Book Reviews

Beil, Benjamin, Gundof S. Freyermuth, and Hanns Christian Schmidt, eds. *Playing Utopia: Futures in Digital Games.* transcript, 2019.

A diverse but tightly consolidated collective effort, the volume *Playing Utopia: Futures in Digital Games* was conceived and prepared for publication at the Cologne Game Lab in Germany. Cologne is famous for the largest video game fair in Europe, *gamescom*. It is only one of the many installments of the Cologne Trade Fair, founded almost a century ago as one of the many industrial World Fairs, initially designed as large-scale futuristic celebrations of progress. Unaffiliated, but situated in the same cultural dimension, is the *Clash of Realities* conference, organized by the Cologne Game Lab. It is a major international game studies conference in Germany with already 10 years of history. The chapters in *Playing Utopia* are from and inspired by a summit at the *Clash of Realities* in 2018; the volume gathers work from scholars based in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, and the UK, at the time of writing.

The German-speaking school of game studies may not be as large and influential as any of the streams in the English-speaking scholarship. However, many important concepts from game studies originated in it: the universally accepted definition of gamification (Deterding) comes from Germany, and the lesser known (but gaining popularity) understanding of interpassivity in games and arts (Jagodzinski; Pfaller) has Austrian roots. These concepts have been productively discussed by German-speaking scholars in parallel with, or even before, their international dissemination. With that in mind, we are free to speculate which ideas from *Playing Utopia* will travel across continents in the future.

Will it be "hieroglyphs of the future," as described by Gundolf Freyermuth? According to him, works of fiction do not predict the future, but it can be creatively deciphered from them. Could it be games as "utopian sandboxes," suggested by Hartmut Koenitz, playful virtual worlds that emulate some of the rules and tendencies of the real world? Anne Dippel offers the concept of "ludopia," or ludic utopia, inspired by Walter Benjamin's ideas of class play and revolutionary art. In short, every paper in *Playing Utopia* has something to offer, although there are also some occasional slips of the tongue. For instance, the word "she-male" should

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never be uncritically reproduced in academic writing (169). Similarly, all-too-enthusiastic critique of capitalism may lead to curious glitches, such as listing *Monopoly* as an "anti-utopia," which is used in many languages as a synonym for "dystopia." Of course, in the words of Andre Czauderna, another author of the volume, "someone's utopia is someone else's dystopia" (72).

To understand the future, it helps to learn about the past first. To teach us exactly this, Freyermuth, a renowned German author and a co-founder of Cologne Game Lab, indulges in a 60-page epic, footnote-heavy introduction into cultural histories of utopias and their counterparts, dystopias, in literature and audiovisual media. This is an exploration of utopian thinking that goes from antiquity to *Westworld* and *The Handmaid's Tale* and then back to the Renaissance, with a little *The Clash* reference thrown in for good measure. Even Vladimir Ilyich Lenin makes a guest appearance to express his famous dislike for utopias. Following Darko Suvin's studies of utopian fiction, Freyermuth notes that totalitarian systems are taking control of futures, as well as of presents and pasts.

Freyermuth demonstrates how our current conception of the future originated during the Industrial Age; technological and economic advances developed between the late 18th and 19th centuries, while far from unproblematic, created the impression that "the present was in many respects better than former times" (Freyermuth 29). This impression allowed people to assume that the future would be even better. From this perspective, *The Communist Manifesto* should be considered one of the most influential utopian works. Most authors of *Playing Utopia* agree on that, but some of them also remember how attempts to bring the communist utopia to life repeatedly resulted in mass oppression.

In the end, we need the ideal of utopias to move forward, but not to achieve them. From this viewpoint, Benjamin Beil analyzes almost unbeatable "masocore" games such as *Getting Over It* by Bennett Foddy as "a remarkably consistent utopian practice" (324). As Alison Harvey rightfully notes, the game industry has very little to offer in terms of believable utopias of diversity and equity, but utopian thinking provides the much needed impulse for social change. Gerald Farca further explores utopian impulses in the game industry, discovering them even in games with generally dystopian narratives such as *Fallout 4* (2015).

In a broader perspective, the main virtue of this volume is the wide array of distinct and reasonably grounded political thoughts of its authors. As almost all of them state, playing games leads to better understanding of political science. For instance, Andre Czauderna analyzes the political simulator *DEMOCRACY 3* (2013)

to show the educational potential of this game, particularly through its relevance and the multitude of its political choices. As homework, the reader may try to compare game series such as *DEMOCRACY* or *Tropico* to the most recent game from Molleindustria, *Democratic Socialism Simulator* (2020).

Specific case studies are more playful and open for interpretation from any political angle, and they are often not just about games. In his research on *Star Trek*, Tonguc Ibrahim Sezen has counted exactly how many locations and programmed interactive experiences are available in the famous Holodeck. Hanns Christian Schmidt asks whether playing Lego and *Lego Dimensions* may be a utopian practice in physical and hybrid modes of play, and Thomas Hawranke returns to modding, a subversive practice with a long tradition and still present artistic potential, in *Grand Theft Auto V*. Finally, Lars de Wildt explores political dichotomies in the fictional universe of the *Assassin's Creed* series. Taken together, this collection of papers takes us on an encouraging journey from the gloom and doom of current news reports to possible utopias — but also to much more ubiquitous dystopias — in literature, film, TV, and games. As in any game with multiple possible outcomes, there is no single future for all. In fact, *Playing Utopia* shows that it would be oppressive to force everyone into the same future, without the possibility to make one's own interesting choices in the process.

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Flea. *Acid for the Children*. Grand Central Publishing, 2019.

If The Red Hot Chili Peppers were the last rock band for which you could name all the members, then Flea's *Acid for the Children* is not the book for you. If, however, you were a band geek, or are raising a band geek, or if you buy Andrew Herrmann's argument that we are all pop culture natives, then you might love Flea's memoir.

