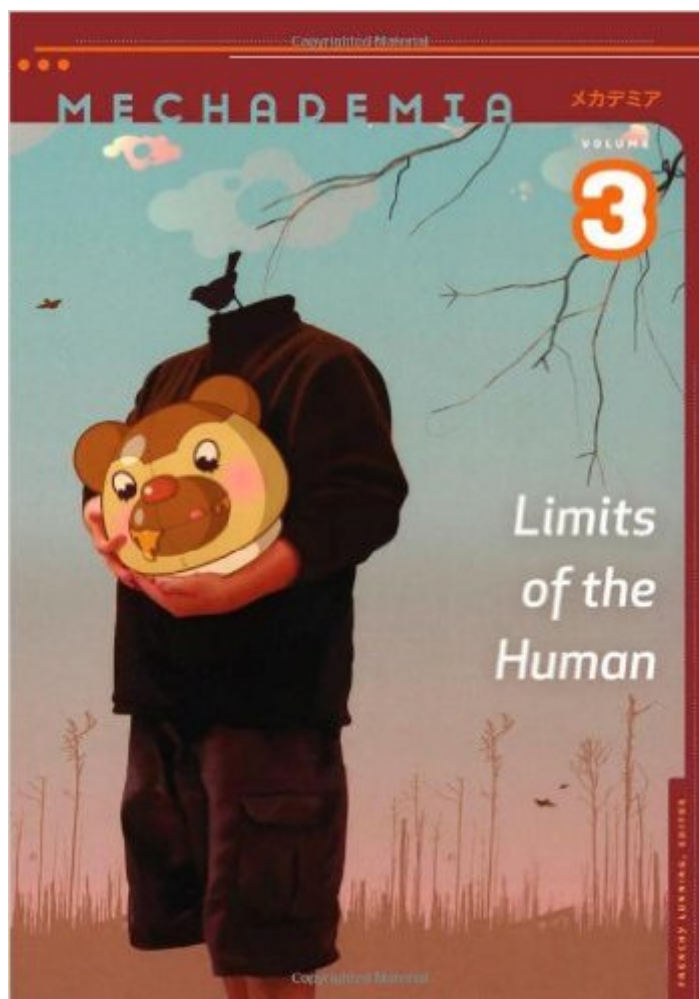


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Mechademia 3: Limits Of The Human



Synopsis

Dramatic advances in genetics, cloning, robotics, and nanotechnology have given rise to both hopes and fears about how technology might transform humanity. As the possibility of a posthuman future becomes increasingly likely, debates about how to interpret or shape this future abound. In Japan, anime and manga artists have for decades been imagining the contours of posthumanity, creating dazzling and sometimes disturbing works of art that envision a variety of human/nonhuman hybrids: biological/mechanical, human/animal, and human/monster. Anime and manga offer a constellation of posthuman prototypes whose hybrid natures require a shift in our perception of what it means to be human. *Limits of the Human*—the third volume in the *Mechademia* series—maps the terrain of posthumanity using manga and anime as guides and signposts to understand how to think about humanity's new potentialities and limits. Through a wide range of texts—the folklore-inspired monsters that populate Mizuki Shigeru's manga; Japan's Gothic Lolita subculture; Tezuka Osamu's original cyborg hero, Atom, and his manga version of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (along with Ōtomo Katsuhiro's 2001 anime film adaptation); the robot anime, *Gundam*; and the notion of the uncanny in *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, among others—the essays in this volume reject simple human/nonhuman dichotomies and instead encourage a provocative rethinking of the definitions of humanity along entirely unexpected frontiers. Contributors: William L. Benzon, Lawrence Bird, Christopher Bolton, Steven T. Brown, Joshua Paul Dale, Michael Dylan Foster, Crispin Freeman, Marc Hairston, Paul Jackson, Thomas LaMarre, Antonia Levi, Margherita Long, Laura Miller, Hajime Nakatani, Susan Napier, Natsume Fusanosuke, Sharalyn Orbaugh, Ōtsuka Eiji, Adèle-Elise Provost and MUSEbasement; Teri Silvio, Takayuki Tatsumi, Mark C. Taylor, Theresa Winge, Cary Wolfe, Wendy Siuyi Wong, and Yomota Inuhiko.

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Customer Reviews

Though I have enjoyed both of the previous Mechademia volumes, I must say that this most recent excursion is the most thorough, exciting, and well-presented of them all. Though previous volumes were slightly uneven, Mechademia 3, after an opening salvo by Mark Taylor I will charitably call abstruse (sample sentence: 'Always articulated between a condition of undifferentiation and indifferent differentiation, information emerges along the two-sided edge of chaos,' p. 5), it is a tremendously satisfying and stimulating work, appropriately scholarly without often veering into the sort of convoluted scholaresque that limits intelligent discourse to a very privileged few. Laura Miller's 'Extreme Makeover of a Heian-Era Wizard' is a consummate examination of the reincarnation of a historical-mythological Japanese figure into an icon of otaku adulation. She makes compelling points about the capacity for fringe cultures to make the female voice--so often neglected by dominant cultural/historical discourse--a viable one, and she explores how seemingly trivializing activities can in fact reaffirm traditional Japanese culture. Theresa Winge provides a competent and useful overview of one of Japan's strangest fashion cliques: the Lolita, in all her myriad forms. She makes intriguing points about the ritualistic nature of the adoption of a Lolita identity (points that could, in fact, probably be applied to incorporation into any subculture), and aims to examine the trend from the position of an insider.

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