors seeking to discredit them.

Who Does It?

In the fledgling days of the technology, Biotechnica held an exclusive market to Exotics, but over the years, their monopoly has begun to falter, with new and vigorous competitors arising to take advantage of advancing technologies.

Biotechnica

They hardly need introduction. Biotechnica is practically a household name, thanks to their persistent Public Relations effort aimed at trying to promote the corporation as a caring, compassionate entity. As far as the general public is concerned, they've succeeded, but the average Edgerunner knows better.

As the original pioneers of the bodysculpting business, Biotechnica tried for years to maintain its monopoly in the field of exotic biosculpts. They've been free to charge whatever prices and impose whatever contractual waivers and obligations they wished on patients, and they've revelled in that freedom. The emergence of fledgling corporations on the market has changed that dynamic, and the corporation has had to change some of methods. For the time being, they're opting to pursue their competition with the likes of Darwin Biotech via conventional means, feeling, quite justifiedly, that any kind of hostile act would have a significant risk of negative publicity.

Despite these new threats to their dominant position, Biotechnica still holds a hefty market share. Most potential Exos with the means choose them for the corporate reputation of quality and security.

Darwin Biotechnologies

Perhaps the most controversial of biotech corps of the 2020s, Darwin Biotech is set to go head-to-head against Biotechnica in the future. Their catalogue of Exos is ever expanding to meet market demands (and matching whatever the latest Biotechnica offering might be).

The reason why Darwin is so often derided and targeted by smear campaigns is to do with their bold advertising. They buy full-page ads in all of the major screamsheets on a regular basis, as well as timeslots on major networks. Darwin ads always focus on what have commonly considered the "sacred cows" of many conservative thinkers, like the Founding Fathers, the American Dream and other such buzzwords.

Darwin's latest campaign, featuring a "playful" rendition of Jesus as an anthropomorphic Golden Retriever, resulted in riots all across the country, leaving six dead and twenty-one wounded. The management called it a "lamentable miscalculation", while the demand for their products, fueled by controversy, went through the roof.

Controversies aside, Darwin exotics are perhaps among the most successful, and are considered more "artistic" and "natural" by aficionados, and their prices are competitive. They also offer pay-by-installments plans for the lucky few people who pass their (rather strict) background and credit rating checks.

Napier & Lee

It is common practice among would-be Exotics to go for the most expensive conversions they can get their hands on, simply because nobody wants to spend the rest of their life paying for the consequences of buying substandard biomods. The Korean firm Napier & Lee are not at the very bottom of that ladder, but they're not far off.

Focusing on minor fashion mods (cat eyes, tongue and ear surgeries) for the moment, N&L are trying to rebuild a reputation lost after the widely publicized failures with their earlier full-conversion Exotic packages. Problems ranging from cancers to birth defects were turned into a major scandal by a Net54 journalist reputedly cooperating with one of N&L's competitors for the scoop. It is unsure if these failures were genuine systemic flaws in the product, isolated incidents exaggerated by the media, or the result of deliberate sabotage, but the firm survived only by liquidating a lot of their assets and securing a lot of new loans (which has left them indebted to the Korean business giant Tanson Group).

Modern N&L products have been found completely safe by several independent inspections, but sales are still low outside their domestic market. They're somewhat slow to follow market trends set by Biotechnica and Darwin, but their prices are within reach of the average mallrat customer, which might help secure their niche as a budget biomod provider for poor white trash.

Promise Biolabs

This Orbital biotech outfit is making some major waves before they've even released a single product in the market, and it's all because of what they've announced as their main line of research: Non-anthro Exotics. Meaning quadrupeds, centaurs, snake tails and other, even stranger body types. Needless to say, some hardcore Exo-aficionados are already drooling with the possibilities, while experts in cyberpsychiatrics are already posting dire warnings on medical journals.

It's unsure if there is anything concrete backing Promise's promises, but industry analysts and potential end-users are keeping a wary eye on the newcomer. According to rumors, so are the "acquisition departments" of several major players in the biotechnology and genemod fields.

Thomas Szilar Studios Inc.

