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Book Reviews

THE POPULAR CULTURE STUDIES JOURNAL BOOK REVIEWS

Introduction

As the new Book Review Editor, I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself and the philosophy I bring to the book review section of *The Popular Culture Studies Journal*. I was in middle school and a competitive gymnast when my father was in law school. So, the two of us would come home at 9:30 at night, he after an 8-hour work day and night classes and me after a full day of school and five hours at the gym, only to have our homework still to do. We would watch TV just to stay awake. On weekends, when many parents would tell their children to go outside, my father would insist I watch old movies like *Cat Ballou* and *The Godfather* with him. I never wanted to admit how much I liked them since I'd been "forced" to do it. To this day, I "coerce" my own students into watching movies they might never have seen without me. Students learn so much about character development by comparing Lee Marvin and Al Pacino's characters evolutions (or de-volution in Pacino's case). The visual composition of *The Godfather* never fails to turn on light bulbs over my students' heads as they begin to recognize how film can be "read." After earning my PhD from Ohio University (2009) in Rhetoric and Public Culture, with a secondary area of study in Feminist Media Studies, I now have the academic legitimacy to call watching all this TV and these movies "work."

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I have always watched television and movies, played sports, gone to Disneyland, listened to music, and joined in games for more than just enjoyment. I am not sure if this something more was because of my identities as middle-class, white, and female; my parents' support of my precocious curiosity; or some innate desire to learn that motivated my critical engagement the most. What I do know is that the first time I noticed that more women's gymnastics than men's was televised, that more men played hard rock music on the radio, and that Disney princesses never had jobs was way before I went to graduate school. I also know that it was in the everyday activities in which I engaged, in which millions of people engage daily, that I wondered about how the world worked and how it shaped me.

So, to answer the question: "Why popular culture?" Its ubiquity, influence, and our everyday engagement with it make it necessary to study. When researching new publications in need of review, I look for those that engage in the diverse areas of our everyday lives that contribute to the ways we think about our culture, beliefs, and everyday practices, whether those contributions are theoretical, methodological, historical, substantive, or a combination thereof. There are longer and shorter reviews of current scholarship about popular culture in this issue on topics ranging from comic books to conspiracy theories, from sports to superheroines, and from traditional to new media. What they all have in common is that our reviewers' insights contribute in meaningful ways to our critical engagement with popular culture. Our reviewers have taken the time and exerted the effort to assess current popular culture scholarship to aid readers of *The Popular Culture Studies Journal* in evaluating these works and making important decisions about what to read, buy, and use in their own research and teaching. We are thankful that they shared their insights with us and with you.

Early on in my journey to legitimate my enjoyment of and engagement with popular culture, i.e., earning that diploma, I encountered the writings of Stuart Hall. His theories related to media and popular

culture contributed to my motivation to focus my studies of rhetoric and public culture on media and popular culture in particular. His work (along with Raymond Williams') made me realize that popular culture was a valid (necessary) area for scholarship and teaching. In our continuing effort to provide "New Perspectives on Classic Texts" in *The Popular Culture Studies Journal*, and to commemorate the passing of this legend, our review section also includes three reviews of classic Stuart Hall works. I have written more about Hall and this section in the introduction to the roundtable. What I will say here is that between the reviews of new and classic works there appears a bias. All the reviews are of written works. As our journal hopes to push the boundaries of traditional publications and due to the interdisciplinary nature of the study of popular culture, this section should include reviews of other forms of popular culture, be they exhibits, films, events, or other performances of popular culture. The one limit I would impose as the Book Review Editor is that these reviews be of scholarly engagement with popular culture, not the popular culture performances themselves. One example that demonstrates my point might be that reviewing the film, *Cutie and the Boxer*, would be appropriate for this section, but a review of the Shinoharas' art forms would be more appropriate as an original scholarship submission. The latter may be popular arts (paintings and comics), but the former is critical engagement with their arts (and relationship). For my part, I will be revising the call for "Book Reviews" to reflect and encourage broader submissions. For your part, please suggest reviews of materials beyond books. But, don't stop reading books about popular culture and submitting those reviews as well.

Finally, thank you to Samantha Latham, Graduate Instructor at Utah State University, for all her help reading and reviewing the book review submissions. I could not have accomplished all that I did with this section without her assistance.

Jennifer C. Dunn
Dominican University

Sotirin, Patricia, and Laura Ellingson. *Where the Aunts Are: Family, Feminism & Kinship in Popular Culture*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2013, \$34.99 (paper), 252 pp.

Patricia Sotirin and Laura Ellingson's comprehensive overview and analysis of aunts in popular culture is an insightful and extremely well written guide to an under studied and under-appreciated but well-known character. The aunt, whether on TV, in film, selling products or hosting websites is both everywhere and invisible, and Sotirin and Ellingson do an impeccable job of bringing her to light. Their approach to reading media, which underscores the importance of transgressive characters, offers readers a way to see the aunt as more than just "like a mother to me" but as her own unique character with inherently feminist characteristics.

The book opens by asking, "What's up with aunts?" and through this question the authors argue that aunts are "surprisingly unconventional and progressive" "double agent(s)" who play secondary yet vital roles (2). Sotirin and Ellingson suggest that the aunt has a capacity to advance social justice through her ability to transgress normative feminine roles, to reinvent feminine kinship systems by breaking down hegemonic notions of the nuclear family, to revalue caring and caregiving, both economically and culturally, and to "articulate progressive visions of families of choice" (12). In order to support these arguments, Sotirin and Ellingson revisit their initial claim that aunts are more than characters who are "like a mother *but not a mother*" (15, italics original) in their astute survey of aunts throughout television and film history. From Auntie Em (*Wizard of Oz*) to Aunt Viv (*Fresh Prince of Bell Air*), readers begin to see the profound impact these non-mother care-givers have on their families. Because aunts offer a "nonprocreative model of family life based on extended kin relations and emotional commitments of choice rather than on institutionalized sexual and marital relations" (20) they become a "rallying point for recognizing and reclaiming nonnuclear familial

relationships, extended kin-care arrangements, and same-sex and non-procreative parenting partnerships as valid social forms” (21).

Beyond revisioning kinship systems, aunts also become the loci for racial social justice. In chapter two, Sotirin and Ellingson survey the “othered” aunts through characters such as Aunt Jemima and Aunt Sarah (*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*). These two women symbolize “not only the contradictory logic of racist violence but also the ways in which racism and sexism intersect literally within the bodies of women of color” (49). These aunts also become sites for subversion. For example, Aunt Jemima has the potential to go beyond the claims of a postgender, postracial, postfeminist climate and act as a subversive character in three distinct ways: she “speaks up” about America’s history of racism, she challenges stereotypes about black women and she exemplifies a strong black woman in the face of cultural silencing of black women’s realities (50). As such, these “othered” aunts work to change the way we understand race and gender, and it is this transgressive potential that Sotirin and Ellingson so thoroughly highlight.

The authors also show how the malevolent aunt, i.e. the “bad mother,” has the potential to be more than what is initially seen within her character. Analyzing texts such as *Raising Helen*, *No Reservations* and *Mostly Martha*, the work of chapter three demonstrates the ways in which women who are childless by choice – bad mothers – can not only become good mothers when needed, but also “radically undermine the need for heterosexual reproduction” (68). These aunts’ transgressive nature, as argued by Sotirin and Ellingson, works to support LGBT rights by showcasing more diverse notions of family and parenting as well as what it means to have families of choice.

In chapter four, we come to some of the most well-known aunt characters, the ones full of wisdom and witchcraft. Aunt Clara (*Bewitched*) and Aunts Zelda and Hilda (*Sabrina the Teenage Witch*) are used to continue the argument that aunts have the ability to center “intimacy and

caring in female relationships” and extol “a flexible, voluntary, communal model of kinship” (93). For example, while Sabrina and her aunts may initially be read as having little narrative depth and existing within a postfeminist dreamworld, Sotirin and Ellingson argue the family works to reimagine neoliberal ideas of the family unit as well as position women’s power at the forefront of family. Combined, the aunts “take up the ongoing feminist struggle to assert the value of women, girls and feminine identity” (87).

Chapter five brings readers to the “eccentric” or “crazy” aunt, and here Sotirin and Ellingson highlight aunts such as Auntie Mame (*Auntie Mame*), Aunt Augusta (*Travels with my Aunt*), and Aunt Josephine (book 3 of *Limony Snicket’s A Series of Unfortunate Events*) to showcase the ways in which the exaggerated styles of these women invite readers/viewers to “protest against the strictures of conventionality” (102). In fact, the authors suggest that these women offer transgressive camp performances, which support the idea that femininity is a “strategy of gender struggle and survival rather than a pregiven, essentialized identity” (102). The mad aunt inspires creative reflections that introduce ambivalences into the binds between women and domesticity.

Chapter six explores the life of the e-aunt and the commodified aunt. Using a popular search engine, Sotirin and Ellingson quickly found over 33 million links when they searched the term “aunt.” Their sample study produced an abundance of commercial sites concentrated on products and services for domestic and leisure industries. An analysis of the language in the “About Us” section of each website produced the reasons and qualities for the aunt’s appeal. Online aunts promote care, nostalgia, asexuality, whiteness, traditional middle-class values, and “bounteous goodwill” (126). They also point to a social need for intimacy, albeit at a distance. These online aunts are by far the most troubling characters for Sotirin and Ellingson for they unearth an “unreflective consumerism” that “facilitates

instrumental relations with others that render the consumer hardened to the humanity of the other and concerned with nothing beyond the self” (130).

