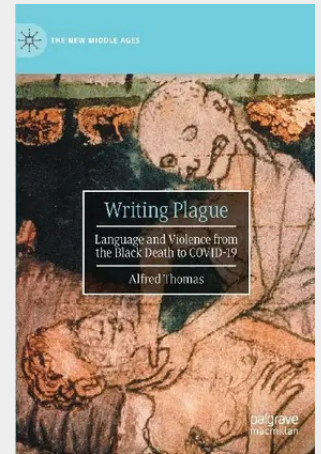


Writing Plague

Language and Violence from the Black Death to COVID-19

Writing Plague: Language and Violence from the Black Death to COVID-19 brings a holistic and comparative perspective to "plague writing" from the later Middle Ages to the twenty-first century. It argues that while the human "hardware" has changed enormously between the medieval past and the present (urbanization, technology, mass warfare, and advances in medical science), the human "software" (emotional and psychological reactions to the shock of pandemic) has remained remarkably similar across time. Through close readings of works by medieval writers like Guillaume de Machaut, Giovanni Boccaccio, and Geoffrey Chaucer in the fourteenth century, select plays by Shakespeare, and modern "plague" fiction and film, Alfred Thomas convincingly demonstrates psychological continuities between the Black Death and COVID-19. In showing how in times of plague human beings repress their fears and fantasies and displace them onto the threatening "other," Thomas highlights the danger of scapegoating vulnerable minority groups such as Asian Americans and Jews in today's America. This wide-ranging study will thus be of interest not only to medievalists but also to students of modernity as well as the general reader.

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117,69 €

109,99 € (zzgl. MwSt.)

Lieferfrist: bis zu 10 Tage

Artikelnummer: 9783030948498

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-3-030-94849-8

Verlag: J.B. Metzler

Erscheinungstermin: 23.04.2022

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: 1. Auflage 2022

Serie: The New Middle Ages

Produktform: Gebunden

Gewicht: 493 g

Seiten: 265

Format (B x H): 153 x 216 mm