Specializing in the Exotic-related field of "Wereborg" design, TSS has an exclusive market on obscure and customized Full Body Conversion components. They specialize in combining animalistic designs with stock 'borg bodies, but have been known to create a handful of "concept bodies" utilizing truly extreme modifications such as centaur bodies or snake tails. Originally, these bodies were intended only as life-sized works of mobile cybernetic art, controlled by a remote computer link, but public interest led to them being modified into proper 'borg shells.

As for Thomas Szilar himself, he doesn't exist, being the creation of the company's PR people as a figurehead, a reclusive genius who designs the products but never gives interviews or makes public appearances. Even some media corps got into the act (although it's unsure whether they honestly believed the spiel or did so to exploit rubes who did), trying to trace the elusive Szilar down in his "mountain retreat" somewhere in Austria. There's even a movie biography, *"One Man, One Dream, One Desire"*, detailing Szilar's supposed rise from rags to riches.

XenoGnosis Inc.

Springing up out of relative obscurity, XenoGnosis emerged in the exotic bodysculpting market shortly after Biotechnica finally had to concede their claim of full and complete ownership of all relevant patents (a somewhat embarrassing ordeal due to the original principles being "appropriated" from the research of one Dr. Armand Moireau, who'd died in what was thought to have been a botched extraction attempt by Biotechnica agents).

While they still lack the financial means to offer large-scale conversion packages, XenoGnosis have become the in-vogue provider of minor exotic affectations, like eyes, minor facial work, tongues and custom synthskins. Their products enjoy more social acceptance than full Exos, though some anti-biotech groups label them as offering "gateway products" that ultimately lead to fullblown biotech obsession.

The public face of XenoGnosis is one **Aryn D. Ludwig**, a rather uniquely flamboyant personality who has connections to several prominent Eurocrats and Goldenkids. Though ridiculed in the media as a relentless hedonist, Ludwig considers himself a pioneer in the area of breaking down social boundaries.

Who Are They?

As explained above, Exotics are a varied lot, not just physically but also mentally. The purpose of this section is to gather a few individuals to represent the subculture. Some of them are famous, others not. Some of them are ultra-rich neo-socialites, others make their living in the dirty, dangerous streets of an American metropolis.

They all have one unifying characteristic, though: The will and means to be something other than just plain human.

Sebastian Amber

With his 6' 8" frame bristling with muscle and covered with a luxurious pelt, Mr Amber is considered to be the epitome of physical perfection. In his line of work as a braintance artist, this is to be expected, of course. After all, it's essentially a wish-fulfillment industry.

Amber's 'dances don't tend to do particularly well with critics, but they do rake in profits, being variations on the basic "sex, action, excitement, sex" pattern that a lot of serious braintance junkies have come to expect.

Adriana Kessler

Among Exotics, Adriana Kessler is a milestone, the first Exotic centerfold and supermodel. Her lithe, serpentine frame has graced the billboards of major cities all over the world and the pages of every notable mens' magazine and swimsuit calendar. She's quickly becoming one of the iconic faces of 2020. Which is exactly how her corporate masters want it to be.

Before her conversion into the alluring form of a black-scaled serpent-woman, Ms. Kessler was a model of no real outstanding characteristics, who by a stroke of good fortune landed an exclusive contract with a rather prestigious agency looking to exploit the advances of modern biotechnology. After her transformation, she was thrust into the limelight of the voracious media, and quickly became an icon in the fashion circles, although it's assumed her inevitable fading away will be just as sudden.

Kessler is fully aware of the fleeting nature of her fame, and she's doing all she can to cash in on every aspect of her success while she still has the attention of the media, planning to live comfortably ever after once her 15 minutes are up.

Benjamin Novell

Major Novell was an officer in the Royal Army when the MLA took control, and manouvered himself out of the country soon afterwards. A closet Royalist, Novell seldom makes his political views known these days.

Novell's white wolf Exotic conversion (a high-end Biotechnica package with enhanced senses and survival modifications) was acquired soon after his departing the UK, as a mode of self-expression a tightly-controlled military life had always denied him. Since then, he has secured for himself a lucrative contract as a security chief of a Petrochem facility in Alaska, a position where he can utilize both his training and his newfound abilities.