Flea is the bassist, composer, and founding member of The Red Hot Chili Peppers. Born in Australia in 1962, Flea grew up with a loving grandmother and dog. His earliest memories involve these two equally rebellious and adoring figures. In early childhood, he moved with his mother to Southern California. In this new setting, he struggled to communicate and eventually discovered the public school music programs that once assisted children to stay in school and are now endangered by shortsighted budget cuts. The loss of these programs is a motivation for writing the memoir. Flea fears for generations being raised without access to the programs that saved him.

The book's organization takes the form of a string of memories separated by chapter titles, but not much more. The writing feels fleeting. In terms of structure and sparse writing style, the book evokes *Just Kids* by Patti Smith. Yet this type of comparison fails since Flea has written a book that seems accurate to the nature of memory rather than an autoethnography with a metanarrative purpose such as Smith's work. Flea's chapters are like glimpses into the past rather than a narrative-driven, critical analysis of chronological events.

Recently Scott Bruner argued that, "while great art does come from pushing boundaries, those boundaries are absolutely essential to the realization of great art" (7). Likewise, Flea presents a childhood in Australia and in Los Angeles during the 1960s and 1970s in which popular culture raised kids who in turn erased and challenged social and artistic boundaries. This parenting created Flea's dual persona of artist and child. On the one hand, he is the kid who played trumpet and dreamed of "jazz greats, being in a majestic symphony orchestra, growing into a respected man, cool and distinct" and when he picked up the bass guitar he became the persona of "an animal…a poser at first, but underneath, an animal" (201). In playing music, he was modeling his adventures around the search for joy, pain, and love. As he explains, "I learned that from Kurt Vonnegut" (205). This combination of music and rebellious literature taught him to run from "corruption" and throughout the book it seems his own family, fraught with the troubles of any family, was the corruption and the boundary he most wanted to avoid.

On the other hand, there was the music itself and the corrupting boundaries it offered. For Flea, "Rock music seemed silly, a dumbed-down form, for people who

didn't really care about music, just a bunch of haircuts and advertising." KISS was particularly troubling as was the lip-syncing of KISS songs at the school "talent show." Even all these years later, he still recalls the names of the kids who did this performance. Strangely, it was the lip-syncing that made his own friends want to start playing instruments for real. The urge to not be a poser loomed large (196).

Acid for the Children is not about creating but wondering about the creation. The memoir begins in early childhood and ends in early adolescence. The book may not satisfy fans because it fails to discuss the heights of fame or the recording process. In other words, it is not a book about the creation of art. However, for those who study popular culture, it is an ideal book because it is about the creation of the artist from the kid.

Flea takes readers on a tour of the "dingy" East Hollywood storefronts from Melrose to Edgemont. He rolls a huge tractor-trailer tire down the hill at Palm Street into traffic. He goes out to eat fried rice with his crush Rosa Cha. He explains his fear of punk music and punk bands. There are passages recalling how he and his friends jumped off roofs into swimming pools and their fights with "Rednecks." He learns to drive. For these reasons, in many ways, *Acid for the Children* is also a memoir of place. The focus on the landscape of youth bends Bob Batchelor's argument that popular culture is the "connections that form between individuals and objects" (1). In the case of *Acid for the Children*, the relationship is between the individual and the location.

Los Angeles was a soundscape of grassroots popular music formation in the 1960s and 1970s that challenged the pop music industry created and marketed in the same city. As Batchelor explains and Flea echoes, it is the individual's engagement with the popular culture, in this case from the ground up Stuart Hall-style, that produces the emotional investment the individual feels for the culture. In Flea's writing, it is the emotional investment that transforms the city map, the musical instruments, and the drugs from material/commercial objects into a culture. For this reason, *Acid for the Children* is successful in capturing the rush, the chemistry, the hatred, the attraction, the antipathy, and the love that define popular culture (Batchelor 1). Flea sums it up when, near the end of the book, he writes about the jazz musicians who taught him to play. Their gifts held "the solution to so many mysteries for the willing listener, yet jazz was culturally irrelevant by an increasingly tabloid-and-haircut-based culture" (357). Here Flea distinguishes the commercial from the integral in popular culture. In Flea's hands childhood is more

than an interlude, it is the time and the place that produces a system of identity rooted in popular culture.

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Glickman, Nora and Ariana Huberman, eds. *Evolving Images: Jewish Latin American Cinema*. University of Texas Press, 2018.

Given the success of Latin American films with Jewish topics and/or by Jewish filmmakers at international film festivals and film clubs in recent decades, the book *Evolving Images* is a timely contribution. Edited by Nora Glickman and Ariana Huberman, the book is structured into five sections: "Alternative Identities," "Memory and Violence," "New Themes," "Diasporas and Displacements," and "Comparative Perspectives: North and South American Cinema." Under each of these headings three to four contributions deal with selected case studies. The collection interrogates the images in a selection of films with Jewish characters and within Jewish settings. Furthermore, the book also considers films that offer protagonists who can be identified as Jewish via some narrative clues, even if their heritage is not made explicit, as contributions to Jewish Latin American cinema. The contributing authors examine how Jewish identities are represented on film, both in fiction and documentary. The range of films discussed furthermore goes beyond the divide between documentary and fiction filmmaking with the inclusion of home movies in Ernesto Livon-Grosman's chapter, who introduces readers to

the 8mm films of Alberto Salomón. These movies were of an experimental nature and mix motifs from the private and public spheres, which is why the author argues that Salomón's oeuvre (and other similar films that are yet to be discovered) deserve a place in Latin American cinema history.

