

Reality™2048: Watching Big Mother

Derek Cressman

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Reality™2048s an epic dystopia that warns about the dangers of consumerism.

In Derek Cressman's dystopian novel *Reality™2048* the future is dominated by infotainment and consumption is the name of the game.

Globalia is one of the world's two superpower states in 2048, and Vera works for its Department of Information, researching issues that the government wants the public to know about. After fact checking and approval, Vera's short answers air in short periods between regular entertainment shows.

Establishment members like Vera and the lower consumer class, called Vues, are subject to continuous programming. As Vera falls in love with screen writer, Chase, she discovers a plot to cover up crucial information from her research. She starts to question the reality that's projected on every person's screen. Along with Chase, she takes risks to find an alternative life.

This future world is stimulation central, focused on what's disposable and immediate. Reality show synopses, ads, and a barrage of broadcasts on Vera's MyndScreen, combined with Globalia's history, overwhelm the book's opening chapters, but the narration is more streamlined after these introductions. Moments of backstory interrupt its chronological, fast movement. When Vera and Chase read a history of Globalia near the book's middle, whole pages of it are quoted and interspersed with commentary, slowing the plot. These interruptions add little to the book's bold satirical content.

Vera's awe over simple and rare pleasures like walking and conversation is vibrantly described. Such moments are welcome breaks from the inundation of virtual content. Conversations between characters add little; Vera speaks impulsively, but other characters sound like they're reciting rehearsed text.

Quotes begin every chapter, and catchphrases from Globalian society interrupt the book's action to flash the society's ideas and draw focus to how they're impeding freedom. They become the primary device for advancing the plot.

Vera is the best developed character, starting out with a nagging emptiness and growing to realize that the problem lies with the culture around her and the government that supports it. Her steps to improve herself and others are compelling, even if her agency is limited. Chase and other secondary figures are more static, while Vue characters are the most intriguing. Their parallel existence is hinted at, but sparks curiosity and a desire for more information.

In the end, the book's monolithic system of business and political corruption has impacts that cannot be ignored or avoided. What promises to be a story of personal transformation turns into a chilling warning about how corporate greed kills individual empowerment.

Reality™2048s an epic dystopia focused on the dangers of consumerism.

MARI CARLSON (May 1, 2019)

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