In all, *Where the Aunts Are: Family, Feminism & Kinship in Popular Culture* is a fascinating text that gives much attention to an often ignored character. The transgressive capabilities of the aunt, as described by Sotirin and Ellingson, are fascinating and provocative. *Where the Aunts Are* would be an excellent addition to any media studies course as well as courses on gender and/or sexuality, family communication, and interpersonal communication. The accessibility of the writing combined with the in-depth analysis lends itself well to all levels of college students. The only criticism of this book is that there should be more. The aunts who are discussed are illuminating, however, they are also limited. While Sotirin and Ellingson acknowledge their collection is only a sampling of aunts, and the appendix of mediated aunts is undoubtedly helpful, more aunt analysis would strengthen their argument and the overall text. Other than a desire for more, which is in many ways the best criticism possible, there is little lacking from this book. Sotirin and Ellingson set out to find aunts in popular culture and reimagine what they mean within a postfeminist society and they have done just that.

Rachel E. Silverman
Embry Riddle University

Henderson, Lisa. *Love and Money: Queers, Class, and Cultural Production*. New York: New York University Press, 2013, \$75 (cloth), \$23 (paper), 224 pp.

“Every Queer Thing We Know,” the third chapter of Lisa Henderson’s *Love and Money: Queers, Class, and Cultural Production*, opens with a simple yet profound question: “How to live?” (60). The question is integral to the chapter it introduces, but also serves as an entry point to a holistic understanding of Henderson’s 2013 book project. Throughout the introduction, six chapters, and conclusion, Henderson explores the entanglement between queerness and social class. Convinced that queerness and class are not mutually exclusive, but rather mutually affecting and reproducing, she cautions against failure to recognize the discourses’ interplay. Henderson urges readers to envision solidarity between queerness and class, and to strive for alliances between and among people living at the queer/class crossroad. Various cultural texts are taken as exemplars that illustrate the book’s prominent motifs of solidarity and alliance, and demonstrate the ways that these ideals lead to a spirit of repair imbued with the potential to redistribute current modes of thinking, doing, and being. Located at the intersection of queered and classed identities and communities, *Love and Money* articulates hope for a way of living that moves beyond shame, exclusion, and antagonism.

Among the cultural products Henderson employs are films (for instance, Kimberly Peirce’s *Boys Don’t Cry* [1999] and Miranda July’s *Me and You and Everyone We Know* [2005]), television programs (including the ABC’s *Brothers and Sisters* [2006- 2011] and Showtime’s *The L Word* [2004- 2009]), and the literature of award-winning contemporary author Dorothy Allison (examples are *Bastard Out of Carolina* [1992] and *Two or Three Things I Know for Sure* [1994]). In addition to this empirical material, Henderson provides autobiographical

anecdotes, which serve as threads of continuity that allow readers to seamlessly move between the varied cultural texts.

At the crux of Henderson's thesis is the need to adopt an augmented definition of social class—one that moves beyond a Marxist economic frame and includes cultural production. As *Love and Money* argues, such an expanded conception of social class enables both academic and popular conversations that integrate queerness and class as a symbiotic discourse. Chapter 1, "The Class Character of *Boys Don't Cry*," centers upon the based-on-a-true-story movie about the murder of Brandon Teena, a transgender male. Henderson convincingly suggests that "at the nexus of queer and class, is the displacement of the trauma of one category onto the trauma of the other" (25); her reading of the film discusses queerness and class in tandem by highlighting the film's working-class environment (rural Nebraska) and the working-class and queered identities therein. The chapter is shorter than the subsequent chapters, but it effectively introduces readers to the book's major theme about the interconnectedness between queered and classed identities. Because the film's climax centers upon Brandon's murder, the book's investigation of "how to live?" is poignantly introduced by the first chapter.

Chapter 2, "Queer Visibility and Social Class," uses television programs to expose "compartment, family, and modes of acquisition [as] the class markers of queer worth" (34). Here, Henderson revisits her earlier attention to trauma and expands her analysis to engage themes of exclusion and shame. Henderson expresses wariness of the cultural productions that attach body, normative institutions, and consumerism to the creation of good, enfranchised queers. The chapter asks readers to imagine "a queer class future of love and solidarity" (59), and heralds a reparative spirit that becomes increasingly woven into the book's dominant narrative.

Chapter 3, “Every Queer Thing We Know” focuses upon the work of Miranda July, particularly *Me and You and Everyone We Know*. The film’s characters are “people whose lives are open to attack” (Henderson 68). Henderson draws a parallel between the film’s characters and real world queers, both of whom are marked as Others. However, the film has gentleness and a quirkiness that Henderson suggests is largely missing in academic scholarship and, more generally, “in these mean times” (69). *Love and Money* takes the film as a pedagogical tool that articulates the possibility for repair. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 bring exclusionary practices, shaming, and antagonism to the forefront, and the cultural products Henderson employs helps us understand how those marked as Others might themselves begin to enact change, heal, and repair.

Chapter 4, “Recognition: Queers, Class, and Dorothy Allison,” articulates the class/queerness interchange through a study of Allison’s own story as a “class escapee” (Henderson 77). The chapter also incorporates stories elicited during interviews between Henderson and Allison’s fans. Recurrent in the chapter are narratives of recognition and misrecognition that Henderson distinguishes as the starting place for the socializing, displacing, and calming of “class and queer shame” (100). From this starting point emerges the potential not only for class escapism (or upward mobility), but for the potential benefits of alliances between social classes, an idea explored more fully in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5, “Queer Relay,” responds to the longstanding strict dichotomy between corporate filmmaking and queer independent filmmaking, industries that have often struggled to, as the saying goes, play nice. As the chapter’s title suggests, the proposed alternative is queer relay, which imagines “not two opposed groups but contiguous cultural spaces whose borders are open” (120). Liza Johnson’s *Desert Motel* (2005) is taken as an exemplar to anchor the assertion that filmmaking is a cultural process that can incorporate relay to foster alliance, rather than antagonism among peoples, organizations, and institutions—specifically

queerness and social class. With queer relay, we see filmmakers from different financial circumstances working together; the film industry, then, acts as a metaphor for society at large. Readers are encouraged to cross identity borders (be they classed, queered, or otherwise) and work together to repair the divisiveness that has long prevailed.

Chapter 6, “Plausible Optimism,” solidifies the thematic trajectory that distinguishes *Love and Money* from most academic scholarship, which rarely extends criticism to locate positive ripostes. The chapter compares *By Hook or By Crook* (a 2001 movie made on a proverbial shoestring budget) and *Brokeback Mountain* (the 2005 blockbuster) to delineate the powerful, affirming queer attachments—be they sexual or friendly—that enable “queer openings” (Henderson 154). At the heart of the chapter is the assertion that even tragic narratives have entrance points to queer happiness and healing. Just as in Chapter 1, Henderson explores a film that tackles the complex intersection of rural and queer identities, and climaxes with the murder of a homosexual character. However, in this chapter, Henderson asks readers to recognize the positive elements of tragic narratives and to adopt an optimistic outlook on the possibility of repair, solidarity, and love.

Henderson’s quest to find a way to live, to approach class and queerness, and to repair is brought full circle in “Conclusion: A Cultural Politics of Love and Solidarity.” The book speaks to the current moment in which sexual and class Others continue to navigate a cultural landscape that produces shame, trauma, and exclusion. *Love and Money: Queers, Class, and Cultural Production* is best suited to academics and the graduate classroom, but its major themes and emphasis on popular media will resonate with those beyond the academy who take interest in LGBT and class-based issues and, especially, those who have or are hoping for optimistic alternatives. Henderson’s hope—indeed, her reparative spirit—inspires the same love and solidarity she sees in cultural production.

Vanessa Campagna
Monmouth College

McLeod, Kembrew. *Pranksters: Making Mischief in the Modern World*. New York: NYU Press, 2014, \$29.95 (cloth), 364 pp.

The Scholar Who Japed

A single line in *Pranksters: Making Mischief in the Modern World* sums up not only the point of the book, but also the academic career of Kembrew McLeod: “a clever deception can help generate an honest discussion” (264). Indeed.

McLeod came to most of our attention through a sly stunt: in 1997, he trademarked “freedom of expression,” making a point about ownership and Intellectual Property that eventually led to his 2007 book *Freedom of Expression*[®]: *Resistance and Repression in the Age of Intellectual Property*. This book has, in turn, contributed to the continuing discussion of concerns over ownership of intellectual (or any) thought and expression.

McLeod has never been simply an observer. He has been involved in the types of activities he studies in in *Pranksters* since his days as an undergraduate at James Madison University a quarter of a century ago. In terms of studying popular culture, this gives him a distinct advantage, for he is not writing as an outsider, a self-styled impartial student, but as an enthusiastic participant. This provides him a connection to his material that the traditional “objective” scholar cannot attain, a connection particularly appropriate and useful in the field of cultural studies.