His coworkers consider Novell a capable leader, although more than one is somewhat creeped out by his augmented physique that allows him to go jogging shirtless in the Alaskan winter. He usually doesn't leave the Petrochem compound, as the locals' attitudes towards him are a far cry from those the relatively tolerant city-dwellers

Samarcándë

Enigmatic. Eccentric. Pansexual. Obscenely rich. Samarcándë certainly has all the qualifications of a major media sensation. This hermaphrodite supermodel is as controversial as sie is famous, and the amount of death threats sent to hir agent has grown steadily and now exceeds the amount sent to the White House.

To the chagrin of some prying journalists, Samarcándë is very secretive about certain aspects of hir life outside the spotlight, which has only aroused more interest in certain circles. Nothing is known of hir life before augmentation, nobody even knows whether sie was a man or a woman pre-operation. Another facet that has aroused obscene amounts of interest among the plebs are the frequent and reputedly voracious erotic encounters Samarcándë has participated in with an ever-changing cavalcade of partners both male and female and from all imaginable sexual orientations.

Everything about Samarcándë, from her name to her modeling work and various fashionable hobbies appears to be a part of a carefully groomed overall image. In hir preferred social circle among the Goldenkids and jetsetters, sie is considered a living work of art, and is routinely included on the guest list of any major gallery opening, cocktail party or rave-orgy on the continent. Having hir actually show up, which sie does exceptionally infrequently, is considered a major endorsement of the host, and the fortunes of many a host favored in such a manner have experienced an immediate turn for the better.

Samarcándë's uniquely artistic bodysculpt (a slender feline with blue-grey fur and silver highlights) has attracted its share of imitators, and has made the original artist-surgeon, Dr **Iacob Metzner**, a celebrity in his own right. Following the meteoric success of his "creation", Metzner's appointment book is filled for the next five years with hopefuls seeking similar life-altering sculptures.

Thomas Voss

As a professional bodyguard and "troubleshooter", Voss tends to deviate from the classic image of Exotics as hedonistic thrillseekers. As a 7½", superhumanly muscular bear Exotic, he has certainly pulled out all the stops to project as commanding a presence as possible. Simply put, he's a giant, armed-to-the-teeth teddy bear with enough brawn to tear through a phonebook as easily as us normal people snap a match.

Voss is currently contracted to the martial-arts braindance star Joanne Reeves, a lucrative and relatively low-intensity assignment that has already made him enough money to ensure a comfortable lifestyle for years ahead. Given his client's combat expertise and self-reliant nature, Voss has figured she's ultimately after more than just a burly ursine protector, but he's content to

A note on pronouns

Many non-traditionally gendered Exotics are intensely sensitive of the pronouns used to describe them. The supposedly gender-neutral pronouns "sie" and "hir" were coined for these cases.

Of course, some Exotics and many Normals feel this to be intensely pretentious and want nothing to do with it.

bide his time for now.

Outside work, Voss tends to spend his time at *Marco's*, the same sports bar he's frequented all his life. The regulars there have all known him from back before his transition, and "Tommy-Bear" has become an informal mascot of the place. Plus he's a handy guy to have around in case the occasional dorphed-out troublemaker walks in.

Life of the Exotic

In its scope, an Exotic Modification is on the same level with the Full Body Conversion cyborg. As such, the procedure is always coupled together with extensive counselling meant to ease the transformed individual's passage back into everyday life. Aside from the obvious physical changes, there are numerous other large changes that need to be taken into account. In a way, Exotics, being flesh and blood, are even weaker than full 'borgs in this respect.

Signing Up

Exotic conversions aren't really over-the-counter products. To sign up for one, you typically need to walk into a **Biotechnica Body Boutique** or comparable large-scale biotechnology salon and book an appointment with a sales rep. The process is not unlike buying a luxury car, and customers with the means to procure a conversion for themselves or their partners are typically catered to with complementary beverages and around-the-clock service.

