

# Introduction

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As numerous scholars and cultural critics before me have noted, popular culture has always intersected with politics. Whether it is Sherlock Holmes expressing his belief in globalism (see Doyle and Faye), Superman battling the Ku Klux Klan (see Bowers), or Paddington Brown espousing an ethos of tolerance (see Grayson), popular culture reflects, reaffirms, and challenges a range of ideologies across the political spectrum. This might explain why popular culture frequently becomes a contested arena. For instance, the film *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988, dir. Martin Scorsese) sparked protests prior to its release due to a controversial sequence in which Jesus renounces his divinity and fathers children with Mary Magdalene, an act that many Christian groups considered blasphemous (for more on the protests, see Harmetz). Similarly, the Gamergate and Comicsgate movements of the early 21st century emerged in response to calls for increased diversity in the video game and comic book industries respectively (see Kain and Francisco). Most recently, conservative groups (including far-right conspiracy sect QAnon), launched the #CancelNetflix campaign in response to the streaming giant's advertising for *Cuties* (2020, dir. Maïmouna Doucouré), a film that critiques the sexualization of young girls, especially girls of color (see Alexander). Through their subject matter and the response(s) they elicit, texts and incidents such as these demonstrate that popular culture and politics have long crossed paths, despite calls to "keep politics out of \_\_\_\_\_" (fill in the blank with your popular culture of choice).

The reviews in this issue consider texts that engage with the overlap between popular culture and politics in a variety of ways. For instance, Taylor J. Ott writes about the anthology *The Sacred in Fantastic Fandom: Essays on the Intersection of Religion and Pop Culture*, edited by Carole M. Cusack, John W. Morehead, and Venetia Laura Delano Robertson. Meanwhile, Carl Johnson G. Anacin reviews Erica B. Edwards and Jennifer Esposito's *Intersectional Analysis as a Method to Analyze Popular Culture: Clarity in the Matrix*, which provides readers with a framework for conducting intersectional analyses via explorations of such popular texts as sitcoms (*Cristela*, *Black-ish*, *Fresh Off the Boat*), musicians (Big Freedia), and films (*Black Panther*). Kathleen Turner Ledgerwood provides a look at Valerie

The Popular Culture Studies Journal, Vol. 8, No. 2  
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Estelle Frankel's two-volume anthology *Fourth Wave Feminism in Science Fiction and Fantasy: Essays on Film Representations, 2012-2019*, while Dennis Owen Frohlich discusses *The Discursive Power of Memes in Digital Culture: Ideology, Semiotics, and Intertextuality* by Bradley E. Wiggins. Beyond book reviews, this section also features critiques of the television series *A Place to Call Home* and *That's So Raven*, with Gordon R. Alley-Young arguing that the former show highlights class inequalities in Australia while Brecken Hunter Wellborn identifies the racial, gender, and queer dynamics at play in the latter. The reviews included here all reinforce the idea that popular culture is inherently political.

As always, I want to thank my assistant editor, Sarah Pawlak Stanley, for her diligence in helping to put this section together (and for catching all the grammatical and mechanical errors that I missed). I also want to thank you for reading this section, and say that I hope you find the reviews collected here useful in pointing you toward texts and scholarship that assist you in your academic pursuits, both pedagogically and scholarly.

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