McLeod is trustworthy as a scholar for two reasons: First, he owns up to his deceptions, giving his readers confidence that they know exactly where he stands, when he is joking, and when he is not. In *Pranksters*, he is not joking, but is seriously examining “everything from political pranks, silly hoaxes, and con games to the sort of self-deception that fuels outlandish belief systems” (3). Second, he always highlights his agenda,

making clear to everyone just where he is trying to go and his own relationship to it. He begins his last chapter with, “I have a confession. The subject matter in the previous chapter is very close to my heart” (254). Further, by refusing to distance the scholar from the person, he banishes the distrust that stances of objectivity generate in this chary age. “Everyone has an agenda” we grumble as we watch the news or read the latest pontification. McLeod, refreshingly (and importantly) refuses to hide his agenda, making what he says much more reliable than the latest attempt to, say, undercut a hated enemy in the field through a putative impartial stance.

McLeod dates his “modern world” to the Enlightenment or even before, starting his study with the Rosicrucian hoaxes of the early 1600s. He twists his way from there through shadowy worlds of con artists, conspiracy theorists, “Satanists,” and more, ending with the contemporary world and with a wish that, as he says in the last line of the book, “we won’t get fooled again” (285). Like the pranks that he likes the best, he writes with a certain and clear purpose.

As I was reading *Pranksters*, my mind continually returned to the fiction of Philip K. Dick, particularly to his short 1956 novel, *The Man Who Japed*. Dick’s protagonist Allen Purcell becomes a trickster to save the world, creating a prank in which, on television, the claim is made that the founder of the society of the novel was a cannibal. The joke—or jape—is an attempt to shock the world out of a repressive social system.

Purcell is deadly serious about his prank, just as McLeod has been about the trademarking of “freedom of expression,” remaining so even as he writes about other pranksters. Purcell, like Dick himself (who built contradictions into his work, sometimes accidentally, sometimes to make a point), is just the sort of prankster McLeod appreciates most. He has a real fondness for all of his jokers, but especially for the ones, like the Yippees, who were out to change the world. Though he examines characters as

different as Benjamin Franklin and P.T. Barnum—and more, both before and after their times—it is the prankster with a purpose that he loves best.

Ultimately, what McLeod gives us in *Pranksters*, his topic aside, is an example of the best of cultural-studies writing. The book can engage almost any reader; it is not necessary to have been part of any academic “conversation” before picking it up. At the same time, it can be extremely useful to the scholar who *does* want to continue the particular discussion. It is well organized and indexed, and it contains an extensive bibliography.

Dick’s Purcell, at the end of his novel, elects to stay on Earth and deal with his culture and the consequences of his act. McLeod, too, sticks to home, to his intellectual and philosophical roots. The result is an engaging book, one as important for the example it sets as for the scholarship it presents.

Aaron Barlow

New York City College of Technology

Donnelly, Ashley M. *Renegade Hero or Faux Rogue: The Secret Traditionalism of Television Bad Boys*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland. 2014, \$38 (cloth), 200 pp.

First, let us get to the primary concern: *Renegade Hero or Faux Rogue: The Secret Traditionalism of Television Bad Boys* is a commanding book, compelling the reader to rethink television’s role in contemporary culture. For Ashley M. Donnelly, an assistant professor of telecommunications at Ball State University, the book is a striking debut that pushes her into the vanguard of popular culture scholars, particularly when examining television and its larger implications.

What Donnelly demonstrates is that the male, anti-hero characters in shows such as *Dexter*, *Sons of Anarchy*, *True Blood*, *Boardwalk Empire*,

and *Breaking Bad* (all incredibly popular, critically-acclaimed, and award-winning) actually reinforce traditional (outdated) forms of power, particularly related to race, capitalism, inequality, and patriarchy. Donnelly explains, each show's "narratives are creating ideologies that perpetuate capitalist hegemony and American conceptualizations of Otherness under the guise of difference, rebellion, and progress" (73).

Donnelly's detailed research – drawing from close reading of the selected television programs and weaving in theorists as necessary to draw out new inferences – fuels a skilled assessment of the programs under review, but then extends its analysis to the role television plays in the broader cultural milieu. What is striking in *Renegade Hero or Faux Rogue* is that these seemingly groundbreaking characters – like Dexter Morgan, the serial killer with a heart of gold – superficially appear to be fictional portraits on the cutting edge of the new golden age of television drama but are actually not far removed philosophically from what TV viewers are used to or have seen in the past.

What Donnelly reveals is that American TV viewers are committed to old-school ideals and nostalgic visions of the good old days, even though we dupe ourselves into believing otherwise. Rather than reformulate what it means to be an American, if such a being even exists in the twenty-first century, these programs submit to a canonical vision where white males are the ultimate heroes, women know their place, and minorities are essentially evil. Donnelly explains, "The narratives produced will privilege those who already are privileged in our culture and, with few exceptions, continue to oppress those who face oppression and resistance every day of their lives in reality" (171).

There is little to criticize in this tightly argued, gem of a book. Pressed, however, one might point to the book's title, which is straightforward enough, but not the type that will set the potential book buyer's heart aflutter. The same cannot be said, though, of the cover image, which is a striking photo of Dexter sporting the outline of bloody angel wings. This

may seem a trifling aspect of the book, but in today's cutthroat publishing market a strong title can lead to more buyers, particularly among general and academic libraries.

Renegade Hero or Faux Rogue is highly engaging – analyzing several of the dramatic television series that are considered among the best ever produced – and written in a style that is both scholarly and authoritative, yet will also appeal to a general interest audience. Donnelly's book deserves wide readership and is appropriate for all libraries and as a text in undergraduate or graduate courses analyzing television. This book is the real deal and Donnelly is a popular culture scholar on the rise.

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Lotz, Amanda D. *Cable Guys: Television and Masculinities in the 21st Century*. New York: New York University Press, 2014, \$79 (cloth), \$24 (paper), 251 pp.

In *Cable Guys: Television and Masculinities in the 21st Century*, Amanda D. Lotz presents a well-detailed argument about how recent television series represent the ongoing gender script negotiations of American men in the beginning of the 21st century following the introduction of second-wave feminism. According to Lotz, the representation of men and their relationships during this time demonstrate men managing their masculine identities in the “post-second-wave” society and culture of the United States. She presents twelve cable and broadcast network series in a textual and contextual analysis to consider how these characters “negotiate prevailing patriarchal masculinities with aspects of a more feminist masculinity” (35). Lotz compares the prevailing

patriarchal masculinities to those hegemonic masculinities in the series by arguing that there are multiple hegemonic masculinities constructed within and reified by the narratives of the series, which may or may not align with the patriarchal masculinities of the larger society and culture. This tension between the patriarchal and the hegemonic masculinities demonstrate the impact of second-wave feminism in popular culture and perhaps the broader society and culture.

Quite correctly, Lotz asserts that not enough scholarship exists on the representation of men on television. The focus of television studies, and media studies in general, have largely examined the stereotypical presentations of women without providing “typologies of archetypes or thematic analyses of stories about men or masculinities” (Lotz 7). However, the problem remains on the issue of gender stereotypes, as televisual portrayals, while traditionally more varied for men than women, support specific stereotyped masculinities as heroic or preferred while denigrating others. Showing masculinities that do not adhere to these stereotypes could provide role models for young men, as the decades’ worth of work in representing women non-stereotypically has done for young women. Thus, her goal for this book was to consider such masculinities that were being constructed and represented on U.S. television from 2000 to 2010.

In her analysis, Lotz considers three different types of series, categorized by their representation of men. First are the “male-centered serials,” where the focus of the narratives is on the character study of a male protagonist, such as in *Breaking Bad*, *Hung*, *Dexter*, and *Sons of Anarchy*. With these examples, she argues the male protagonists are struggling to express more feminized masculinities while using immoral or illegal methods to meet overarching patriarchal requirements. While the men are depicted as more family-oriented and seeking equality in relationships, their drive to embody the masculine provider role leads to their downfall. In discussing this type of series, she argues that “Many

male-centered serials depict the crisis of inadequate means faced by the middle-class white male in the twenty-first century..." (67). This conclusion can be read as a reference to how these characterizations negotiate the latest male crisis, which was triggered by the global economic downturn of that time.

Second are series featuring "homosocial enclaves" or narrative spaces that are exclusively masculine domains, such as in the firehouse in *Rescue Me*, the diner in *Men of a Certain Age*, the entirety of *Entourage* and the fantasy football of *The League*. In these examples, she argues that characters use jokes and jockey for position to demonstrate the ideal hegemonic masculinities. Of all the analyses she presents, this section is the most evidentially argued: the different positions men take in the series and how they use jokes represent their attempts at negotiating what is proper male behavior within these spaces, presenting the idea that such homosocial enclaves are safe places within which to both challenge traditional patriarchal masculinity while policing the alternatives.