The advent of holotanks and accurate body imaging has made it possible for biotech salons to give prospective clients a preview of the bodies they're buying. Into that model, the customer can then add optional features, as well as tweak its physical qualities to his or her satisfaction. For those customers who prefer the real deal to holosimulation, Biotechnica has a habit of presenting attractive (and usually shamelessly provocative) models of both sexes available for whatever physical demonstration might be required.

Typically, these demonstrations also feature braindance and VR simulations where the customer gets to feel "firsthand" what it really means to be an anthromorphic tiger, or whatever should strike their fancy. These promotional 'dances are usually also available in braindance arcades and subscription services, often quite cheaply to drum up interest and, as their PR department calls it, to further acceptance of Exotics in society.

Counselling

For the prospective Exotic, counselling is the first hurdle to overcome. In the case of full-blown exotic conversion packages, pre-op screenings and preparatory meetings are scheduled a full eight to nine months prior to the start of surgery and augmentation. These typically take the form of biweekly two-hour sessions with an assortment of therapists.

The purpose of the first series of sessions is to assess a patient's mental state and suitability for the procedure, as well as to prepare them for their new lives. Unlike with full-conversion cyborgs, few candidates permanently fail the psych evaluations, though on occasion the experts recommend postponing the operation for further treatment, in cases where they feel the patient needs to get rid of some pre-existing "issues" before they get saddled with an assortment of new ones.

The use of braindance and virtual reality therapy is also a required part of this regimen, providing an environment for the patient to experience his new body in a controllable setting with expert supervision.

The Procedure

With most full conversion Exotic packages (as a rule, minor Exotic mods are basically only a step

up from regular Fashionware, and are therefore left out of this section), the surgical procedures are extensive and require a high (and proportionally expensive) level of hospital care. With Biotechnica conversions, this usually entails a stay at their private clinics, under the care of in-house specialist medical staff.

Typically, the first surgery to be performed is facial reconstruction, followed by whatever body and posture alteration might have been ordered. Skinchange and exoskeleton mods are typically applied last, as these are reliant on specific nanotech and gene therapy treatments which are time-consuming and could potentially affect other surgeries.

As is the case with many extensive surgeries, Exotic conversions are fairly painful operations with long recovery times, but it's becoming an industry standard that the patient is isolated from the situation as much as possible. Once again VR technology comes to the rescue, allowing them to spend their days inside any of a countless variety of intricate fantasies instead of lying on an uncomfortable bed in a full-body cast.

It is the goal of all the pre-op counselling and VR simulation to ensure that the patient's moment of discharging from the hospital is as unspectacular as possible. Even though they will be taking their first steps in a brand-new body, they'd have gradually familiarized themselves with it over the previous months. Nevertheless, many Exotics consider the moment of their leaving the hospital to be a life-altering moment. Many have taken to calling it a second birth, or an awakening, but the most common term seems to be "the Becoming".

Follow-ups

Exotics require a lot of maintenance, both mental and physical. They're recommended to have regular checkups, and certain vendors include them as a condition for their warranty contracts. These checkups are usually half-day affairs, containing an extensive physical and body scan plus a psychiatric consultation.

Most Exotics don't relish these visits, treating them like one would a dentist's appointment, as they're expected to make quite detailed accounts of their personal lives for the medics, in order to assess any potential hazards. Lying to the doctors is, of course, both counterproductive to the patient's health and in some cases guarded against in the interest of legal ramifications.

Follow-up care typically costs around 500 to 1,000 € per session, depending on the professionals involved. Biotechnica Exotics are typically referred to their in-house medical staff, who typically charge prices from the higher end of that range.

Well-to-do or professional Exotics are typically prone to falling into a bit of a paranoia about their follow-ups, and typically have medical personnel and therapists on retainer, available for immediate consultation twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year. From their perspective it's really no different from your average celebrity's yoga teacher, life coach, feng shui consultant and food taster.

Everyday Life

For the most part, Exotics are able to live out normal lives, certainly more so than their full borg counterparts. Their specialist physiologies do raise some issues, however.