Almost all chapters in this edited collection reveal how personal stories of both fictional characters as well as of real protagonists are intertwined with political and social developments in Latin American society. Memories, they show, are informed by one's cultural background and by national upheavals and disruptions, as well as by the need to develop strategies to deal with these issues. Although this understanding of memory permeates many films mentioned in the book, it is perhaps most evident in the section on memory and violence. It contains contributions from Daniela Goldfine and Patricia Nuriel, both focusing on fiction films by director Jeanine Meerapfel, who was born in 1943 in Argentina to German parents and who reflects on this aspect of her biography in her screenplay of *My German Friend* (2012). Mirna Vohnsen provides the third chapter dealing with "Memory and Violence," engaging with a film whose story takes place in the aftermath of the 1994 bombing of an important Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires (*Anita*, Marcos Carnevale, 2009).

Historical events in Latin America, be they further in the past or more recent, either provide the backdrop of many films discussed in the collection or else are repeatedly referenced. For instance, the immigration of Jews to Argentina in the late 19th century or the 20th-century activities of the mothers searching for their children who fell victims to dictatorships are invoked in several Latin American films dealing with Jewish themes or featuring Jewish characters. Questions of belonging and of how to remember and integrate one's own roots and heritage into one's life also frequently arise in the readings of the films presented in the book. The negotiation of how to observe (sometimes hybrid) religious traditions is another theme frequently considered, for instance in documentaries from Peru and Cuba respectively, which Ariana Huberman explores in the section on diasporas and displacement. Interpretations of coming-of-age narratives are found in the "New Themes" section. They address issues of growing up Jewish in Latin America and of generational conflicts. Alejandro Meter, writing on the film *The Year my Parents Went on Vacation* (Cao Hamburger, 2006), additionally reflects on the importance soccer can play in identity formation.

The section headings correspond overall to the themes examined in the respective papers, providing an effective overview of what to expect in this volume.

When I first opened the book, I wondered whether the five categories would turn out to be somewhat perfunctory, as I expected themes to overlap. Yet each contribution fitted in well with the heading under which it appeared. The editors are to be commended for creating a structure that gives insight into specific aspects of Jewish lives and how these are visually depicted in Latin American countries. The largest portion of the films discussed emanate from Argentina, Mexico and Brazil, in line with the proportions of Jewish communities in these countries, but the book also includes analyses of films from Peru, Chile, Cuba, and Uruguay. One chapter includes a film made in Spain (starring, however, two Argentinian actors and co-financed by the Argentinian government), while the comparative last section engages also with North American films. The contributions have a good length, usually discussing one to three films. All are written in an accessible style that makes them a pleasure to read.

Evolving Images is essential reading for anyone seeking to gain insight into Jewish filmmaking in Latin American countries. Those studying or wishing to learn more about how Jewish motives and themes are treated in Latin American film and cinema will find this edited anthology highly informative and engaging. Everyone interested in the depiction of religion, heritage and/or cultural identities on film might also be interested in the collection. It provides a useful tool to help analyze Jewish-themed Latin American films that will come out in the future. In addition, it could possibly offer insight into other films with a Jewish undercurrent or connection from Latin America that have not found entry in the book but might also deserve a closer look. Lastly, this collection is a relevant addition for everyone interested in Latin American cinema studies.

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Hosey, Sara. *Home Is Where the Hurt Is: Media Depictions of Wives and Mothers.* McFarland Press, 2019.

In her new book, *Home is Where the Hurt Is,* Sara Hosey places the spotlight on the often-overlooked figure of the mother in contemporary U.S. film and television. Borrowing from numerous texts across time and genre, Hosey provides a comprehensive analysis of how feminist discourses have impacted the evolution of

the mother in popular culture. While placing each media text in its own sociocultural context, Hosey argues that U.S. media culture constantly strives to negotiate feminist ideals while still trying to hold on to the "traditional, nuclear family" (43). This book is an engaging critical analysis that should be of interest to feminist media scholars engaging with concepts of post-feminism and motherhood. Readers may especially appreciate Hosey's dedication to a nuanced critique of each text, always recognizing where depictions of women and motherhood both succeed and fail at being politically enlightened.

Home Is Where the Hurt Is consists of two parts and nine chapters, each centering on different themes in the portrayals of mothers and the domestic. The first part, "Hurt," largely looks at transitional texts where the characters, like the texts, similarly struggle to balance the changing demands of modern motherhood. Chapter 1, for example, primarily focuses on horror texts where the home is made into a literal house of horrors. These allegorical texts, Hosey argues, illustrate how the home can be a place of isolation and harm, as mothers struggle to balance the demands of public life with their roles as mothers.

Chapter 2 continues the discussion of conflicting roles through an analysis of single mothers on television. Exemplified by the sitcom *Gilmore Girls* (2000-2007), Hosey argues that single mothers are often portrayed as young, lively, and attractive while their teenage daughters are more mature, leading to the archetypes of the "girly mom" and "worldly girl" (38). These two archetypes suggest a blurring of the roles of daughters and mothers, where young girls are encouraged to act older, and older women younger. Hosey, however, notes that the girly mom is often still dependent on the support of her own father, assuring the importance of the patriarchal figure even in a single-mother household.

Chapter three features an exploration of the young adult series *Twilight* and *The Hunger Games.* The main heroines of these series begin their narratives rejecting their mothers and the idea of traditional motherhood, yet their stories both end with the women as married mothers of their own. The figure of the mother is simultaneously devalued and yet seen as a woman's inevitable role. In Chapter 4 Hosey tackles narratives of toxicity and social justice, only to discover that mothers are similarly devalued in the media examined. In films such as *Safe* (Todd Haynes, 1995) and *Consumed* (Daryl Wein, 2015), mothers are silenced and ignored in their fights for social change. Despite the women's struggles, Hosey notes that the films often praise the mother's actions when they are justified by their dedication to the

family. Mothers are righteous to stand up for themselves — but only when they do so for the sake of their children.