Third are series that feature explicit or implicit "hetero male intimacy" in the relationship between the main male dyad, such as found in *Boston Legal*, *Scrubs*, *Psych* and *Nip/Tuck*. Here she argues the series police the boundaries of heteronormativity by directly or indirectly, jokingly or seriously, addressing the homosexual tensions of such friendships. For example, whereas *Scrubs*' non-serious nature may undercut the intimacy being depicted, the jokes in *Boston Legal* can serve to strengthen the normality of the relationship. However, as Lotz notes, the analysis of *Cable Guys* primarily focuses on white, middle-class men. Two of the series analyzed here, *Psych* and *Scrubs*, feature African-American men, but their masculinities are not attended to in relation to their ethnicity. This limitation in ethnic and class identities suggests more work needs to be done, as Lotz herself indicates, on the array of masculinities presented via broadcast and cable television.

Across these analyses, Lotz concludes that while the men are anxious about their masculinity and heterosexuality, they are not depicted as blaming feminism for their anxiety. In this way, the representation of the men's struggles can provide examples of how to address and represent non-patriarchal masculinities. While an important interpretation, Lotz has a tendency to reiterate this argument and conclusion without substantial presentation of evidence for them. More concrete, in-depth analyses of the texts – of what happened, by whom, and when in the series that led her to these conclusions – would help readers better understand her interpretations of the representations. Such discussion would better inform those unfamiliar with the programs how these masculinities were policed, made into tensions, and connected to contemporary society and culture.

Lotz's work is an immensely compelling, well-argued discussion on this emergent construction and representation of masculinities in U.S. television, and as a general discussion of this topic, it is a must read for the fields of gender studies and television studies. Being more preliminary, the analyses of the television series in this book indicate that there is more work to be done to understand televised masculinities, during this time period as well as others. Overall, the ideas expressed in *Cable Guys* are very timely considerations for the analysis of popular culture and the discussion of the media's role in perpetuating or challenging patriarchal and hegemonic masculinities. While she may not see all of the characters she analyzed as role models – especially from the male-centered serials – their ability to struggle with and present different forms of masculinity can be inspirational.

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Howell, M. D., and John D. Miller, eds. *Motorsports and American Culture: From Demolition Derbies to NASCAR*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014, \$75 (hard), \$74.99 (eBook), 248 pp.

On August 9, 2014, sprint-car driver Kevin Ward, Jr., died from injuries sustained in bizarre circumstances, after leaving his vehicle and being struck by another racer. He was a relatively unknown driver, competing on a local dirt track, so his death, however tragic, may not have caused more than a blip in national sports news. This tragedy, however, made national and international news headlines because National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR) driver, team owner, and champion, Tony Stewart drove the sprint-car that took Ward's life. The resulting conflicted media reports ranged from condemning NASCAR as a representation of the breakdown in the fabric of American society to exalting the sport's fans who consider themselves, and the entire racing community, an American "family." Ward's tragic death and the media firestorm it created signals a struggle for meanings of "Americanness" as it relates to motorsports.

With this in mind, it is surprising that in a country often broadly associated with automobiles, muscle cars, and a need for speed, American academics have generally neglected motorsports in favor of more "prestigious" sports such as football, baseball, and even soccer. Mark D. Howell and John D. Miller seek to rectify this lack of academic work in their anthology, *Motorsports and American Culture: From Demolition Derbies to NASCAR*. Although published prior to Ward's death, the discourse surrounding the tragedy poignantly answers, in part, their question: "Why study racing?" Contributors broadly examine motorsports from multidisciplinary perspectives, including gender studies, sociology, media studies, and globalization, and center on four interlocking areas for studying motorsports—meanings for fandom, community identity, gender,

and racing sports stars. Within these broad perspectives and areas, the themes of identity and relationships, with regard to motorsports and American culture, are most prominent.

With these two themes, of identity and relationships, in mind, the contributing authors address demolition derbies, as well as stock car, drag, and land speed racing. For example, James Wright discusses the paradox of NASCAR's increasing popularity when American national identity may be shifting away from the more traditional values associated with the sport. Ehren Helmut Pflugfelder addresses how drivers' identities are created, consumed by fans, and then integrated into those fans' identities. He also examines how American identity is challenged by globalization. Martha Kreszock, Suzanne Wise, and Margaret Freeman trace the history of Louise Smith, one of NASCAR's first female drivers. This entry is important because Smith serves as a model for today's female racers, including Jennifer Jo Cobb and Danica Patrick. Lisa Napoli's chapter on Barney Oilfield describes racing's first multimedia folk hero who paved the way for future sporting media celebrities. Essays examining the sport's early icons are valuable in providing molds that help shape the identities of today's stars.

The primary value of *Motorsports and American Culture* is launching conversations that encourage more in-depth studies in this under-examined field. In other words, the volume offers starting points for research as motorsports becomes increasingly intermingled with broader popular culture domains. These essays help readers further understand, and even critique, the relationships between racing and American culture/national identity.

Interestingly, the editors claim to address motorsports broadly, though at least half of the chapters focus on NASCAR. This may be reflective of the interests in American motorsport cultures, but also reveals that these "other" motorsports are also extremely under represented, thus opening potential new lines of inquiry. As such, the collection is most useful for

advanced undergraduate and graduate courses in sport communication, cultural studies, gender studies classes, and even applied coursework in sports management. *Motorsports and American Culture* provides valuable contextual and historical background regarding the intricate relationship between American identity, popular culture, and auto racing.

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Gessen, Masha. *Words Will Break Cement: The Passion of Pussy Riot*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2014, \$16.00 (paper), 308 pp.

On February 12, 2012, the feminist art-punk collective known as Pussy Riot entered the largest Orthodox Church in Moscow, the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, and belted out a “punk prayer” lambasting the cozy relationship between Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin and the Russian Church. The protest generated widespread international attention when the band uploaded the video of the protest on the Internet and it went viral. Less than a month later, three members of the group were arrested and charged with “felony hooliganism” (167). On August 17, 2012, all three members were found guilty and sentenced to two-year prison sentences. Commenting on the sentence, Putin declared that the band “undermined the moral foundations” of the nation and “got what they asked for” (Elder 1).

In *Words Will Break Cement: The Passion of Pussy Riot*, Masha Gessen, a Russian-American journalist, provides an impassioned and much-needed account of the rise of Pussy Riot, their protest-art, and the attempts by the Russian government and authorities to control the group.

By restructuring the personal journeys of each woman up to and through their trials and prison time, Gessen's work provides, so far, the most thorough discussion of what the members of Pussy Riot said and what they were trying to accomplish with their art. Early in the book, Gessen begins to formulate the argument that political art can have the power to defeat oppressive regimes by casting light on its entrenched doublespeak, something obviously referenced in the title of the book as well. "Pussy Riot had subverted Soviet-speak," Gessen concludes, "which had perverted [Russian] language" (273). Readers will benefit from the actual correspondence Gessen had with Pussy Riot, including interviews, letters, and other written statements. This in and of itself is a striking accomplishment, considering she only had limited access to Nadezhda Tolokonnikova (Nadya), Maria Alyokhina, and Yekaterina Samutsevich (Kat)—the three members of Pussy Riot who were convicted of "felony hooliganism" and served time in Russia's notoriously cruel and corrupt prison system.

Words Will Break Cement is divided into twelve chapters over three parts. Part one is titled "Becoming Pussy Riot." In this section, Gessen discusses how Nadya, Kat, and Maria came to be a part of Pussy Riot. Gessen not only details the back-stories of the three arrested women, but she also describes the earlier art collective that was the pre-cursor to Pussy Riot, a group that Nadya and Kat were involved with called *Viona* (War). In part two, "Prayer and Response," Gessen focuses on Pussy Riot's controversial performance at the Cathedral of Christ the Savior and the ensuing trial of the three women. This is perhaps the most fascinating portion of the book. Here Gessen transcribes what Nadya, Maria, and Kat actually said in court, something that up to this point in the coverage of the controversy was largely missing. The trial plays out like an absurd drama, as the defendants are locked in a Plexiglas-cage for the proceedings as witnesses for the prosecution described their movements at the church as "devilish jerkings" that were "offensive" and caused great "moral

damage” (175). Scholars of popular music have long been aware of music’s potential to cause moral outrage, but Gessen’s strategy of stepping aside and instead permitting the space for Kat’s, Nadya’s, and Maria’s arguments is a great resource for anyone interested in how musicians respond to attempts to control or ban their art.

In part three of *Words Will Break Cement*, titled “Punishment,” Gessen focuses on the three young women’s time in prison after the trial. Separated from one another and shuttled from prison to prison with little-to-no knowledge of where they were going, Nadya, Maria, and Kat were fed rotten food, provided no proper means of sanitation, and forced to work in sweatshop-like conditions. During this time, Kat motioned for a new lawyer who successfully had her two-year sentence reduced to probation by arguing that she did not actually participate in the church performance (she was grabbed by security before the song started). This caused a somewhat uneasy rift between the women, as both Nadya and Maria remained in prison, struggling to survive within a system that conditions other prisoners to ostracize and physically attack those who protest their living and work conditions. Maria’s efforts to defend her fellow inmates in her colony met some success, however Nadya’s calls for improved prison conditions resulted in her secret transportation to a prison hospital in Siberia after several hunger strikes. Although their time in prison was extremely difficult and inhumane, Gessen demonstrates how the experience transformed the young women, especially Nadya and Maria, into more strategic organizers.

