Posthumanism in Digital Culture

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The *Digital Activism and Society: Politics, Economy and Culture in Network Communication* series focuses on the political use of digital everyday-networked media by corporations, governments, international organisations (Digital Politics), as well as civil society actors, NGOs, activists, social movements and dissidents (Digital Activism) attempting to recruit, organise and fund their operations, through information communication technologies.

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Dr Athina Karatzogianni is an Associate Professor at the University of Leicester, UK. Her research focuses on the intersections between digital media theory and political economy, in order to study the use of digital technologies by new socio-political formations.

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Posthumanism in Digital Culture: Cyborgs, Gods and Fandom

BY

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Abstract

This work investigates the theories of transhumanism and posthumanism, the former dealing with radically changing bodies and minds, and the latter with the nature of humanity itself. It examines how these theories are rapidly growing and gaining more exposure in both today's media (specifically, video games and science fiction (SF) screen media, two likely platforms for such work), and the minds of their fans: the so-called 'geek fandom' that follows this type of media with a passion. The literature review lays the groundwork for this research, following the early days of humanist thought, the birth of 'anthropocentrism' and the history of transhuman and posthumanist thought from ancient times through to the modern day. In addition, this book tracks the ways in which video games and science fiction scholarship have developed, alongside research methods for both, in order to provide context to the case studies I have created: two for video games (*Xenoblade Chronicles*/*Xenoblade Chronicles X*) and one for SF screen (*EX_MACHINA*). Empirically, this work is triangulated with developer interviews and comments, together with the fan culture study, which provides the base for the primary research. This includes interviews with 'lay' fans and experts in various fields alike, which allowed for a great sample diversity. In fact, it is from the latter that the three key themes for this work emerge: 'body', 'identity' and 'power'. These themes allow for a unique theoretical framing of trans/posthuman ideology, analysing the depth of popularised themes. Ultimately, with SF as a powerful disseminator of themes and video games as an interactive, responsive medium, these two media types and the fandom surrounding them make an excellent case for the rapid growth of trans/posthuman ideas. Ultimately, this work provides a rich triangulated analysis on a constantly shifting and changing scholarship on the current state of popular culture, and especially that of fandom.

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Preface

The universe is cold. Fun is the fire that melts the blocks of hardship and creates a bubbling celebration of life. It is the birth right of every creature, a right no less sacred for having been trampled on since the beginning of time.

–Nick Bostrom

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