Fashion

Most clothes, at least, will fit Exotic wearers reasonably well. As they're a relatively small and extremely diverse demographic, no large brand has a line expressly for them, but certain smaller ones do. In certain communities, especially in areas frequented by Nomads, you can find an actual seamstress to do alterations. For the truly affluent, there's also the expensive alternative of getting your wardrobe bespoke tailored.

In the world of *haute couture*, Exotics have sometimes been used as models for bold new designs, but the transitory nature of the fashion world usually means such trends are extremely ephemeral and are never reflected into everyday wear.

Food

A little-known fact about Exotics is their dietary requirements. Any Exotic with any significant Skinchange implantation due needs to either consistently eat food of pre-pack quality or above, or imbibe a steady regimen of nutritional supplements. The importance of diet and various nutrients with regard to the wellbeing of fur and scale is something the creative minds at Biotechnica's genetics labs have been working to find a perfect solution for, but so far haven't quite gotten a finished product out of the door.

Another food-related issue is dental care. For most Exotic forms based on predatory animals, the specific tooth arrangements are prone to dental problems with a mixed diet, as the patterns they were designed after were universally carnivorous. Possible solutions to this include either regular dental care (somewhat expensive and hard to find) or investing in more robust tooth implants either as a part of the original package or as "aftermarket add-ons". Or you could just switch to an Atkins diet and eat a lot of meat (and meat-analogs).

Grooming

Exotics and filth don't mix. Particularly in cases where extensive gene-modification of the skin has been performed, it is recommended that a high standard of personal hygiene is maintained. Skin grafts and modifications need particularly fastidious care during the first 6 months to a year after a patient's discharge from the hospital.

Their increased focus on themselves tends to give many Exotics a reputation as narcissists, though the risks posed by various complications are real enough. Chief amongst these are skin cancers for various types, typically not life-threatening but potentially extremely expensive to have treated.

Procreation

Exotic conversions do not, in the great majority of cases, affect one's ability to engage in sexual contact and have children. Any modifications extreme enough to impede these functions are not engaged in by reputable Exotics vendors (with the possible exception of Promise Biolabs). Nevertheless, the supposed existence of these extreme augmentations is a constant source of tabloid media panic, as well a favorite topic for anti-Exotic activists to invent lurid scare tales about.

All that being said, there are those who push the envelope by getting the most extreme augmentations and "animal adaptations" their therapists and surgeons let them get away with. Without going into too much detail, suffice it to say that... cosmetic parameters can go beyond the

comfort zone of your average citizen.

Certain Exotic groups of a more idealistic bent would like to see conversions done completely on the genetic level and for the changes to be transmittable to any offspring, in essence creating a new ethnic group. Experts tend to be of the opinion that such thoughts are completely incompatible with the reality of the situation, and that the scientific and ethical barriers for such a development are insurmountable.

Organizations for Exotics

The world of 2020 can be a hostile place if you're alone. The key for the survival for any subculture is sticking out for their own kind. To that end, Exotics have formed various gangs and organizations dedicated to assisting in their cause. Many of these organizations tend to have a bad rep among mundanes, though often without cause.

Sometimes, Exotics are connected to criminal organizations and activities purely on the power of prejudice. The most infamous of these are the **Werewolves of London**, a sadistic, violent gang of serial killers who apparently draw perverse pleasure from stalking and then dismembering their prey. Despite some rather fantastically lurid accounts in tabloid media, there have been no confirmed Exotic members of the gang, all those caught by law enforcement have turned out to be natural born humans, though of a particularly sociopathic bent.

The media, however, will never let facts get in the way of journalism, and the story of a pack of actual werewolves stalking the nightly streets is just too good not to print, truth be damned.

Beatified Circle of the Celts

Out of all the "new religions" of 2020, the Celts (HoB, pg. 34) are the most open towards Exotics. Being peaceful and dedicated towards communion with Nature, they tend to be wary towards biotechnology in general, but the beliefs of many shamanistic Exotics are compatible with theirs. Many such Exotics embrace the Celt way of life wholesale, moving to one of their rural communes in the unspoilt areas of the country and living out their lives in asceticism.