The release of Pussy Riot just prior to the Winter Olympics in Sochi was obviously a publicity move by Putin and the Russian government to improve Russia’s image prior to the Games. In their build-up to their much-publicized release, it is clear that *Words Will Break Cement* was rushed into print. Although some may find Gessen’s lack of citation and partial access to the women she writes about limitations, there is no denying that her knowledge of Russian art, history, and political dissent is

invaluable in helping to contextualize Pussy Riot's work and the Russian government's attempt to control potentially subversive and controversial art. In addition, Gessen provides a moving case study in which music does have the power to rise above repression and have a lasting impact on public dialogue. While it remains to be seen what will happen to Pussy Riot moving forward, *Words Will Break Cement* is an excellent work that makes a strong case for the power of protest music. Gessen's book is not only a great resource for scholars interested in popular music and moral panics, but it is also a highly accessible text that could be useful to undergraduate students interested in popular culture, world history, and the power of music and social protest.

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Malin, Brenton. *Feeling Mediated: A History of Media Technology and Emotion in America*. New York: NYU Press, 2014, \$79 (cloth), \$25 (paper), 317 pp.

Brenton Malin's new book, *Feeling Mediated: A History of Media Technology and Emotion in America* gets a smiley face from me. This timely overview of humans and their complicated relationship with mediated communication had me when I realized his Introduction included not only a smiley face, but references to Plato, Socrates,

Guglielmo Marconi, Dale Carnegie, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Herbie (“The Love Bug”). Indeed, Malin’s walk through our tangled mixed-up relationships with technology covers a lot of ground in its 317 pages. Starting in ancient times, Malin points out that even Socrates (via Plato) was worried about the printed word and its potential drug-like effects—“Like a drug, the written word stimulated emotion without a clear source” (7). Malin makes it clear, however, that he wants to be an unbiased interpreter in this book, making sure we understand, in the first few pages, that he does “not take a position on the relative advancement of various ‘new technologies’ or on whether these technologies enhance or hinder our connections to each other” (10).

Malin’s goal is to analyze the rhetorics of emotion and technology, with this analysis allowing “us to think more critically about how we interact with and through the communications media that surround us” (12). Using a lens that he calls “media physicalism,” Malin intends to show “some of the ways that notions of assumed technological power get attached to ideas about emotional stimulation during the early twentieth century” (21). In five fascinating chapters, plus a comprehensive introduction, Malin focuses on stereoscopes, radio, motion pictures, and new media of the digital age to show not so much how consumers have been brainwashed, but simply limited by the choices that have been made for them.

Although Malin claims to be nonjudgmental, it seems that social scientists (and, really, the academy in general) take a hit in this book, as Malin continues to point out (somewhat repetitively) that while academics decry the “effects” on human emotion via media consumption, they tacitly promote the power of media over our emotions by continuing to rely upon media machinery to conduct research. Thus, per Malin, not only academics, but advertisers, media moguls, and educators (just to name a few groups discussed by Malin) have served as foils (or dupes?) for the media elites that they are so concerned about to begin with. The result has

been devaluation of emotions and introspection as ways of knowing. Really all of us have bought into the idea of technology as sublime. The fact that consumer radios were set up to be one way communication devices, for example, forced users of radio to take the position of passive audience members. Malin's point throughout this book is that the various media technologies he profiles have been co-opted by various stakeholders to both manipulate the emotions of a passive consumer/user as well as, at the same time, to study (and promote or decry) so-called "media effects."

This book is worth the price of admission alone for the endnotes which contain comprehensive reference lists of books and articles that have focused on: the history of media technology, the field of emotion research, and the history and rhetoric of science. I know that I will place this book on my bookshelf along with other histories of human communication that I admire, such as William Harris's *Ancient Literacy* (1989), Alberto Manguel's *A History of Reading* (1996), Jennifer Monaghan's *Learning to Read and Write in Colonial America* (2005), and Miles Myers' *Changing our Minds* (1996). What Malin adds is a 21st century spin and an overarching rhetorical approach that effectively compares and contrasts our current digital age to practices and prevailing opinions related to media of the early 20th century. His knowledge of media history, and the history of science and rhetoric is impressive. I can't wait for a sequel, when perhaps he might cover the late 20th century including that 1960s sitcom masterpiece of technology and emotion: *My Mother, The Car*.

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Hunt, Leon, Sharon Lockyer, and Milly Williamson, eds. *Screening the Undead: Vampires and Zombies in Film and Television*. New York: Palgrave, 2014, \$28 (paper), 288 pp.

World War Z, a film too recent for inclusion in the excellent collection of essays *Screening the Undead: Vampires and Zombies in Film and Television*, stars Brad Pitt as Gerry Lane whose primary goal is to save his all-American family from the incipient zombie hoards. That he must also spend the second half of the film in locations other than America, and also save the world, seems entirely subsidiary to saving his American wife and daughters. Unlike *World War Z*, however, *Screening the Undead* reminds American viewers and readers, habituated to *World War Z*'s ironic provinciality, Anne Rice's Southern Gothics, or Stephanie Meyer's Washington-based, sparkly Cullen clan, that the undead—and their fans, followers, and filmmakers—traverse wildly across cultures and countries.

Even the decision to include analyses of both vampires *and* zombies represents a kind of border crossing, explained well by the editors in their introduction: despite that the convergence of vampires and zombies “is a recent one,” both monsters “share three interconnected proclivities: they *feed* on humanity, they *infect* humanity, and by these means they also *proliferate*” (4). As if to demonstrate this proliferation, like a zombie apocalypse *Screening the Undead*’s geography ranges widely, from Swedish vampire films and Japanese horror to auteur Guillermo Del Toro’s movement from Mexican cinema to Hollywood and back again, with other chapters stopping to explore images of the undead in Spain and Italy. Nicola Woodham’s chapter in particular offers groundbreaking first-hand investigative research of “Nollywood”: “the video film industry largely based in Nigeria that grew out of a landscape with few resources for investment in the locally produced cinema” (191), where “the vampire image allows for a comment on both colonialism and its legacy” (199).

Like the undead themselves, the collection crosses other kinds of boundaries, not just the national and categorical. The book examines at least a few expected works, such as the Hammer Film Productions, the George Romero franchise, and recent international sensation *Let the Right One In*. But it wisely spends little time on phenomena explored at length elsewhere, like the now-canonical *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or *Walking Dead*, leaving room for discussions of less frequently explored works such as, say, *Count Yorga, Vampire*, Spanish director Amando de Ossirio’s “Blind Dead” quartet, and Miike Takashi’s genre-bending film *The Happiness of the Katakuris*. Similarly, the book also includes some strong, if likely, analyses of the undead and race and gender, but also some surprises, like the undead and the counterculture or, separately, homonormativity.

Even the chapters on Anglo-American or well-known films and television shows stand out: Milly Williamson’s “Let Them All In: The Evolution of the ‘Sympathetic’ Vampire,” for example, which on the

surface seems as though it's going to cover familiar ground, instead argues that the supposedly recent popular-cultural trend of benevolent vampires in fact has a strong historical precedent. In addition, the essay shows how Gothic literature "was defined as a woman's genre, downgraded in the cultural hierarchy of the day because of the association with femininity, the irrational and the supernatural (which today is echoed in the critical reception of the *Twilight Saga*)" (78) in order then to provide an interesting comparison between *Twilight*'s academic disparagement and *Let the Right One In*'s celebrated indie standing. Jeffrey Sconce's wonderfully titled "Dead Metaphors/Undead Allegories" begins with a thorough psychoanalytic reading of the zombie, from Freud to Zizek (aside from zombies, who love brains as much as a psychoanalytical critic?). But like Williamson's essay, it develops and broadens its themes further, including the novel *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* with other depictions of zombies in fiction and film. The chapter concludes with the ways in which the zombie has infected and spread beyond the screen and into real life, by means of zombie pub crawls, zombie-themed "Run for Your Life" charity marathons, and "perhaps the most literal in articulating this social death drive...several ingenious pranksters have hacked into electronic traffic signs that stand alongside major urban thoroughfares in order to warn: ZOMBIES AHEAD—EXPECT DELAYS.... The sign reminds [commuters] (and us) of the fate that slowly engulfs us all—a zombified repetition of social obligations that does a little more each day to destroy the self and the planet" (110). And Emma Dyson's "Diaries of a Plague Year: Perspectives of Destruction in Contemporary Zombie Film" nicely puts the pseudo-documentary style of many zombie films in perspective: "The notion of fictional 'reportage' is not new to literature—notably in Daniel Defoe's *A Journal of the Plague Year* (1722)—but in zombie film it may well be a seminal shift in the social critique and reimagining of horror considered a hallmark of the diverse film texts that compromise zombie film" (131).

Encompassing critical theory, historical context, literary tradition, and a truly international outlook (unlike the film *World War Z*), the collection provides insightful commentary on the ostensible subject of contemporary representations of screen vampires and zombies. But like the best analyses of popular culture, it winds up being about much more than film and television. In the end, *Screening the Undead* demonstrates how and why these films and television shows themselves have fed upon, and *are* fed upon by, humanity itself. While the book is ideal for vampire and zombie academics and aficionados, the writing is accessible, and the book provides frequent illustrations and summaries for anyone unfamiliar with a given film or series. Based on the collection, the undead will undoubtedly continue to come back, to infect humanity and proliferate. Humanity, it seems, would not have it any other way.