A mother's dedication to her children becomes an even more prominent theme in discussions of domestic violence in Chapter 5. The films *Enough* (Michael Apted, 2002) and *Waitress* (Adrienne Shelley, 2007), Hosey argues, suggest that women in domestic abuse situations are expected to endure a certain threshold of abuse before they can appropriately fight back; namely, when their refusal to submit is predicated on the protection of a child. Hosey further points out that these films represent an individualistic take on fighting domestic violence, implying that it is a woman's responsibility to fight back on her own. However, these narratives of domestic violence have been challenged in later films and television shows, as focused on in Chapter 6. The films *Personal Velocity* (Rebecca Miller, 2002) and *Madea's Family Reunion* (Tyler Perry, 2006), and the TV series *Big Little Lies* (2017-) all illustrate more complex experiences of domestic violence and center the possibilities of female community and support.

Hosey's analysis of more hopeful portrayals of domestic violence in Chapter 6 operates as the bridging point to the second part of the book, "Hope." Here, Hosey highlights more positive portrayals of mothers, mostly from independent films and TV shows produced through streaming services. As Hosey notes in one of the later chapters, this is not a coincidence. With a wider availability of media that is not dependent on ad revenue, independent film studios and streaming services can take greater risks and create more diverse stories with more diverse directors and writers. For example, Chapter 7 focuses on independent films, including *Tiny Furniture* (Lena Dunham, 2010) and *Obvious Child* (Gillian Robespierre, 2014), which both star and are written by young women. In these narratives, the young women come of age while struggling with their desire to be with their mother and living up to her expectations.

Chapters 8 and 9 focus even more so on questions of the "traditional family." In her analyses of *Tully* (Jason Reitman, 2018) and *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017-), Hosey grapples with how these stories both acknowledge the necessity of non-traditional family structures while still upholding some patriarchal values. For example, she engages with critiques of *The Handmaid's Tale* as in many ways privileging biological relationships and heterosexual families. However, she also points out the significance of the show's side plot involving a type of "found-family" in Canada. In the series, June (the main character)'s husband, best friend, and one of their roommates work together to raise June's baby, despite neither of

them being biologically related to the young girl. Despite the show's dystopian narrative, this makeshift family revolving around baby Nicole can provide viewers with a sense of hope, both within the show and in depictions of parenthood across media.

In the last chapter, Hosey continues her discussion of hopeful depictions of non-traditional families in *Orange is the New Black* (2013-2019) and *Transparent* (2014-2019). In both shows, trans women struggle with balancing their roles as fathers in the past with becoming mothers in the present. Hosey argues for the value of these shows, as they not only make the narratives of trans parents visible, but also illustrate how parenting roles often change over time. As Hosey does with all her examples, she engages with feminist critiques of these shows, while still holding on to moments of liberating potential.

Overall, *Home Is Where the Hurt Is* showcases a broad yet nuanced take on how portrayals of motherhood and the domestic have changed over the last few decades in U.S. popular culture. Hosey's work, like many valuable texts in popular culture studies, reminds us of the back-and-forth relationship between public culture and media texts as always in conversation. She ends her book on a hopeful note, using a discussion of *Jane the Virgin* (2014-2019) to reiterate the progress that has been made in depictions of women and mothers. However, she also importantly reminds us that even when media representations fall short, seeing our struggles on screen can make us feel a little less alone.

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Lobato, Ramon. *Netflix Nations: The Geography of Digital Distribution.* New York University Press, 2019.

As a regular user of Netflix, going back to its pre-streaming days as a DVD rental-by-mail service, I do not think too much about how the platform works. After a long day of teaching, I come home, turn on the television, log into Netflix, and watch away. That is the experience of millions of Netflix users, along with users of other streaming services, worldwide. However, what goes on behind the scenes when the user hits play? That is the task Ramon Lobato, Senior Research Fellow in Media and Communication at RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia, explores in *Netflix Nations: The Geography of Digital Distribution*.

The book is anchored by an event in January 2016, the annual Consumer Electronics Show, held in Las Vegas. Netflix CEO Reed Hastings took to the stage to announce that Netflix, previously confined primarily to a few Western countries, was now a global television service, being "switched on" in 130 new countries, including India, Vietnam, Russia, Poland, Singapore, and more. As Lobato unpacks, such a "switch on" is not so simple. While theoretically Netflix, being a digital service, could be the same worldwide, the global switch-on has nevertheless proven to be anything but easy, seamless, or neat.

Lobato grounds his work in a long tradition of television studies, specifically scholars and media theorists who study how television (including satellite television) stations have attempted to expand beyond one country's borders into another. Transnational and global television distribution is not new; while not the perfect analog to Netflix (in some ways it is like television; in other ways it is very different), this research connects Lobato's findings to something bigger. This book is not just a study of Netflix; such intense focus on one streaming service, to the exclusion of dozens of others, could be seen as shortsighted. Instead, Netflix's version of global television is one iteration in a long line of global television systems, an iteration that has enough specifics and differences from other television systems to justify such a deep focus as Lobato provides.

As an American, I have little to no understanding of how Netflix works in other countries: why would I need to know that? It turns out that my perspective was quite naïve. The strongest parts of Lobato's book are when he discusses how Netflix operates in other countries, with case studies on India, Japan, China, Europe, Canada, and Lobato's home country of Australia. In some parts of the world, the America-heavy catalog of cinema and television offered by Netflix is appealing to local users; in other parts, local content is in high demand. Some countries regulate how much local content streaming services must carry; others take a more laisse-faire approach. In some countries, users accessed Netflix years before the global switch-on using VPNs and proxy services, which allowed users to bypass technical restrictions to get access to American or European Netflix catalogs, despite not living in those countries. Netflix has proven quite popular in some countries. Yet in many examples, Netflix arrived late to the streaming party in those countries: countries like China, India, Japan, and others already had robust streaming services, featuring a wealth of local content, which makes for an uphill climb for Netflix to establish a foothold with audiences.

