

Reviews Introduction

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Since taking over as editor of the reviews section of the *Popular Culture Studies Journal* from my predecessor and occasional collaborator, Malynnda Johnson, I have tried to maintain the tradition of including reviews of books that demonstrate the breadth and depth of popular culture. I, myself, am a voracious consumer of different popular (and cult) texts and believe that a healthy media diet consists of equal amounts of “high” and “low” art (not that those binary distinctions mean anything anymore, or ever truly did). Cinema (specifically, old exploitation films produced during the 1960s and 1970s) remains my first love, but I am also a fan of games (both analog and digital), comic books (superhero and otherwise), professional wrestling, music, stand-up comedy, science fiction, collectibles, and more (not necessarily in that order). Furthermore, I am confident in saying that this idea applies to you as well, dear reader, because no one is a fan of just one thing. Rather, we are all fans of a multitude of media that ignite our passions, fuel our creativity, help us define our personalities, and provide us with topics to discuss and bond over either in person or online.

The reviews in this issue demonstrate just a small fraction of the range of popular culture, as they cover books devoted to just some of the topics mentioned above, as well as some that I did not even touch upon. First, Sarah Revilla-Sanchez considers Jonathan A. Allan’s new monograph, *Men, Masculinities, and Popular Romance*, which analyzes the ideological impact of depictions of masculinity in romance novels (and in the 2001 film *Y tu mamá también*, directed by Alfonso Cuarón). Next, Navid Darvishzadeh brings us into the world of cinema with a review of Ulka Anjaria’s *Understanding Bollywood: The Grammar of Hindi Cinema*, a book that serves as an introductory primer to one of the largest, most profitable filmmaking industries in the world today. Games and game studies are also represented in this issue, with Dennis Owen Frohlich reviewing Paul Booth’s *Board Games as Media*, Ellen A. Ahlness discussing Edward Castronova’s *Life Is a Game: What Game Design Says About the Human Condition*, and Jennifer Kelso Farrell providing an overview of Jon Peterson’s *The Elusive Shift: How Role-Playing Games Forged Their Identity*. CarrieLynn D. Reinhard, meanwhile, looks at Mark Duffett and Jon Hackett’s *Scary Monsters: Monstrosity, Masculinity and*

Popular Music, a monograph that explores the intersections between masculinity and monstrosity in popular music. Argyrios Emmanouloudis steps inside the squared circle with Eero Laine's *Professional Wrestling and the Commercial Stage*, which considers professional wrestling's unique place within global popular culture. Following this, Melissa Beattie looks at "Hailing Frequencies Open": *Communication in Star Trek: The Next Generation*, in which author Thomas D. Parham III analyzes the first *Star Trek* sequel series through a communication studies lens. We close out this section with reviews of two recent films, as Carlos Tkacz considers the role of symbolism in *The Batman* while Elizabeth Shiller discusses how subjectivity drives the narrative of *The Last Duel*.

Before wrapping up this introduction to the reviews section, I want to take a moment to introduce and recognize my new assistant editor, Linda Howell of the University of North Florida, where she serves as an Assistant Professor in the Department of English and the Director of both the writing program and the writing center. Linda's areas of interest include writing pedagogy, first-year writing, digital literacies, and fan and media studies. I think Linda is an excellent addition to the PCSJ team, and her keen eye and deep knowledge of writing helped ensure that the reviews published in this section are not only free from grammatical and mechanical errors but also help strengthen some ideas by suggesting ways the authors could expand on some of their thoughts.

As always, we hope that you find these reviews useful and that they point you toward texts that would help you in your research and teaching. I also want to encourage readers to submit their own reviews of scholarly books, novels, films, games, albums, comic books, or other popular culture texts. If you are interested in doing so, please visit [our website](#) for more information on submitting reviews. On behalf of Linda and myself, we thank you for taking the time to read these reviews and hope you find them enjoyable and/or beneficial.