

Feminism and Cyberpunk

The Cyberpunk Project

Cyberpunk fiction prefers a different feminism from the more mainstream one; while the latter proudly emphasizes the differences between man and woman, cyberpunks see "la différence" as passive, genteel, nostalgic and late-hippyish. Cyberpunk feminism harks back to an earlier historic stage of feminism, the one advocating equality at all costs : see Joanna Russ's *The Female Man*. Molly from *Neuromancer* is a typical example : strong and ruthless, violent and independent.

What is more evident in cyberpunk fiction is not machism, but the extreme individualism of its characters, both men and women. This individualism is sometimes rebellious and anarchic, sometimes egocentric and superomistic. Such ambiguity of connotations makes for a more complex reading than the usual scholarly one of cyberpunk fiction as reactionary. A more likely and serious accusation is that of xenophobia; the 90s equivalent of the "red scare" is a "yellow scare"; the baddies here are japanese executives. *Neuromancer* is hostile to the zaibatsu just as the U.S. in the 80s were hostile to the anticipated Japanese techno-economical takeover. This hostility is again expressed through individualism : Japanese people are feared because they are "like ants", that is not individualistic enough. The simplistic cliché is significantly repeated even by a thinker as sophisticated as Timothy Leary.