Some of the most interesting discussions in the book, which unfortunately take up very little space, concern content differences around the world. Netflix is not the same everywhere. While the streaming giant has invested billions of dollars in recent years to create movies, television shows, documentaries, comedy specials, and more, most of this content is targeted toward American audiences, which does not always appeal to international users. Netflix is starting to correct this, realizing that audiences want to see shows in their own language, with actors they recognize. Time will tell whether Netflix has the stamina — and the cash reserves — to build up original local content in other countries the same way it has in America. Lobato briefly touches on censorship and how Netflix operates in a regulatory gray area in many places, skirting censorship laws by which traditional television must abide. However, as these countries build up their own regulatory systems, it is likely that Netflix will soon come into conflict with such systems as local regulators seek to shape how an American company operates within their borders.

Lobato's scholarship is guided by two questions: "How are global streaming services changing the spatial dynamics of global television distribution, and what theories and concepts do scholars need to make sense of these changes?" (4). Lobato succeeds in answering these questions as they relate to Netflix. However, more scholarship is needed to understand the vast array of streaming services, not only those currently on the market, but those yet to come that are unimaginable to us today. Lobato's research guides readers' thinking on digital streaming services and lays an effective theoretical foundation that can be used by others to study such services, from Hulu to Amazon Prime to the myriad services operating in other countries.

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Lucia, Cynthia and Rahul Hamid, eds. Cineaste *on Film Criticism, Programming, and Preservation in the New Millennium*. University of Texas Press, 2017.

Launched in 1967, the long-running film journal *Cineaste* (originally *Cinéaste*) sought from the start to provide readers with smart, accessible writing about the art and politics of cinema. With each issue, *Cineaste*, currently one of the oldest

quarterly film publications in the United States, brings readers intelligent and engaging articles regarding all aspects of cinema, including such topics as film criticism, repertory programming, and archival preservation. More importantly, perhaps, these articles remain refreshingly free of what *Cineaste* editors Cynthia Lucia and Rahul Hamid refer to as the "esoteric, jargon-laden language of 1970s French-influenced structuralist film theory" (10). Therefore, the journal's offerings appeal to a wide range of readers, from harried grad students toiling away in doctoral programs to cinephiles who possess a deep knowledge of cinema history but no formal academic training. As Lucia and Hamid state in the introduction to their edited collection Cineaste *on Film Criticism, Programming, and Preservation in the New Millennium*, the journal's editors believe that film criticism should be "well written, with ideas — no matter how complex the level of argumentation or analysis — made accessible to readers who should find *pleasure* in reading" (3, emphasis in original).

This dedication to bringing thoughtful film writing to a variety of readers proves increasingly important during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, as cinema undergoes seismic changes at every level, from production to distribution to exhibition. Indeed, many of these changes feel like upheavals thanks to the introduction of new digital technologies and distribution platforms that leave scholars, critics, and amateur film fanatics pondering the very nature of the medium, as well as its future. This collection, which brings together six symposia and five interviews originally published in the pages of *Cineaste* between 2000 and 2011, interrogates many of the issues that arise from these changes, offering valuable insights into the various challenges and opportunities facing film criticism, programming, and preservation in the early years of the digital age. The book's focus makes it perfect for use in an Introduction to Film classroom or a seminar on archiving, but the clear, comprehensible prose and engaging subject matter mean that the collection will also appeal to anyone interested in film and film culture, no matter their level of education.

Split into three sections, each with a different focus, the book gathers together several symposia that feature introspective musings from prominent film critics, programmers, and archivists, along with a handful of interviews with significant figures in each field. The book's first and most substantial section centers on a discussion of the evolution and ongoing necessity of film criticism in the era of the internet. This section, titled "Film Criticism in the New Millennium," gathers four symposia and two interviews that collect the thoughts of film critics from around

the world, primarily functioning as a meditation on both film criticism and culture in various national, cultural, and technological contexts. Across the three symposia *Cineaste* editors posed questions such as “What does being a film critic mean to you?” and “How do you assess (or combat) the perceived globalization of the film industry?” to several leading critics, including David Ansen, J. Hoberman, Meenakshi Shedde, Tahar Chikhaoui, Karina Longworth, Richard Schickel, Roger Ebert, and more. Their responses highlight numerous issues facing film criticism in the digital age, including the distinction between reviewing and criticism, nostalgia for the film culture of the 1960s, the dominance of male voices, and readers’ newfound ability to speak back to the critics and their opinions.

This section also illustrates the enduring importance of writers such as Serge Daney and Robert Warshow to film criticism while uncovering several issues that have arisen to alter the field in recent years. The first symposia, which considers film criticism in the United States (and takes up the bulk of this section), ends with a characteristically grumpy essay from noted contrarian Armond White, who sidesteps the editors’ questions in favor of grousing about what he considers the sorry state of cinema at the turn of the millennium. Yet White also offers a thoughtful discussion of the effect of capitalism on film criticism, noting that in the early years of the twenty-first century especially, “To be a mainstream journalist has come to mean one’s complicity with this [Hollywood] system rather than a detached view of it” (89). Ultimately, this first section grapples with the meaning and nature of film criticism in the new millennium but also demonstrates how the field of film criticism often favors the voices of men (an issue acknowledged by the editors), as it includes essays from just a handful of women; in addition to Longworth and Shedde, the symposia on film criticism also contain essays from Manohla Dargis, Stephanie Zacharik, Farran Smith Nehme, but few others. The section also demonstrates the primacy of US critics, as the symposium titled “Film Criticism in America Today” runs 74 pages while the other three symposia combined run just 127 pages.

