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Abstract:

The article aims at reviewing the main strategies for surviving a world catastrophe in science fiction. The underlying assumption is that science fiction can provide insight into unspoken social attitudes towards global risks as well as towards the effectiveness of disaster planning. The review covers a broad selection of fiction published in the US and UK since the end of WW2, featuring three types of human-caused world catastrophes: nuclear, biological and environmental. The results highlight that the imagination of what is helpful to survive the apocalypse has evolved towards patterns of individual actions instead of governmental or collective actions and towards the ability to face unexpected events rather than planning ahead. Such imagination can be approximated to underlying feelings as regards planning in the British and North American society at least, although the extent to which fiction reflects actual values and beliefs is open to dispute.