Science Fictions

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Understanding Contemporary American Science Fiction, Understanding Contemporary American Science Fiction: The Age of Maturity, 1970-2000 explores the major trends and developments during three decades that witnessed science fiction's most dramatic progression from subliterary escapist entertainment to a more sophisticated literature of ideas. Darren Harris-Fain suggests that to understand American science fiction fully, it is essential to realize that the current field with all its variety results from the proceeding decades of writings. In addition, he contends that although much science fiction of merit was written in America prior to 1970, the latter decades of the twentieth century witnessed a dramatic improvement in quality, even as the field fragmented into a variety of subgenres and as writers sought to transcend earlier critical dismissals. Harris-Fain discusses significant and representative works, most of which mainstream literary scholars and critics ignore, as he charts the historical and literary development of contemporary American science fiction. the internal divisions along both literary and political lines experienced during the Vietnam era; the influence of the feminist movement and other contemporary concerns; the increasing contributions of female, African American, and gay and lesbian writers; and the emergence of such significant trends as hard science fiction, cyberpunk, alternate history, and shared-world stories. Harris-Fain also considers literary science fiction's relationship to the mass media, the effects the popularity of fantasy has on the field, and academia's continued misprizing of the genre.
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