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Edited by Riccardo Retez

The Real Aftermath

How COVID-19 Changed the Way Science Fiction is Conceived, Read, and Interpreted

SERIES IN LITERARY STUDIES

“The Real Aftermath” is a bold reexamination of science fiction in the wake of COVID-19, expertly edited by Riccardo Retez. This collection dismantles and redefines the genre’s boundaries, revealing its urgent role in confronting real-world crises. A necessary read for understanding the power of speculative narratives in a transformed social and media context.

Prof. Matteo Bittanti
ULM University, Milan, Italy

About the editor

Riccardo Retez, Ph.D. in Visual and Media Studies at the IULM University in Milan, is an Adjunct Professor in Television and Media History at the LABA of Florence, Italy, with a research focus on Social studies, Audience studies and Game studies. His doctoral research (IULM University of Milan, 2024) investigated spectator behavior on game live-streaming platforms according to social consumption phenomena. He obtained his Master of Arts degree in Television, Cinema and New Media at IULM University in 2019 and his Bachelor of Arts Degree at the LABA of Florence in 2017. He contributes to academic publications in international journals and volumes (Concrete Press 2020, Ludica 2020; Eracl Journal 2021, IFM 2021, Phoenix Papers 2022, Oxford Press 2023, Mimesis 2024) and works as curator of events concerned with contemporary visual culture. In this field, he has recently worked as project manager of festivals related to science fiction and its perception between academia and the public within Italian and American universities (IULM University, 2021-2022-2023, The University of New Mexico, 2023). His interest in the consumption of science fiction in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic emerged as a result of research conducted in the context of doctoral research in audience studies that has demonstrated a growing reevaluation of speculative fiction in the face of the recent pandemic.

Summary

‘The Real Aftermath: How COVID-19 Changed the Way Science Fiction is Conceived, Read, and Interpreted’ offers a profound exploration of how the COVID-19 pandemic has redefined the boundaries of speculative fiction. Through contributions from scholars in literature, media, and cultural studies, this volume examines the pandemic’s deep impact on science fiction as a genre and cultural phenomenon. The book navigates the thematic, stylistic, and ideological shifts that have emerged in response to the global health crisis, revealing how science fiction has become a mirror of contemporary societal anxieties, from isolation and contagion to resilience and dystopia. Drawing from a rich array of media, including literature, film, and video games, ‘The Real Aftermath’ delves into the portrayal of existential threats and explores how speculative narratives provide frameworks for imagining future crises and solutions. By addressing both cultural and technological disruptions, the book positions itself within the growing body of critical literature on the intersection between global crises and fiction, offering original insights into the transformative power of science fiction in post-pandemic society. This volume is an essential resource for scholars and students in literature, science fiction studies, media, and cultural analysis. It can serve as a reference for academic research, a methodological aid in classroom discussions, and a guide for practitioners interested in the role of fiction in interpreting and responding to global crises.

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