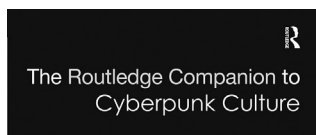'The Rats in the Walls' (1924), 'The Colour Out of Space' (1927) and 'The Shadow over Innsmouth' (1936). In an intriguingly paradoxical phrase, Lovecraft's 'cosmic outside' is not merely 'indifferent' but '*malignantly* indifferent to human life'.
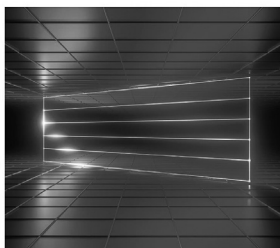
There is, though, an interesting coda that goes beyond this apparent paradox. How far 'does Lovecraftian revulsion engulf the reader in ceaseless flux and all-encroaching formlessness'? How far do we *actually* find Lovecraft's affect 'disgusting'? For most readers (at least, those who have grown up with him), words like 'eldritch' and 'squamous' evoke smiles. We see Cthulhu reduced to the status of a children's toy, and enjoy knowing parodies such as Neil Gaiman's 'I, Cthulhu' (1987). Or, we might want to put it, how *weird* is Weird fiction actually? Does it really produce an affect? For example, the cosmic horror of Hodgson's *House on the Borderland* is not so much evoked by the physical manifestations we are shown, but in the breakdown of time and space experienced by the protagonist, and while Machen's *The Three Imposters* is certainly a masterpiece of physical corruption, it can be argued that 'A Fragment of Life' (1923) and 'The White People' (1904) offer evocations of chilling otherness which go far beyond disgust. It is here perhaps, where we encounter Korsmeyer's 'slight intake of breath', on realizing what we have actually seen described, which makes weird fiction *weird* rather than 'horrific'.

Newell seems to hint throughout his book that these arguments are valid, and that he is simply highlighting the way physical corruption or even the physical *difference* of the 'monster', and the disgust it evokes, is a major part of weird fiction. *A Century of Weird Fiction* is a broad and rewarding field of study for this mode. As a way of understanding the authors it focuses upon, it is perhaps more limited, but Newell's often overblown description of their work is a useful engagement with a number of writers whose fiction engages with a remarkably wide spectrum of anxieties.

The Routledge Companion to Cyberpunk Culture

Edited by Anna McFarlane, Graham J. Murphy, and Lars Schmeink

Anna McFarlane, Graham J. Murphy and Lars Schmeink, eds. *The Routledge Companion to Cyberpunk Culture* (Routledge, 2020, 474pp, £39.99)
Danielle Shalet (Canterbury Christ Church University)

The Routledge Companion to Cyberpunk Culture (2020) is an extensive volume that looks at cyberpunk from a socio-cultural perspective. Its stated purpose is to 'emphasize the importance of cyberpunk as a cultural formation and a means of engaging with our 21st century techno cultural

age', and the volume does just that by taking the reader on a journey from the origins of cyberpunk to its impact on popular culture, whilst hinting to the reader, throughout, that we are now living in the dystopian future that plays a key role in many of these works.

The opening section, 'Cultural Texts', looks at cyberpunk within a wide range of popular media such as books, films, TV, video games ,and even fashion. The second section, 'Cultural Theory', introduces the reader to theories like posthumanism, queer theory, cyberfeminism, Afrofuturism and Indigenous Futurisms, to name a few. More significantly, one of the volume's major highlights is that it looks at cyberpunk culture in non-anglophone and non-western countries. In fact, the UK and USA are refreshingly absent from the third section on 'Cultural Locales', which makes this extremely appealing to those readers who may have been over-saturated by the copious amounts of work done on US, UK and Japanese cyberpunk.

What makes this book distinctive from more general works on science fiction, such as the recent *Cambridge History of Science Fiction* (2019), is that it not only focuses exclusively on cyberpunk but it also thoughtfully illustrates the importance of cyberpunk as a 'culture'. The editors do this adroitly through their selection of essays and the essays' strategic placement within the work. It is clear that nothing is done in this book by accident. The essays are tactically placed in terms of interest, cultural significance, importance and quality, and the editors do their best to produce an extensive guide on the subject, drawing from a range of experts as well as postgraduate students and cyberpunk enthusiasts. Furthermore, apart from a few rather simplified 'case studies', the primary methodologies used are textual, making this Media and Cultural Studies Companion far more accessible to a general audience.

What makes this book particularly interesting to a 'cyberpunk geek' like me is that it is a hotbed of ideas; it encourages the reader to explore many of these topics first-hand and in greater depth. For instance, I came away wanting to do research on the reception of cyberpunk in countries that were not mentioned as well as some that were. Moreover, what was enjoyable about this text was the attention that it not only paid to cyberpunk as a global phenomenon but also its look at critical race theory, Indigenous Futurisms and Afrofuturism which, although brief, was refreshing to see as many of these theories are worryingly lacking from past work on cyberpunk. The three essays that stood out for me were those written by Isiah Lavender III, Corinna Lenhardt and Lavender's collaboration with co-editor Graham J. Murphy.

There are, however, places were this work falls short. The first is that, with over forty essays, it is over-ambitious. There is a great deal here but not a great deal of substance. It is an ideas book rather than a book of academic

rigour. That is not to say that there are no gems in here, from experts in the field like Sherryl Vint and co-editors Murphy and Anna McFarlane, but it would have been nice to see significant and fundamental works given more attention and focus. Once again, I refer here to the lovely work on Afrofuturism, cultural locales and Indigenous Futurisms.

Although the way in which these critical companions are laid out limits the amount of depth that an author can go into in each essay, I think it would have served its audience better if the volume had focused on less rather than more. There are many fascinating texts here, but I was left feeling unfulfilled after reading some of the chapters. In addition, there were also essays that did not use up-to-date source material in their assessments. In some authors' attempts to draw conclusions, they repeated work that had already been done by others in academia without paying heed to this research and those authors. This is worrying to see in an area like cyberpunk that still has a limited range of scholarship. Some authors should have been more rigorous and careful in their sourcing; for example, in a discussion of *Ghost in the Shell* (1995), there was no mention of two academic works published in the same area in 2018/19 that covered similar ground. This chapter was so similar to previous work on the topic that it was somewhat uncomfortable to read and not see these sources cited.

More significantly, this work emphasized a look at 'cyberpunk culture', but 'culture' is a complex phenomenon, and there was very little evidence of clarification or definition of what type of 'culture' this book was focused on. For instance, popular culture is different from high culture, which is different from low culture, and so on (the list is extensive). Although this book is clearly looking at cyberpunk within popular culture, it could have done with a few essays that clarify what is meant by 'culture' and a description of this in reference to cyberpunk.

Nevertheless, I enjoyed reading this work very much and, despite its broad nature, it is an easy read that gives the reader much food for thought. This was indeed a welcome addition to my library and would be a welcome addition to the library of any cyberpunk fan. It should also be noted that this book would do well as a reference guide for an undergraduate course on cyberpunk at any university that teaches science fiction. It will be nice to see more in-depth studies done by several of the authors whose work is presented here, and it is lovely to see this book adding to science fiction's traction within academic spheres.