Despite all that, the symposium on international film criticism provides some meaningful discussion surrounding issues of colonialism, particularly in the response of Japanese film critic Tadao Sato, who notes that “American films crowd out others, and the values and the world views promulgated by Hollywood have been invading the world” (125). Meanwhile the symposia devoted to film criticism in the age of the internet offer vital insights into how advanced communication technologies and new media (such as blogs and social networking sites) have

impacted the delivery and consumption of film criticism and reviews. Though somewhat slighter than the section on film criticism, the sections that collect symposia and interviews looking at programming and preservation still contain valuable considerations on how new digital technologies have changed the distribution, exhibition, and archiving of film, as well as on the challenges now facing those involved in each field. For instance, according to Margaret Bodde, executive director of the nonprofit Film Foundation, archivists deal with issues related to funding, the preservation of born digital texts, and questions of access and availability, all of which existed before the advent of the internet but have nevertheless grown more complicated due to the influence of digital technologies.

In addition to the symposia, the book also features lively interviews with Pauline Kael, John Bloom (the man behind the Joe Bob Briggs persona), Peter Von Bagh, Mark Cousins, and George Feltenstein, who all offer valuable insider perspectives on each field. Overall, the book highlights the importance of materiality in a digital age, with most respondents stressing the importance of physical film, while balancing hopeful optimism for the future of cinema with a somewhat grim acceptance of the ways that new digital technologies have changed both the medium and the industry. Along the way the collection provides a fascinating look into how film criticism, programming, preservation, and cinema itself have evolved to meet the changes wrought by the rise of the internet during the early years of the twenty-first century. Therefore, Cineaste *on Film Criticism, Programming, and Preservation in the New Millennium* should be of interest to scholars, students, and anyone seriously interested in film.

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Mangaoang, Áine. *Dangerous Mediations: Pop Music in a Philippine Prison Video*. Bloomsbury, 2019.

Virginia Woolf has said "[s]tyle is a very simple matter; it is all rhythm" (Woolf). Rhythm includes movements marked by a regulated chronology of opposing or different conditions (The Shorter Oxford Dictionary). The *Dangerous Mediations: Pop Music in a Philippine Prison Video* title reflects the "problematic, precarious and potentially perilous nature of today's media culture's 'YouTube-ificaton'

(Vernallis 2013: 14)" (Mangaoang 2). Author Áine Mangaoang embraces Woolf's remarks on style with a comprehensive flair and a compelling sense of movement.

Dangerous Mediations manifests both style and rhythm as Mangaoang (a musicologist by training) unites the music of language with the music of popular culture to produce a movement marked by opposing conditions (individual-society, freedom-constraint, and participation-subjugation, among others) in a compelling and reflective media text. The work embraces the musicality of what are dominant and complex political and cultural movements represented by a multifaceted interplay of expression through musical and digital platforms, systems of incarceration, and those incarcerated — all while grounded in the context of traditional Philippine history and an increasingly digital present.

The work, part of the "New Approaches to Sound, Music, and Media" series, explores the meaning of the Dancing Inmates' *Thriller* video, initially recorded in 2007 at the Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Centre (the "CPDRC") under the direction of then prison warden Byron F. Garcia, to both those involved in its creation (the Filipino Dancing Inmates, prisoners housed at CPDRC) as well as the millions involved in its viewing. The work explores the message and meaning reflected in the rhythm and viral transmission of video itself, as well as the impact and implications of the video (both as a matter of practice and theory) within and without the prison system.

Woolf has also written that "[n]othing has really happened until it has been described" and recorded (Nicolson 2). In *Dangerous Mediations*, Mangaoang describes and documents, with care and reflexivity, to memorialize and humanize the Dancing Inmates' *Thriller* video both as recorded and lived. The text is dedicated "[t]o the dancers — past and present — of the Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Centre," but speaks to a wide audience that includes populations united through digital platforms, technology, and shared interests in musicality, human rights, history, colonialism, and/or freedom or the lack thereof. In sum, the work speaks (practically and musically) to all.

The text merges, in rhythmic form, existing scholarship on popular music and the music video with emerging scholarship on digital era practices in general and YouTube specifically. The work focuses on the interactions of music, media, and power with an aim described as two-fold: to add recognition and understanding of the complexities of YouTube (as both a site of commercial enterprise and cultural citizenship) and of those described and/or defined as prisoners. The text explores these dual aims through the lens of a CPDRC-based ethnographic case study, yet

its impact extends broadly to marginalized and controlled populations of all varieties. Its themes (musical mediations of power and subversion; prison, subjectivity, and spectacular entertainment; and music and mediation in postcolonial Philippines) extend broadly, as well. The text is itself a movement and a labor of love (with research spanning more than a decade). The work is structured as seven interludes, each with an accompanying chapter. Each interlude serves as a prelude to the narrative and the research presented in the accompanying chapter.

Through rhythm, research, and recordings, the work raises a curtain on potentially dangerous dynamics inherent in digital streaming platforms and highlights the "significance of historical contexts, ideologies and power relations often not visible at first glance; but without which such mediations would be impossible" (2). What might otherwise present as a "seemingly innocuous" YouTube video — one of the billions watched on a daily basis, ("37 Mindblowing YouTube facts") — is revealed as a complex system representing "a myriad of questions regarding pop music entertainment, postcolonialism, government policy and prisoner agency" (Mangaoang 2). The complexity and possible subversion extend to and include those constituted as subjects (for example, inmates who are "compelled" to dance in a prison yard) as well as YouTube audiences who spend hundreds of hours scrolling and clicking through the millions of uploaded videos (6).

Music is widely accepted as a powerful, often bonding, form of communication which can "yield cross-cultural emotional" connections (Higgins 118). At the same time, Mangaoang appreciates and acknowledges music's long-established role "in places of conflict and its use as a powerful weapon" (3). While the text explores music's function in society and culture and its associated possibility for danger, the inherent power of music — "not simply a source for power, but power in and of itself" (5) — is "powerfully" communicated. Power, distinct from music, is a persistent theme.

