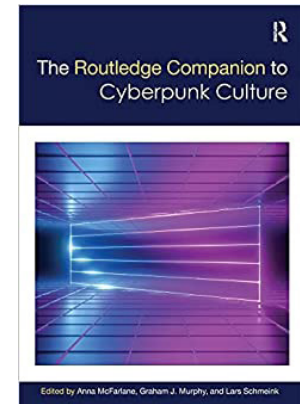


The Routledge Companion to Cyberpunk Culture, edited by Anna McFarlane, Graham J. Murphy and Lars Schmeink



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McFarlane, Anna, Graham J. Murphy, and Lars Schmeink, editors. *The Routledge Companion to Cyberpunk Culture*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2020. Hardcover. 474 pg. \$225.40. ISBN 9780815351931.



The Routledge Companion to Cyberpunk Culture, edited by Anna McFarlane, Graham J. Murphy, and Lars Schmeink, aims broadly, as outlined in the text's introduction, "to track cyberpunk's diversity and far-reaching influence" (xx). Made up of contributions from more than fifty scholars, the sizable anthology is divided into key three sections: Cultural Texts, Cultural Theory, and Cultural Locales. The first section is made up of traditional analyses of the cinematic and literary roots of cyberpunk and notably replaces examinations of typical works such as *Neuromancer* (1984) and *Blade Runner* (1982) with other texts such as Pat Cadigan's *Synners* (1991) and Charles Stross's *Accelerando* (2005). Containing theoretical assessments of disparate topics such as identity, ecology, class, and political power, the second section of the anthology, Cultural Theory, explores cyberpunk through the lenses of diverse theoretical frameworks including queer theory, Afrofuturism, and feminism. The final segment, Cultural Locales, complicates assumptions that cyberpunk is an Anglo-American mode constructed through the appropriation of other cultures' imagery and tropes. As this companion emphasizes, cyberpunk, though perhaps initially a North American phenomenon, has manifested in pivotal ways within various polities. The essays making up Cultural Locales examine these cultural manifestations of cyberpunk and their relationships to the complex systems operating within and influencing these societies. This anthology is a valuable resource due to its close examinations of cinematic and literary manifestations of cyberpunk and for its analyses of identity and the political actions of cyberpunk media in relation to discussions of governing power, ecologies, and class. It is additionally pivotal due to the questions it raises about cyberpunk as a global phenomenon that reflects and shapes our understanding of living in the 21st century (xx).

This companion continues the work of scholars interested in cyberpunk as a method for better understanding contemporary life. Unique to this collection is its emphasis upon cyberpunk as not simply a genre of writing but instead "a cultural formation, a means of engaging with our 21st-century technocultural age" (xx). Recognizing the limitations of treating this phenomenon as a

mere literary school, Anna McFarlane, Graham J. Murphy, and Lars Schmeink construct a broader framework for their collection and therefore widen discussions concerning the relationship between cyberpunk and contemporary culture. Since Bruce Bethke initially utilized the term in his short story “Cyberpunk,” published in a 1983 issue of *Amazing*, and Bruce Sterling edited an influential collection of fiction under this classification, *Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology* (1988), cyberpunk scholarship has flourished but maintained a predominant focus upon literary and cinematic generic functions. Larry McCaffery’s edited collection *Storming the Reality Studio: A Casebook of Cyberpunk & Postmodern Science Fiction* (1992), for example, drew together the fiction of contemporary writers and the critical commentaries of scholars to diagnose cyberpunk as the quintessential postmodern literary form through which writers use the resources of a fragmentary culture to comment on how technology shapes modern life. While subsequent major collections such as *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* (2003) and *The Oxford Handbook of Science Fiction* (2014) contain minor sections focused upon cyberpunk, *The Routledge Companion to Cyberpunk Culture* is a significant resource for scholars due both to its predominant focus upon this cultural formation and its recognition of cyberpunk’s influence and presence outside literary and cinematic borders.

Emphasizing such a far-reaching impact and manifestation of cyberpunk, this anthology is best suited for scholars seeking a helpful companion for undergraduate courses focused on this topic or emerging scholars desiring a guiding resource through this cultural terrain. Moving beyond the most influential cyberpunk texts, it provides a broader understanding of how cyberpunk permeates disparate genres and media including video games, music, fashion, role-playing games, manga and anime, comic books, novels, and films and therefore enables scholars to re-envision cyberpunk as not merely a North American genre of speculative fiction but instead in a more accurate sense as a global response to late capitalism. This companion additionally provides theoretical tools for young scholars and students seeking to better understand how to interrogate cyberpunk as a tool for negotiating a complex, technocultural age. By providing key critical works utilizing various theoretical foundations including feminist, race, and queer frameworks, this anthology acts as an ideal tool for young scholars and students seeking an entry point into discussions surrounding this cultural formation and its commentary on identity in 21st-century societies. Though a somewhat limited resource for advanced scholars versed in the history, theoretical apparatus, and cultural products of cyberpunk, *The Routledge Companion to Cyberpunk* is a valuable collection for developing scholars seeking a broad understanding of this cultural phenomenon.

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