

The *Popular Culture Studies Journal* Reviews: Introduction

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Popular culture remains constantly in flux because things tend to fall in and out of fashion quickly and routinely. Indeed, something that is considered “wired” today can soon become “tired” (and vice versa) based entirely on the whims of audiences and consumers. This propensity can be seen in the rise and fall of one-time social media giants such as Myspace and Friendster, the trajectory of high-waisted “mom jeans” from cultural punchline to trendy fashion statement, and the avalanche of Netflix movies that generate buzz for a week before fading almost entirely from the collective memory.

These examples all demonstrate that popular culture is both diverse and dynamic, not to mention difficult to define and encapsulate. Over the years, researchers have applied the term “popular culture” to numerous texts and concepts, from books to films, from fashion to football games, and from video games to social media sites such as Facebook and TikTok. The various specimens listed here serve to reveal that people have very different ideas of what is popular and what is not, as well as what exactly constitutes culture. Ultimately (and, possibly, obviously), the very notion of “popular culture” may be every bit as fluid and varied as the texts and societies that comprise our understanding of the concept; at its core, popular culture refers to those things that different people consider fashionable at different times throughout history and in different places around the world.

The reviews in this issue of the *Popular Culture Studies Journal* reflect that diversity as they look at books, films, and games that cover a wide breadth of topics, issues, and stories. Angela M. Nelson and Matthew L. Miller discuss books that consider the cultural histories of comic book superheroes Batman and Superman. Jackson Reinhardt, meanwhile, writes about a book that analyzes how religion and myth manifest in the adventures of the films that comprise the Marvel Cinematic Universe, while Elizabeth Shiller takes a deep dive into the adventures of one of the cornerstones of the MCU with her review of the film *Black Widow* (Cate Shortland, 2021). Dakota J. Sandras shifts the focus to the small screen by reviewing Taylor Nygaard and Jorie Lagerwey’s examination of what the authors term “Horrible White People” television shows. Navid Darvishzadeh and Melissa

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Beattie each turn an eye toward global screen cultures as they review new books about Iranian cinema and global television respectively. Moving from film and television screens to computer screens, David Kocik, Grace Wilsey, and Mridula Sharma all discuss books examining issues in digital spaces. Kocik looks at Amanda C. Cote's study of sexism in the gaming industry, Wilsey explores Susanna Paaonen's book about affective formations in networked media, and Sharma offers insight into Rebecca Saunders' monograph looking at sex and labor in the digital age. Finally, CarrieLynn D. Reinhard discusses a video game that adapts real-life situations into a digital setting, while Christopher J. Olson reviews a board game based on the theories of pioneering media scholar Marshall McLuhan.

As always, I wish to thank my assistant editor, Sarah Pawlak Stanley, for her dedication in helping me ensure that these reviews are clear, concise, and as free from grammatical and mechanical errors as possible. I also want to thank all the contributors for their hard work on these reviews; without them, this section would not exist. Thanks also to CarrieLynn D. Reinhard for occasionally acting as a backup assistant editor who lends another set of eyes to look at these pieces before they head off for publication. Finally, thanks to you, the readers, for taking the time to read these reviews. I hope you find them useful and that they point you in the direction of scholarship and texts that assist you in your own academic endeavors.