The downside of such a lifestyle is the relative isolation which makes attending to an Exotic's medical needs more difficult. Even a perfectly healthy Exotic should get regular checkups, preferably from a doctor qualified for to diagnose possible genetic side-effects.

Flesh Gallery

Catering to body artists of all sorts, the Flesh Gallery has recently become famous for its Exotic membership. It functions as an artists' conclave for those who use their own bodies as the canvas and means of expression.

In a culture where 20th-century modifications like tattoos and piercings are considered blasé, Exotics still enjoy a certain air of mystery. One of the functions of the Flesh Gallery is to bring these aficionados together with the objects of their attraction. Many Exotics enjoy an almost cult-like attention from such acolytes, and come to revel in it.

For its members, the Flesh Gallery is an important social network, and clubs affiliated with it can be found all over the West Coast. In terms of mental wellbeing, however, associating exclusively with people who see you as an artistically transcendent figure worthy of veneration and idolization is not the most healthy of environments, and many Exotics develop minor quirks as a result.

Many-As-One

The organization known as Many-As-One is a social network for Exotics, a safety net that provides support, purpose, companionship and protection to its members. Members are encouraged to keep in

touch with each other either virtually or in person, and organized "chapterhouses" are kept in many major cities around the globe.

The Many-As-One philosophy is simple, to maintain a united, cohesive front for Exotics, trusting in the power of numbers to protect themselves. They defend and protect their own passionately, and seek to further the goals of the Exotic community wherever possible.

An unifying characteristic of Many-As-One supporters tends to be their distrust and loathing of Biotechnica, and many feel the megacorporation's current dominant market share as being unhealthy to their subculture. Alternatives to Biotechnica's dominance are eagerly investigated upon and financially supported whenever feasible.

The Holy Grail for Many-As-One is essentially turning Exotic Conversions to open-source biomods, and hopefully eventually lowering the costs to be within reach of everyone. There's a lot of misguided idealism surrounding the topic, but more than a few rather sharp scientific minds are pondering it.

Wild Hearts

The Wild Hearts are an Exotic gang/movement focused in the Free State of Nevada. Their primary motivation in life is hedonism. They believe that since Exotics have left behind their human shapes, so too should they abandon human taboos and inhibitions. Wild Hearts members are typically so-called fetishistic Exotics, and the gang tends to recruit new arrivals with similar interests. Such prospective members typically start off with minor augmentations, advancing among the ranks as they get more. In this respect, they are very much akin to Boosters, just more selective as to the actual implants involved.

The general public, at least for the time being, has a fascination with the Wild Hearts, since they hold a lot of the better underground entertainment events in the state, such as clothing-optional rave parties, wine tastings spiked with recreational drugs, etc. These, being legal in Nevada (where nearly everything is), usually pass without incident.

Somewhat more troublesome is the Wild Hearts' campaign of spreading their creed. Among other things, they get off on showing off their lifestyle to the unsuspecting. This usually takes the form of gang-affiliated Netrunners hacking vidchannels, billboards, ad-blimps and the like. As a rule, powermongers who come to Vegas for a relaxing weekend don't want to be confronted by unsolicited anthromorph porn on their pay-per-view, and as such, the gang is often subject to official harassment keep a limit on such embarrassing incidents.

The self-appointed leader of the Wild Hearts is the rogueish **Thierry Gribeau**, a tiger Exotic with a notorious flair for dramatics. He's fairly approachable as far as Exotics go, and is always willing to elaborate on Wild Heart philosophy to anyone who'll listen

Enemies of Exotics

Something as "alien" to the naked eye as the Exotics cannot escape the attention of various groups of "concerned citizens". Some of them are harmless loonies, some of them heavily-armed guerillas in what they consider to be a Holy War against the genetically inferior.

Out of the major religions, the most anti-Exotic are (oddly) the Buddhists, who see them as a concession to the very material desires their faith is dedicated to rising above. They don't actively pursue this opposition, but if you get into a philosophical debate on the issue with one of them, be prepared for long match.