Dewey writes persuasively on the importance of awareness on teaching and education. Mangaoang's work is an instrument that raises awareness and prompts reflection on both the consumption and production of music. Dewey describes people who have been disconnected from communal, social, and political bonds as "lost individuals" (Mason 75); The Dancing Inmates (and incarcerated populations more broadly) arguably fit this category and this case study promotes greater awareness of this often overlooked and disconnected population. Mason writes "that Dewey's conception of the lost individual and his proposed solutions for

reconstruction can help both schooling and society address problems of depoliticization and individualization" (76). *Dangerous Mediations* works similarly, largely through its effort to raise awareness in the manner Dewey has argued.

In sum, the work promotes reflection on an ancient question of the relationship between the individual and society and whether we can (or should) separate and distinguish individuals from the associated sociocultural and structural issues of which they are a part (see Fuhrman and Bailey). It is well established that the relationship "between individual and society" is "very close" (Hossain and Ali 130). Mangaoang educates readers at both individual and societal levels by uniting the abstract and the sensory as conveyed through digital music platforms, often in viral form. Furhman and Bailey explore limitations associated with traditional approaches to an examination of individual-society relationships in that they "do not contain a rich enough sense of the relationship between the individual, society, and nature" (2). Mangaoang furthers this inquiry in timely and current ways.

Closing, aptly, with a focus on "a crossroads" at the intersection of music and digital technologies that shift "the mobility of what can be considered presence, and what might be the present" (181), *Dangerous Mediations* inspires further inquiry on power and power structures. Despite increasing access to technology, digital media, and music, freedoms (and access of self) remain significantly limited. The prisoners of CPDRC represent the complex dichotomy of presence and the present, mobility and constraint, speech and silence, control and freedom of expression. *Dangerous Mediations* highlights how a population can be both part of the public conscience, often in pervasive ways, and simultaneously a silenced segment of society. Mangaoang's rhythm is one of reflection and encouragement. The work invites readers to consume, listen, and engage with music, digital platforms, and participating parties with more critical inquiry and analysis to include cases inspired by, but transcending beyond, the CPDRC's Dancing Inmates.

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Mizejewski, Linda and Victoria Sturtevant, eds. *Hysterical! Women in American Comedy*. University of Texas Press, 2017.

The portrayal of the woman in modern Western culture is becoming a hotly sought-after field of research within the humanities. With much research focusing on these portrayals in literature and film, the concept of the woman in the American sitcom is one which, until recently, evoked little scholarly research. Seeking to fill this void, the edited collection *Hysterical! Women in American Comedy* examines the influence of various comediennes on the U.S. comedic scene, often considering the work of these women in fictional comedies and as hosts and stand-up comediennes in their own right.

With each author exploring the work of a different comedienne, the chapters in this collection link together, as the work of the following woman is often inspired from that of the woman examined in the previous chapter. All chapters consider the role of the female anatomy in invoking comedy, revealing that the comedic elements shared by women from Lucille Ball to Ellen Degeneres often stem from the female body, filling a gap in the comedic market that men would simply be unable to emulate. The notions of women as "shape-shifters" and women in drag feature heavily throughout the collection, suggesting that, for women to succeed on

the comedy circuit, they have to be able to perform as "traditional" women, non-traditional women, and, in some cases, men (Leonard 198). Playing on the dual meaning of the word "hysterical," the authors of this collection explore the way women throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have turned men's view of the female anatomy on its head: reclaiming the term "female hysteria" to reflect their comedic abilities, rather than any alleged pitfalls of life in the female body.

Experienced in the field of popular culture studies writing, co-editor Linda Mizejewski has previously produced works titled *Pretty/Funny: Women Comedians and Body Politics* and *Ziegfeld Girl: Image and Icon in Culture and Cinema.* The concept of female body politics in the work of female comedians forms the overarching strand of *Hysterical!*, with this expertise combining well with Victoria Sturtevant's writing for the edited collection, *Hetero: Queering Representations of Straightness* (ed. Griffin). Together, Mizejewski and Sturtevant create a collection which thoroughly explores aspects of the body, gender, and sexuality in American women's comedy, shedding light on the fact that, to appear funny to men, women often find themselves making fun of their own bodies and sexual experiences in a way most male comics do not.

As mentioned, the essays in this collection cover the works of a range of American female comics from wartime to the present day. Though the range of media studied varies between comics and — more notably — between eras, one thing remains consistent throughout the analyses: the study of how the female body is used to address common societal perceptions of femininity in a humorous and satirical way. From Fay Tincher's typically masculine and domineering frame serving to subvert pre-war and 1920s gender norms (Rapf 69) to Lena Dunham's willingness to expose her naked figure on screen for comedic purposes (Sulimma 379), it is clear that women in America are and always have been capable of gaining recognition for their work largely when their body is exploited for entertainment purposes. Lori Landay's examination of the works of Lucille Ball and Rebecca Wanzo's exploration of comedic devices used by Whoopi Goldberg demonstrate that it is not merely the exposing of the body itself that these women use to gain credit in a comedy circuit dominated largely by men, but also the concealing of the body. Landay notes that much of Lucille Ball's charm derives from her wearing of disguises for mischievous ends, and her performance of "half clown, half character" (137; 152). Wanzo takes a more racialized perspective when examining Goldberg's feminine comedy, focusing on her use of drag in the racialization of gender identity

— two concepts which I had not previously connected in considerations of drag and gender performativity (254).

While the collection studies a satisfying variety of female comedians across several American decades — covering a range of ethnicities and sexualities — the detours into drama that the essays often take are jarring and stray from the expectations provided by the title and introduction. Though the background of these comediennes is undoubtedly valuable in providing an explanation for how they came to develop their comedic styles, lengthy explanations such as that of Fanny Brice's struggles on the dramatic market (Wagner 112-8) seem somewhat unnecessary, with sections such as this perhaps benefitting from being shortened in favor of further analysis of the derivation of her comedy and links to the concept of "hysteria" that the title of the collection would seem to suggest.

