



Cyborgization & Virtual Worlds

Portals
to Altered
Reality

A Posthuman Cyberware Sourcebook



PCS02

Matthew E. Gladden

CYBORGIZATION AND VIRTUAL WORLDS:
Portals to Altered Reality

Volume 02 in the
Posthuman Cyberware Sourcebook series

PGS02

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A character's body is the means by which she perceives and interacts with her environment. When a character extends her body by grafting robotic components onto it – or replaces some of its key components with biosynthetic substitutes – it inevitably alters the way in which she experiences the world.

The nature of a character's forays into virtual reality is just one part of her life that's transformed by the process of cyborgization. After all, it's easy to know when you enter a virtual environment if the tools you're using are a VR headset and haptic feedback gloves. If the virtual experience is too much for you, you can always just rip off the headset: the digital illusions instantly vanish, and you know that you're back in the 'real' world. But what if the VR gear that you're employing consists of cranial neural implants that directly stimulate your brain to create artificial sensory experiences? Or what if you're toting dual-purpose artificial eyes and robotic prosthetic limbs that can either supply you with authentic sense data from the external environment *or* switch into iso mode, cut off all the sensations from the real world, and pipe fabricated sense data into your brain? What signs could you look for to help you determine whether you're in the real world or just a convincing virtual facsimile?

This second volume in the *Posthuman Cyberware Sourcebook* series explores the two ways in which neuroprosthetic technologies immerse a cyborg in his environment and allow him to sense and manipulate the world: through *embodiment* and *embedding*. The process of cyborgization not only grants its human subject an augmented body with enhanced, reduced, or simply different capacities; it also embeds him in a particular part of the real physical world and provides the means by which he senses and manipulates that environment. And it may be the instrument through which he dives into virtual worlds, as well.

In this book we investigate these issues from many angles that may be of interest to players and GMs alike. The book is written especially for GMs who are designing adventures or campaigns set in near-future worlds with a cyberpunk, postcyberpunk, or biopunk atmosphere in which posthumanizing cyberware exists and societies are tilting ever further toward the dystopian. Like other Mnemoclave products, the text draws on the latest research into neurocybernetics and the bioengineering, economic, sociopolitical, and cultural aspects of human enhancement, to support GMs who are looking to give their campaigns a hard SF edge. The volume includes dozens of special textboxes with plot hooks, character traits, equipment descriptions, and ideas for successfully GM-ing the ontological puzzles and narrative twists that cyborgization and virtual reality make possible – to help you incorporate the material directly into your game, regardless of which rule system you're using.

Researching and writing this book was a great pleasure. I hope that within its pages you'll find something new, interesting, and unexpected to add to your adventures.

– Matthew E. Gladden

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Whether it's adding a night-vision cybereye or acquiring a full cyborg body, the process of cyborgization reshapes the way in which an individual relates to the physical environment around her. But how does it transform her ability to dive – or to be pulled – into virtual worlds?

Cyborgization and Virtual Worlds: Portals to Altered Reality is a resource for designing campaigns grounded in near-future hard-SF settings in which synthetic bodies and VR cyberware offer characters entirely new ways of perceiving, interpreting, and manipulating the analog and digital worlds...



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