

Preface

This fourth volume in the *Interdisciplinary Studies on Philology* book series, had its origins in a conviction shared by its editors: that two of the most consequential vocabularies for thinking about the human future, transhumanism and cyberpunk, have too often been studied in isolation from one another, or folded prematurely into a single undifferentiated discourse of “the posthuman.” Transhumanism names a philosophical and cultural movement with its own institutions, journals, and advocates, committed to the deliberate technological enhancement of human capacities and, in its more radical formulations, to the eventual supersession of the biological human altogether. Cyberpunk on the other hand names a genre, a visual idiom, and by now a genuinely global structure of feeling, one that has for four decades staged the same technological ambitions under conditions of corporate domination, ecological exhaustion, and social stratification. To read the two together, as the essays in this collection do, is to recover a conversation that has in fact been ongoing since the early 1980s, when the first wave of cyberpunk fiction and the first stirrings of what would become transhumanist advocacy emerged, by more than one contributor's account, out of a shared cultural moment. It is a conversation this volume aims not to conclude but to reopen, extend, and, where necessary, complicate.

The chapters gathered here range with some deliberateness beyond the Anglo-American core that has traditionally anchored both discourses. Readers will find analyses of Greek myth and French New Wave cinema alongside readings of Chinese digital art, Indian blockbuster cinema, Japanese anime, German-language speculative fiction, Polish science fiction, and an empirical study of financial technology adoption in Nigeria and translation studies. This breadth is a matter of editorial principle rather than mere coverage. Both transhumanism and cyberpunk have historically been narrated as products of a fairly narrow set of national and disciplinary traditions, largely Anglo-American philosophy of technology on the one hand and Anglo-American and Japanese genre fiction on the other.

As editors, we have resisted the temptation to impose a single interpretive framework on the volume, or to adjudicate between the transhumanist and the critical posthumanist positions that recur, sometimes explicitly and sometimes only implicitly, across its chapters. Readers expert in this field will recognise that the relationship between transhumanism and critical posthumanism is itself a matter of ongoing scholarly contention, and we have deliberately allowed our contributors to position themselves along this

spectrum in the manner most appropriate to their material, rather than requiring theoretical uniformity for its own sake. What unites the volume is a shared method: close, historically and philologically informed attention to how specific texts, films, television series, video games, digital artworks, and even ordinary financial applications construct, contest, or quietly naturalise particular visions of the technologically altered human. We take this philological attentiveness, situated between the letter of the text and the wider discursive field in which it circulates, to be the series' distinctive contribution to a field that is more commonly approached through the lens of philosophy, media studies, or the sociology of technology alone.

This volume is dedicated to our contributors, whose research constitutes its true substance. We thank them, first and foremost, for their patience through several rounds of revision, their generosity in engaging with reviewers' comments, and their willingness to bring highly specialised expertise, in philology, film studies, anime and manga studies, translation studies, comparative literature, media theory, and empirical social science alike, into conversation with a set of questions that few of them had previously approached in combination. We are equally grateful to the anonymous peer reviewers who read this volume's chapters with the rigour and generosity that scholarship of this kind requires, and whose interventions materially improved the collection.

It remains only to note that this volume does not pretend to exhaustiveness. Numerous cyberpunk and transhumanist traditions, Latin American, African, Southeast Asian, and others, remain underrepresented here, as do several media forms, video games and tabletop role-playing games chief among them, that have done as much as literature and film to shape contemporary imaginations of the enhanced or obsolete human. We regard this not as a failure but as an invitation: to future volumes in this series, and to the wider scholarly community, to continue the conversation this collection has sought to reopen.

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