This said, *Hysterical!* remains coherent throughout; the chapters link together by comedic style, and the organization often reveals how the work of one comedian influenced or relates to that of another. For instance, Landay's examination of the works of Lucille Ball precedes Mizejewski's chapter on Carol Burnett, both of which consider the use of the home and domesticity in the comedic works of these women. Furthermore, the repeated themes of the body, women in drag, and the "unruly woman" (Mizejewski and Sturtevant 16-7) serve to highlight societal expectations of the American woman throughout the ages, while demonstrating the ways women have sought to reclaim these expectations, satirizing them and using them to gain acknowledgement on the comedy circuit and within the wider media. In conclusion, *Hysterical!* is a thorough collection of essays on the works of women in American comedy, focusing on themes relating to the body, sexuality, and expectations of women in society. While not touching as much on the use of "hysteria" as the title may indicate, the collection does an effective job of covering female comics from across the age, race, and sexuality spectrums, ultimately demonstrating that regardless of their place across these spectrums, female comics have a universal experience with male expectations of their bodies and use this to unite other women through humor based on these shared experiences.

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Seelow, David D., ed. *Lessons Drawn: Essays on the Pedagogy of Comics and Graphic Novels*. McFarland Press, 2019.

As comics studies becomes more prominent in higher education, a common barrier that scholars are encountering is building a "comics canon" in the curriculum while pushing beyond the foundational "big three" texts: *Understanding Comics*, *Maus*, and *Persepolis*. Although these texts are integral to understanding the comics medium and its effectiveness in remediating stories, their dominance often leaves comics curricula feeling stagnant. *Lessons Drawn: Essays on the Pedagogy of Comics and Graphic Novels* not only acknowledges this issue but provides examples and templates on how to work through it. This book features seventeen essays authored by multidisciplinary comics scholars who have dedicated their academic and personal investments to the comics medium. The value that comes from their experience is immeasurable and *Lessons Drawn* successfully demonstrates this, proving the need for continued inquiry into the place of comics within the classroom.

This collection of essays celebrates the journey that comics have taken in the classroom while also acknowledging the hurdles that they have yet to overcome. *Lessons Drawn* is an insightful read on incorporating comics in the classroom and moving beyond treating them as a (pardon the pun) graphic novel-ty. Chris Murray writes in his chapter that "In the past, comics scholars were smugglers, sneaking bits and pieces of comics teaching into the curriculum wherever we could" (114). Murray, a key player in the discussion of comics in the classroom because he piloted the Masters of Comics curriculum at the University of Dundee, Scotland, faced many challenges when creating a curriculum since little to no comics studies degrees existed as a precedent. *Lessons Drawn* explores this issue and several others, including what editor David Seelow terms the "conundrum of coverage" (86), which refers to the impossibility of covering everything about comics in just one course, just as one cannot talk about all of literature in a single semester.

Lessons Drawn addresses the need to allow comics into the classroom and considers how we can use them to shape our assignments in ways that are inclusive, accessible, and community based. While a class on any subject has the power to incorporate all these elements, Derek McGrath's essay highlights how the fan base of comics and graphic novels can be incorporated to allow students to present their work at conventions, to talk critically with fellow fans on blogs and forums, and to edit fan Wikipedia pages of the texts they are reading. Meanwhile, Seelow writes that "A teaching professor needs to participate in learning with the class and not dispense from on high. Learning is a reciprocal loop [...] a classroom should be active, at times noisy" (6). The essays included in *Lessons Drawn* reveal how incorporating comics in the classroom helps facilitate higher learning by positioning students as participants within a community instead of as quiet recipients of knowledge doled out by their instructor. Seelow also emphasizes how instructors can use misconceptions of comics to help guide students through higher-level and critical thinking. He writes, "the stereotype of comics as facile allows the students subconsciously to venture more effort into their reading and analysis than they would with standard prose" (3). Many of the authors included in *Lessons Drawn* address the issue of the changing landscape of students that includes more first-generation students, urban students, and students who grew up learning English as a second language; they conclude that comics helps make reading comprehension more accessible. Not because reading comics is "easy" but because they are approachable.

Almost all the essays in *Lessons Drawn* explicitly promote the use of comics in the classroom as a means of engaging communities and making education more accessible and student-centered. The authors also seemed to all "borrow" from one another and their predecessors to build a "best practice" canon for engaging these concepts. For example, Jessica Baldanzi borrowed Lynda Barry's attendance-taking technique, which involves students sketching a version of themselves every day to take attendance. This method not only gave students a creative outlet to reflect on themselves, but it also gave the instructor the ability to check in on their feelings based on the emotions portrayed in their self-sketch. Similarly, Chris Reyns-Chikuma discusses using Oubapo exercises to have students replace, reduce, or reverse elements in a comic book to play with the medium. Oubapo-style comics introduce some sort of constraint, such as the art being the same throughout with only the text changing (e.g. the long-running *Dinosaur Comics* published at https://www.qwantz.com/), or a comic that can be read both forward and backward.

These exercises make students more aware of the elements in the medium but can also help them understand concepts such as metonymy and metaphor, which can then be applied to other contexts.

When reading the “about the authors” section, it was overwhelming to see the amount of work that the authors were involved in that would often be overlooked in academia. Many organize comic conventions, academic panels at conventions, open-access comics journals, academic fan blogs, and other similar endeavors that enrich the comics studies field as well as bridge the gap between the ivory tower and those outside of it. The breadth of activities, concepts, and “further reading” offered by the authors of these essays solidifies the idea that comics studies needs to be seen and the experts in the field need to be heard, or else the field will remain dominated by the voices of those in other fields who want to be inclusive but have not investigated all that comics have to offer.

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