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Biskind, Peter, *My Lunches with Orson: Conversations between Henry Jaglom and Orson Welles*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2013, \$16 (paper), 336 pp.

My Lunches with Orson, which presents a remarkable series of conversations between directors Orson Welles and Henry Jaglom, is not the first, nor will it be the last of its kind. Publishers Faber & Faber have even serialized the “director-on-director” conceit into its own series (e.g. *Burton-on-Burton*, *Gilliam-on-Gilliam*, *Scorsese-on-Scorsese*, etc.). Yet, 1967’s *Hitchcock/Truffaut* has always been the gold standard of director-on-director film discussion. Essentially journalistic in nature, the book was the result of a fifty-hour-long interview containing more than five hundred

questions on Hitchcock's career. Organized by the chronological progression of his films, Truffaut offered extraordinary insight into Hitchcock's directorial career.

In the introduction to the 1985 revised edition, Truffaut states that he was "emulate[ing] Oedipus' consultation of the oracle" by interviewing Hitchcock: he wanted to understand the true parentage of his own filmmaking (14). Unlike Oedipus, who murders his father, marries his mother, and finally gouges out his own eyes, Truffaut was not destined to bring about his own ruin through these meetings with his cinematic oracle. Welles and Jaglom's conversations in *My Lunches with Orson* diverge from the legacy of the *Hitchcock/Truffaut* interviews on this very point: ruin.

Taken over the course of three years of lunches at Welles' favorite West Hollywood eatery, Ma Maison, Welles shows his genius, his accomplishments, but mostly his frustrations. As Biskind says in his introduction, the conversations often feature "Welles as his own worst enemy" (8). Broken into two parts, part one details Welles and Jaglom's conversations from 1983 and part two covers 1984 and 1985. In 1983, Welles and Jaglom's back-and-forth is peppered with funding talk: how to get backers for the various projects Welles would like to direct, all of which exist in various stages of completion. But funding is not the dominate topic at the table. It is Welles' distaste for Hollywood that takes center stage.

In the conversations captured during 1983, Welles shuns Elizabeth Taylor, says Brando's neck was "a huge sausage, a shoe made of flesh," describes David O. Selznick as simply "gross," calls producer Irving Thalberg "Satan," Chaplin and Woody Allen "arrogant," and crudely discusses the women with whom he's slept (38, 59, 46, 37). Welles shows himself to be bigoted, sexist, and egotistical. The wit and cleverness with which he hits his marks, however, still endears us to his conspicuous talents. Innate intelligence is a liability though, when it cannot be

controlled. “The boy genius,” as he was often called early in his career, either could not or would not control himself to play the political games in which Hollywood demanded he participate. Part one of Biskind’s text says as much. With the hopes for funding strewn among near constant criticisms doled out to everyone from producers to chorus girls, Welles unknowingly foreshadows the funding failures he will face in the next two years.

By 1984 and 1985, when the second and final section of interviews take place between Welles and Jaglom, Welles’ despair is apparent. Funding for major projects has evaporated, Welles’ health is failing, and his personal finances have become even more tenuous. Jaglom’s desire to help his friend, a desire that has been a constant throughout their relationship, is on full display when producer Susan Smith from HBO joins their table, but Welles refuses to discuss a potential project with her about a resort in Acapulco after he “senses” her disinterest. Even when Smith states directly, “I want to hear it,” Welles replies to the pitch opportunity with unwavering despondency, insisting, “Her eyes went dead when she heard *resort*” (265-66). As hard as Jaglom works to cajole the project out of Welles, the meeting ends in anger. Welles’ then-statements to Smith become the working doctrines of Part 2: “we’re not getting anywhere,” “I can’t sell,” “I haven’t got anything,” “no use talking about it,” “I can’t,” “I quit” (265-66). By the close of the 1985 interviews, which end five days before Welles’ death, his financial situation has become so dire, he says to Jaglom: “If I got just one commercial, it would change my life!” (279). The man who created the oft-christened “greatest film ever made” is hoping for a television commercial spot, believing it will be the way to turn things around.

If read in the shadow of *Hitchcock/Truffaut*, *My Lunches with Orson* can appear to lack in content and focus. But Biskind’s expertly edited work is not an auteurist examination of Welles’ completed productions. Direct comment on artistic choices in *Citizen Kane*, *Touch of Evil*, etc.,

surfaces only rarely. *My Lunches with Orson* is more accurately categorized as part industry tell-all and part autobiography. In that context, it is simultaneously witty, revealing, and depressing. By allowing Jaglom to record their conversations, Welles gives us a voyeuristic key-hole view of himself: a great filmmaker close to the end of life, who battled with Hollywood for a multitude of reasons—most of which are attributable to the interaction between the industry's increasingly political structure, and Welles' confrontational personality characteristics that are on display here in full.

Whether Welles "lost" his battle with Hollywood is another story. Biskind's text is likely the last treasure trove of Wellesian archival material to be unearthed, and in it no one seems free of blame for all the missteps in Welles' career. But Welles' still gave us "the greatest film ever made" (a title he only recently lost to Hitchcock's *Vertigo*—a film Welles hated). Even with the figure of Kane becoming less and less extricable from the director of *Kane* as the years went on, if a film were ever capable of giving a man his last laugh, it's *Citizen Kane*. *Kane*, however, always plays best with the initiated: those who know the Hearst saga, what Hollywood cinema was doing in 1941, and of what it was thought capable. *My Lunches with Orson* is no different. Welles' projects mentioned in passing, Welles' feuds, and the roles of related industry heavy-hitters are often assumed as pre-requisite knowledge. Welles and Jaglom do not slow down to explain, nor does Biskind offer significant editorial interjection. If names like Selznick, Mankiewicz, Houseman, and the HUAC are unfamiliar, sections of this text will be as well. *My Lunches with Orson*, however, does not purport to be an introductory text on Welles. This is spellbinding (i.e. required) reading for those who have exhausted all the other extant sources of information on Welles and can't believe their luck that one last gem was left to be pulled out of the Great Magician's hat.

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Murthy, Dirajh, *Twitter: Social Communication in the Twitter Age. Digital Media and Society Series*. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2013, \$22.95 (paper), 220 pp.

Twitter: Come On, Tweet Something Clever

Whether through cave paintings, smoke signals, drums, marathon messengers, the pony express, air mail, telegraph or telephones, humans have always sought to communicate. Social media has become the venue to cultivate both private and public messages. In *Twitter: Social Communication in the Twitter Age*, Dirajh Murthy examines Twitter as a social medium where “ordinary people in ordinary social networks can publish user generated news and updates” (8).

Twitter is an individual-to-many internet forum with a variety of capabilities, such as sorting messages by topic, source, time, or hashtag. Murthy describes Twitter as a public friendship where the user experiences familiarity with another person or organization. It has also been labeled a microblog as individual tweets build a larger text. The author examines this technology by assembling its historic applications and potential implications and explores three archetypal utilizations of Twitter: citizen journalism, Twitter activism, and Twitter healthcare

communities. Murthy ultimately attempts to demonstrate the social action leverage of Twitter in community formation and social change.

Murthy incorporates applicable social media theories. Beginning with McLuhan, but focusing on Heidegger, Murthy suggests that Twitter establishes global villages; coalescing individuals through beliefs, interests, or pursuits, creating small virtual communities congealed by common ground. The author also examines democratization, arguing that Twitter allows for grassroots unfiltered information from citizens instead of from highly scripted institutions. Increasingly, tweeters form personal identity through their profiles and tweets posted while also creating an event based society and an update culture. Concepts like homophily, telepresence and synthetic situations partially describe the Twitter experience. However, Murthy focuses on Heidegger's concept of *Herausfordern* which is to call forth or summon to action. But he fails to firmly establish Twitter as causation. While pointing at several conversations and groups hosted by Twitter, the author does not produce an example of a situation in which Twitter users were specifically motivated to meaningful action other than reposting or retweeting, but rather, Twitter as a contributing factor to larger movements already motivated.

There have been several situations in which video cell phone wielding individuals have become citizen journalists by recording, reporting, and uploading to Twitter emerging events of which established media sources were not yet aware. Murthy establishes an atmosphere of "ambient news," or a constant stream of information provided both by news media and citizen journalists. Hashtags and traceable conversations that generate temporary communities surrounding events, opinions, or news items generate a casual survey of global situations. Similarly, news entities utilize Twitter to draw attention to news. However, Murthy does point out that there is a technological divide that excludes portions of the population. Murthy utilizes the examples of disasters that were first

tweeted by citizens that later became news items, in some cases producing citizen journalist celebrities.

The author points out that, in many cases, individual tweets result in only marginal responses. However, if a celebrity retweets the materials, the likelihood of a larger news event increases. Murthy couples this with broader cultural or global concerns indicating that Twitter also serves as a system of activism, perpetuating messages of change to interested followers. Illustrating the point with the Occupy movement and events in Cairo, Egypt, Murthy discusses the difficulties of leveraging a critical mass of individuals. However, it is clear that while the internet played a role in alerting the media to social situations, it did little to gather masses. Only after the internet had been blocked did masses take to the streets. After events such as the revolution in Cairo, Twitter account subscribers increased. Conversely, Twitter generates an ambient news audience where retweeting becomes sufficient activism. This indicates that for many, including celebrities, the momentary act of forwarding information is sufficient to tag themselves with the activist moniker. This concept of rhetorical activism and persuasion by tweet could be useful if interrogated through a rhetorical analysis lens.