The Architect of Broken Things

The Architect is a Net terrorist, musician and artist whose preferred media is the Net itself. Operating from somewhere within Europe (sources say Sweden, Iceland or Macedonia), he's known for leaving VR artworks and musical compositions all over Netspace, expressing his personal views.

Lately, these artworks have included an increasing amount of venom and derision towards the Exotic movement, as well as an overall breaking-down of his previously lucid and eloquent tone. Media sources within the art world speculate that the Architect has gone off his meds, been replaced by an impostor or is really an Artificial Intelligence that is now malfunctioning.

The Eastborough Reformed Baptist Church

Continuing an odious tradition, the Eastborough Reformed Baptists are a North Carolina based fundamentalist congregation who shun the trappings of modern society. Their particular breed of Fundamentalism handily excludes everyone outside their tiny community from Salvation and preaches the imminence of the Rapture.

The ERBC would be one of countless unremarkable sects, were it not for a rather disturbing "tradition", that of producing serial killers. To date, there have been three cases explicitly linked to the church within the past five years, the latest being Jonathan Hong, who was captured and executed in February 2021 after a three-state killing spree that claimed the lives of forty-six victims, among them seventeen Exotics.

This latest atrocity lifted the ERBC very much into the consciousness of the subculture, and has turned many in it hostile towards religious groups in general, an attitude which had already been prevalent but which has recently taken on a very unpleasant, often violent edge.

The Helix Party

As a political organization dedicated to the cause of genetic purity, the Helix Party makes for natural opponents of just about anyone. A few of their more extreme factions advocate the immediate revokement of all legal rights for Exotics, claiming they no longer fulfill the criteria to be considered as members of the human race.

The Helix spokesman, **Denis Marlowe**, is a prototype of the sort of perfect blonde-with-blue-eyes Übermensch the Party is aiming for. His pretty-boy image is somewhat at odds with the passionately

dogmatic speeches he is fond of. There's even a rather popular videomanipulation of him being superimposed in some footage of the Nuremberg Rally of 1933, speaking to a cheering hordes of Hitlerjugend (rumored to be the work of infamous Netrunner Spider Murphy).

Marlowe has spoken out against Exotics at several Helix Party events, speeches that while lacking the sheer extremism of several of his colleagues, still manage to shock many opponents with their chilling lack of empathy. In his view, anyone electing to undergo genetic manipulation or cybernetic implantation should be subjected to mandatory psychiatric evaluations and checkups, and regardless of the results of these examinations, be barred from any jobs deemed "too risky" (including but not limited to the military, health care, education, law enforcement and rescue services).

In the political front, Marlowe has raised some red flags in that he's successfully lured a handful of Senators from the Big Two into his own party, and some commentators feel that he might have enough charisma and clout to make the Helix a more serious thorn in the side of the powers that be.

The Natural Coalition

The NC is your everyday consumer-awareness group advocating the banning of a rather disjointed list of things they consider "unnatural", including modern pharmaceuticals, the Net, and of course, bioware of all kinds.

It appears to be the view of the Coalition that human beings as a whole can't be trusted to make the right choices in their life and as such, they must be prevented by making the wrong ones, preferably under the guardianship of an impartial entity (such as the Coalition). Such a philosophy has raised the ire of many a libertarian and pro-corporate group, and whenever one side makes a public statement or a protest, a violent backlash is assured.

Leadership in the Natural Coalition tends to be in a constant state of flux, according to what they are campaigning against at any given moment. Their premiere anti-Exotic speaker is **Dr Lauren Schliemann**, a recently-discredited Fundamentalist Christian television psychiatrist and counselor. In Dr Lauren's worldview, being an Exotic is a sin that ought to be punishable by the complete ostracism of the "afflicted" from polite society and the immediate banning of all applicable biotech from the world market.

The Coalition's largest threat is actually their own internal politics, as they're susceptible to a general aimlessness, shifting their focus to keep up with the rapidly evolving *Zeitgeist* of the 21st century. They're very good at using this reactionary attitude for fundraising, but their efforts in lobbying for their goals tend to be rather limp-wristed.