Murthy offers a third example of unlikely communities created by Twitter in healthcare. Twitter has given rise to communities surrounding ailments or diagnosis as a common ground or community builder. Murthy cites situations where individuals chronicle their illness, broadcast diagnoses, seek aid, and even prompt researchers to examine alternative medicine through tweets. While some Twitter users have attempted to reach out directly to the healthcare providers, most have cited professional limitations and the need for personal visitations, more than likely to avoid malpractice, rather than offer medical advice online. News and current events demonstrate that increasingly developing countries are using cellphone technology. This technology allows for historically isolated populations to seek healthcare and information via the internet.

While Murthy provides an interesting look at the social construction contributions of Twitter, he fails to provide a solid case for Twitter as producing action, rather than mere armchair activism. Twitter and many other internet interfaces have not been broadly tested in the legal or regulatory system. Perhaps this is the greatest potential use of this text: as a case study on which to base policy or as an examination of popular culture tipping points by virtue of Twitter trending. While Murthy examines three specific communities developed within Twitter, there are a great many other Twitterspheres that the author avoids, such as cyber bullying, violence, false statements, and misinformation. As states attempt to protect their youth through anti-bullying legislation, it can only be a matter of time before Twitter is restricted and monitored or if left with minimal regulations, will give rise to litigation as the vehicle of violence perpetuation. Just as the author addresses the altruistic uses of Twitter, he ignores the darker underbelly of unrestricted communication or the inherent inequity of technology divides. However, what is perhaps most telling of this text is that it fails to prove that Twitter is a call, a summons to action as Heidegger suggests technology might become. Rather, Twitter provides a safe distance to encourage public postings and saber rattling without action or real interpersonal human contact.

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Walker, Jesse. *The United States of Paranoia: A Conspiracy Theory*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013, \$24.99 (paper), 448 pp.

In his book *The United States of Paranoia*, Jesse Walker follows in the footsteps of others who have studied the role of conspiracy theories in American culture, but builds on what has been done in the past in provocative and insightful ways while not presuming any particular familiarity with the scholarly work already done in the area.

Like most contemporary scholars of conspiracy theory, Walker situates his treatment of conspiracy theory in relation to the work of Richard Hofstadter's essay "The Paranoid Style in American Politics." Walker's thesis is that Hofstadter was not wrong, but that he did not go far enough. Hofstadter saw paranoid thinking as the hallmark of marginal, minority groups; Walker argues paranoia figures prominently not only in the thinking of a marginal few, but in that of Americans in general, and has done so since the first settlers arrived in the 17th century. It's not that those on the margins are necessarily more likely to engage in such thinking; rather, such thinking is more likely to be labeled "paranoid" when it comes from the margins.

The first half of the book (titled "Primal Myths") lays out a taxonomy of American conspiracy theories, which Walker groups into five categories: the Enemy Outside, the Enemy Within, The Enemy Above, the Enemy Below, and the Benevolent Conspiracy. As Walker notes, these are not mutually exclusive categories, but rather helpful concepts with which to think about the dynamics of conspiracy narratives. Walker devotes a chapter to each of the five categories, starting with a representative example from American history, then fleshing out the category by noting the recurrence of the example narrative's deep structure in other conspiracy narratives over time. The result is a sweeping look at the

history of conspiracy theories in American history not based on chronology, but on typology.

Having established a set of concepts with which to discuss conspiracy theories, Walker moves to the second half of the book (titled “Modern Fear”), focusing on conspiracy theories of the last fifty years. There are a number of topics touched on that are to be expected: Lyndon LaRouche, the “New World Order,” Waco, 9/11, etc. But as with the first half, Walker uses specific examples to draw a bigger picture. This proves a more fruitful approach than simply marching the reader through a list of well-known conspiracy theories and sorting them into the five categories laid out in the first half of the book. Relatively obscure con-man/evangelist/conspiracy theorist John Todd is dealt with in some detail as a key player in the emergence of paranoia about Satanism in the 1980s (particularly in regard to rock music). In one of the book’s most interesting chapters, Walker traces the growth of specific underground satirical magazines as a way to describe the larger dynamic of conspiracy theory as a form of play (and the permeability of the division between irony and seriousness in the world of conspiracy narratives). What emerges is a clearer sense of the way conspiracy theory serves as a trope with which Americans think and talk about political culture; each specific thread, when pulled, reveals its role as part of a larger network of thought that is woven into our public discourse.

Walker’s examples are particularly broad when it comes to looking at how popular culture texts reflect paranoia. Again, some obvious examples come up, such as *The Manchurian Candidate*, *The Twilight Zone*, *The X-Files*, and *The Da Vinci Code*. But Walker also draws on examples of captivity narratives, zombie movies, comic strips, the film *The Stepford Wives*, James Bond, the card game *Illuminati*, and a detailed analysis of the *Rambo* trilogy (to name just a few examples) to illustrate the extent to which the paranoia at work in the stereotypical conspiracy theory permeates much of American culture.

And that is, ultimately, Walker's essential point: while conspiracy theory is often associated in both scholarship (e.g., Hofstadter) and popular imagination with fringe thinking, the evidence is overwhelming that the fears and motifs found in conspiracy narratives are part of the basic cultural currency of the United States. It is in making this point that *The United States of Paranoia* is at its best—showing that paranoia is not the purview of one segment of the population, despite the fact that the “conspiracy theorist” label is often reserved for those on the margins. Yes, in the 1990s, members of the militia movement harbored fears about a “one world government,” but the militia movement itself became a target of paranoid narratives used by the government to achieve political aims. Yes, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, there were theories espoused by African American residents of New Orleans that the government had purposefully blown up the levees to destroy their homes, but there were also paranoid stories circulating that Katrina survivors were behaving lawlessly—committing indiscriminate rape, shooting at those who were trying to save them, and even turning to cannibalism. Yes, 9/11 led to the “truther” movement, but it also caused a paranoid reaction by government and law enforcement officials, who saw jihadists around every corner. Yes, those holding “extreme” or “marginalized” views tell stories of conspiracy, but so do those who have power—but it's usually only the former that get labeled “conspiracy nuts.”

There are some omissions that might strike some readers as odd. AIDS, the topic of many conspiracy theories, is barely mentioned, despite being a strong example of several of the dynamics Walker describes. The invasion of Iraq as one symptom of post-9/11 paranoia is not addressed. There is also a lack of explanation on *why* the United States in particular (as the very title of the book suggests) is prone to paranoia. Walker's epilogue points out the extent to which conspiracy theories rely on innately human drives to find pattern and order in chaos, to tell stories to master our fears. As such, they will always be present. True enough, but

how does this relate to the peculiar proclivity of Americans to traffic in such thinking? After painstakingly contextualizing conspiracy theories, this final move oddly suggests conspiracy theory is best explained *outside* of any particular cultural context.

These, however, are minor quibbles with a work that is a useful and much-needed addition to the literature on conspiracy theory. They simply suggest that *The United States of Paranoia* has not only offered compelling answers to interesting questions, but that it shows the need for further work to be done. And that is exactly what one hopes to find in such a book. Written for a general audience while demonstrating familiarity with much of the existing literature on the topic, Walker's contribution to the topic is one that will prove valuable to scholars of American political, cultural, and social history while also serving as a useful addition to the thoughtful discussion of the American penchant for telling stories of conspiracy.

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Joseph Turow, *The Daily You: How the New Advertising Industry is Defining Your Identity and Your Worth*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012, \$28.00 (cloth), \$18.00 (paper), 256 pp.

Joseph Turow's text is a must-read, whether or not you consider yourself a member of the academic community, as his analysis does much more than simply accentuate the negative consequences associated with individual-level media surveillance on the Internet. Rather, he provides a detailed historical and factual account of the ways in which media buyers and

planners dictate the structure, function, and surveillance practices surrounding the World Wide Web. His central thesis is that media buyers and planners are working to find out how to best connect with and understand individual Internet users, resulting in a consumerist rhetoric focused on data mining and intrusions into privacy that can potentially cause serious social and cultural problems.

Turow starts by historically tracing the rise of so-called “consumer power” beginning in the 1980s, yet the chapter dispels attributions of the sovereign consumer by peeling back the layers of the false power consumers may believe they have in our current digital age. Chapter two, “Clicks and Cookies,” intricately describes how “clicks” and “cookies” aid in media marketers performing surveillance on the Internet habits of consumers. Chapter three, “A New Advertising Food Chain,” discusses the behavioral targeting performed by media buyers and planners that allowed them to learn more than ever about media users beginning in the 2000s. In chapter four, “Targets or Waste,” Turow analyzes current trends of media marketers, including their ability to classify consumers as “targets” or “waste,” using their past Internet clicks as predictors of future behavior. Chapter five, “Their Masters’ Voices,” explores the notion that news and information content on the Internet are beginning to be customized in accordance with characteristics of the type of people advertisers are attempting to target. In chapter six, “The Long Click,” Turow addresses conceptions of individual “profiles” being created by individuals online (e.g. via Facebook), and how these profiles allow marketers to quickly increase their advertising initiatives with minimal research efforts, as Facebook profiles perform their work for them. Finally, chapter seven, “Beyond the ‘Creep’ Factor,” offers a normative approach toward digital literacy education, also discussing social and cultural implications of media buying and planning beyond the obvious intrusions into privacy being performed by various companies. The text therefore is very well-structured, with the first three chapters providing

readers with a historical progression of the media buying industry, and the remaining four chapters featuring Turow's explication of the invasiveness of marketing practices and how the tracking of individual behaviors online has serious social consequences.

In the first half of the text, Turow interrogates Nicholas Negroponte's *Being Digital* (1995), which claimed that the Internet served as a form of empowerment or freedom for individual consumers. In reality, Turow suggests, current media buying practices have taken away true opportunities for Internet consumers to have freedom, as opportunities for empowerment have now been replaced by practices of surveillance. By looking "under the hood" of the media buying system, Turow also critiques Henry Jenkins' celebratory view of the digital era written in *Convergence Culture*, stating that Jenkins was correct in his assumption that digital technologies provide people with more tools than ever to produce their own media. However, Turow argues, we must begin to ask how deep this "power" really is compared to the power of media buyers and planners, who are the dictators of cultural and political power via the Internet.

One of the most prominent strengths of *The Daily You* is its ability to tackle a broad topic from a variety of angles. Turow effectively utilizes his text in order to show various representations of the current state of media buying and planning of the Internet, often relying on detailed historical descriptions of media buying and planning for the Internet's progression. Beyond simply arguing that Internet surveillance of consumers is problematic, Turow grounds such broad claims with specific descriptions of exactly how specific industries are operating using the personal data of consumers. This text is most suitable for an academic communications audience, including undergraduate-level classes, Masters-level students, and Ph.D. candidates. Additionally, this work can be beneficial for a more general audience, for example, those who use the Internet on a regular basis would be sure to find interesting information in Turow's writing.

One of the text's most interesting chapters (chapter two) discusses how one click by an Internet user can result in a multitude of data that is stored, researched, and eventually used for advertising purposes. Typically when discussing instances of the Internet storing users' habits, we think of Google's advertising recommendations that pull from our e-mail content or Amazon's ability to create a recommendation list based on our previous searches and buying habits. Turow shows that these instances are the least of our worries, as media buyers and planners are strategically convincing media publishers to allow content to be dictated according to potential advertising power. This means that, beyond recommendations from our favorite websites, the structure of Internet advertising permits its users to be classified as "targets" or "waste," thereby performing a type of social and consumer discrimination, linking with the author's previous work, *Niche Envy*. Turow argues that this discrimination is a result of three important developments: advertisers' obsession with garnering online data about audiences, the significant increase in the number of companies that exist to provide online user data in an accessible format, and the growth in the number of technologies that permit advertising to be selectively presented to individuals based on their stored data.

Turow offers a strong conclusion in *The Daily You*, describing why digital media literacy is so necessary for consumers to adopt and understand. Rather than critiquing the Internet, which is not going anywhere anytime soon, Turow offers specific ways in which the new and ever-popular paradigm can be utilized to increase levels of consumer understanding and awareness. The goal of this text was to explicate how the media buying system is at the heart of the Internet's control, and Turow seamlessly executed this while also offering valid critiques of the ways in which the digital era permits advertising that frames individuals as status symbols, further asserting their positions in society.

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Skloot, Rebecca. *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. New York: Broadway Books. Print. 2010, \$35 (hard), \$16 (paper), \$9.99 (eBook), 400 pp.

Like millions of other students, college Biology major Rebecca Skloot discovered the term “HeLa cells” in her class textbook, which presented the concept as a fundamental cornerstone of Biological science, like the Krebs Cycle or DNA. While the vast majority of us learned about HeLa cells with little or no thought about the “human” person that might be responsible for that “human cell line,” Skloot was struck by a deep curiosity that she could not satisfy. As she attempted to unravel this grand, real-life mystery, what she uncovered was complex, controversial, personal, and universal. The story of HeLa told in Skloot’s *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* reveals deep medical, legal, and ethical dilemmas that took Skloot over a decade to uncover. Perhaps most importantly, certainly to the author, Skloot humanizes HeLa and gives voice to her grieving family.

While other sources could relay biographical details about Lacks, Skloot's narrative remains unrivaled in its loving treatment of Henrietta and her family. Skloot notes that Henrietta Lacks was born on August 1, 1920 into a poor African-American family in Roanoke, VA. She was sent to live with her grandfather, where she shared a bedroom with her cousin, David. Henrietta and David began a convoluted relationship in turns as cousins, siblings, lovers, parents, and spouses. They moved to Turner Station, Maryland (Eastern Baltimore) to work at Bethlehem Steel, which placed Henrietta near Johns Hopkins Medical Center, where her now-famous cells were harvested in 1951.

During her fourth and fifth pregnancies, Henrietta became acutely aware of something else growing inside her that she could feel tightening in her cervix. As she confided in her closest girlfriends: “A knot” she said. “It hurt something awful- when that man want to get with me, Sweet

Jesus aren't them but some pains"; this knot seemed different and more frightening than "the bad blood David sometimes brought home after nights with other women- the kind doctors treated with shots of penicillin and heavy metals" (14). Henrietta's aggressive, massive cervical cancer tumor was exacerbated by multiple sexually transmitted diseases and two pregnancies during tumor growth. This combination appears responsible for her cells' unique ability to not only survive in scientific labs when other human cells died, but to become "immortal": continuously growing and multiplying so that her cells could be stored, frozen, and transported successfully to labs around the world.

Although Skloot begins her journey cautiously reaching out to (and initially getting rejected by) the Lacks family, a meaningful connection grows between them. Most profoundly, a deep personal friendship between Rebecca and Deborah, Henrietta's youngest daughter, drives the story as the pair unravels the often painful mystery, traveling the country searching for answers, sharing frustration, anger, tears, and ultimately hope.

Skloot's scientific background grants her the ability to comprehend and convey complex medical information to the uninformed about Lacks' family, from general interest reader to the scientifically educated. She explains that Henrietta sought treatment at Johns Hopkins in the 1950s because it was the only option for her as a low-income African-American woman near Baltimore. While it seems unfathomable today, the standard treatment for Henrietta included sewing radium tubes inside her vagina and sending her home. She continued with this treatment, having cells removed from her cervix without her knowledge, until she passed away in the hospital on October 4, 1951.

The vivid picture of 1950s laboratory work environment Skloot paints includes details like the cat-eyed glasses of the technicians and the stainless steel tables and assortment of live animal specimens. Johns Hopkins gave Henrietta's cells to the research lab of George Gey, a

visionary in the area of cell culturing. Impressive and progressive, especially for the time period, were George's two female associates and lab technicians: Mary Kubicek, who actually cultured the original HeLa cell sample, and Margret Gey (wife of George) who managed the lab. George Gey was a pure scientist, not a businessman, so he altruistically shared HeLa cells with labs around the world and created culturing labs, none of which were monetarily motivated or financially lucrative. However, other individuals and companies realized the huge profit potential of the cells and made millions of dollars, none of which was ever shared with the Gey lab or the Lacks family.

This corporate greed also led to an overuse of the cells and cell contamination, which caused devastating setbacks to cancer research in the 1970s. The wide-spread HeLa contamination led to a need for *HLA* genetic markers; multiple scientific publications on these markers inappropriately revealed Henrietta Lack's name and medical condition thus invading her medical privacy and her family's privacy. Once the Lacks' family name was released, Henrietta's husband and children were targeted for undisclosed medical testing under false pretenses.

Skloot's scientific and journalism background allow her to evenhandedly cover the interpersonal, legal, and ethical issues of biomedical research, balancing her close relationship with the Lacks family against the scientific understanding that healthcare cannot advance without studying human samples. She includes a sample from the medical waiver Lacks signed, which did not indicate anything about the removal of tissue or procedures for handling or experimenting on that tissue. Even today, medical consent forms do not protect patients from how their tissues are used once removed from the body. A utilitarian philosophy of the greatest good for the greatest number legally overrides the individual rights philosophy of our personal entitlement to basic protections.

Skloot's account holds value for a general readership and for scholars of popular culture interested in representations of the body. Throughout

the numerous invasions of their family's privacy, deceptive harvesting of samples from multiple family members, and multimillion dollar profiting from corporations, the Lacks family has never filed a lawsuit nor requested any compensation. What they wanted were answers, which Skloot provided more of than anyone else cared to do over the past 60 years. After investigating and becoming close to the family, Skloot felt a sense of injustice that the direct descendants of Henrietta were left without medical assistance. Therefore, she used the book's success to launch The Henrietta Lacks Foundation (<http://henrietalacksfoundation.org/>) which initially provided medical, dental, and education assistance for Henrietta's relatives. Since then, the foundation has awarded 43 grants to underserved people whose bodies have contributed to major advancements in science, even though they were never supported for these efforts. In 2013, when researchers published Henrietta's DNA genome without family consent, the family was finally asked to participate on a regulation committee dealing with Henrietta's cells.

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