

Queer TV Annotated Bibliography

Bateman, Robert Benjamin. "What Do Gay Men Desire? Peering Behind the Queer Eye". *The New Queer Aesthetic on Television: Essays on Recent Programming*. Eds. James R. Kelley and Leslie Stratyner. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006. 9-19.

Robert Bateman interprets the underlying conventional nature of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* by expounding various similar criticisms regarding the show's negligent and, thus, stifling representation of homosexuality. Bateman criticizes *Queer Eye*'s abridged display of homosexuality through purely aesthetic stereotypes, and he derives that within the confined, queer context of the show, "sex, desire, and the bodily needs of gay men drop out of contemporary homosexual representation, leaving only an aesthetic apparatus...an eye" (10). Bateman maintains a compelling voice by succeeding certain criticisms of *Queer Eye* with corrective suggestions: "homosexuality must not be reduced to a mere aesthetic form...but must involve an evaluation of real bodies, real desires, and real sex acts." (12). Although Bateman offers much fervent criticism regarding the stereotypical gay theatrics and alienation of queer in *Queer Eye*, he abruptly loses coherence by contradicting himself with an example of queer alienation as a positive force in saying that, "even as gays make their way into the mainstream, they remain marked as radically other and distinct from their heterosexual counterparts. Highlighting this distinction, moreover, has become an effectual means of winning social acceptance for gays and lesbians." His argument successfully analyzes the problematic representation of sexuality, but fails to acknowledge that the small compromise of commercializing the gay aesthetic could potentially create greater benefits of gay visibility through broadened platforms of discourse.

Bury, Rhiannon. *Cyberspaces of Their Own: Female Fandoms Online*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2005.

Rhiannon Bury's ethnographic investigation of online female fandoms focuses on the analysis of two fansites dedicated to two different shows. The David Duchovny Estrogen Brigade (DDEB) is a women only private member society dedicated to discussing episodes of the popular television show *The X Files*. However, during the course of her study, Bury learns the DDEB's primary mission is not necessarily discussing the show, or David Duchovny, but instead, lies in the cultivation of a women centered community. The second site, Militant Ray K Separatists (MRKS), deals primarily in slash fiction written from the Canadian and US sitcom, *Due South*. Bury's analysis of MRKS displays the vital role of slash fiction within female fandom as she exposes the majority of all slash fictions are written by women. Bury proceeds by interrogating the two groups through theories of performance and articulation by examining the use of grammar and manners. Although this book performs a thorough analysis of these specific fansites, Bury's attempts to explain the importance of these television shows to its audience is clouded in film studies speak. Bury's methodology seems to be rooted more in a literature review utilizing canonical readings in fandom and women's studies than an ethnographic one. Theories from Jenkins, Fisk, Butler and Mulvey stand at the forefront of this analysis which is problematic since the texts are focused around television.

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Conway, Richard J.. "A Trip to the Queer Circus: Reimagined Masculinities in *Will and Grace*". *The New Queer Aesthetic on Television: Essays on Recent Programming*. Eds. James R. Kelley and Leslie Stratyner. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006. 75-84.

Richard Conway performs a close reading of the reimagined masculinities of *Will and Grace* using Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of carnival, *laughter of all the people*, in an attempt to prove the legitimization of homosexual male figures through audience acceptance in a state of suspended reality. Conway argues that the show, "in its hyperreal (anti)state, the audience participates in the carnival and then retreats from it to become "real" again." (75). Homosexual men are deemed acceptable through queered masculinity, or a transforming of masculinity into humor and disempowerment. Conway re-examines traditional masculinities focusing on Will Truman (Eric McCormack) and Jack McFarland (Seth Hayes), the two lead male characters on *Will and Grace*, and analyzing Will as the "straight gay man" and Jack as the "camp gay man." The two forms of "Otherness" are critiqued through the carnival of comedy insisting the ridiculousness and disempowerment of each character traps him from transforming from his role as fool. Conway's analysis is original and thought provoking, but demonstrates a serious flaw in its fundamental argument. Essentially, Conway bases his argument on the (anti)space of situational comedy, "normative masculinity can be reimagined in comedy precisely because this genre exists as a space of the unreal." (83). However, this spacial qualifier is not relegated solely to comedy, and, therefore, slightly weakens Conway's argument.

Cragin, Becca. "Lesbians and Serial TV: *Ellen* Finds Her Inner Adult". *The New Queer Aesthetic on Television: Essays on Recent Programming*. Eds. James R. Kelley and Leslie Stratyner. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006. 193-208.

Becca Cragin addresses the pivotal moment in television history when Ellen Morgan (Ellen DeGenerous) came out, becoming the first lesbian character central to a primetime narrative. Cragin seeks to explore the volatile politics of this television moment, explaining the seeming incongruity between the growing fascination with lesbian chic in the popular media of the eighties and the wide public uproar over the creation of a lesbian sitcom star. Cragin examines *Ellen*'s queer apotheosis and subsequent, albeit paradoxical, cancellation in relation to the trepidation of television producers, as well as the evolving activism of its star. Cragin argues a major component in *Ellen*'s subsequent cancellation largely rests in the conversion of an originally heterosexual narrative into a homosexual one, "just as homosexuality comes from within heterosexuality, Ellen's inner lesbian adult developed out of an earlier heterosexual childhood of sorts." (198). Cragin's article offers a unique insight into, "the struggle over the production of the post-coming-out series... and the parameters that shape gay and lesbian representation on television." (204). Cragin's analysis over the "Ellen debacle" is a foundational look at the emergence of homosexual representation in primetime as it further documents the history of queer representation on television.

Doty, Alexander. *Making Things Perfectly Queer*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

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Alexander Doty performs an etymological overhaul on the term queer and its function in media studies. *Making Things Perfectly Queer* examines the queering of media and mass culture in three specific areas: “(1) influences during the production of texts; (2) historically specific cultural readings and uses of texts by self-identified gays, lesbians, bisexuals, queers; and (3) adopting reception positions that can be considered “queer” in some way, regardless of a person’s declared sexual and gender allegiances.” (xi). Doty argues for the term queer as an inclusive common ground between gays, lesbians, and nonstraights, and insists that queer has always already been an acceptable term for Other, analyzing the term through nostalgic references to Classical Hollywood Cinema. The third chapter, “I Love *Laverne and Shirley*: Lesbian Narratives, Queer Pleasures, and Television Sitcoms,” examines the queer themes underlying sitcoms in which the premise for the narrative rests solely on the relationship between the female leads. His examination of several sitcoms proves the involvement, albeit unknowingly, of hegemonic audiences to consume queer texts. Doty ends his argument demonstrating the vast presence of many things queer in heteronormative mass media, “Queer positions, queer readings, and queer pleasures are part of a reception space that stands simultaneously beside and within that created by heterosexual and straight positions.” *Making Things Perfectly Queer* is a seminal work in queer studies and provides countless examples of queer presence in an otherwise straight world. Alexander Doty is a pioneer in the field of queer and media studies, and this book continues to ignite conversation within the discourses of queer studies and media studies.

Harris, W.C.. “Queer Eye on the Prize: The Stereotypical Sodomites of Summer”. *The New Queer Aesthetic on Television: Essays on Recent Programming*. Eds. James R. Kelley and Leslie Stratyner. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2006. 20-42.

W.C. Harris defends the integrity of *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* by challenging commonly accepted views of the show and commenting that it is more empowering to embrace stereotypes than be ashamed of them. His analysis thwarts various critiques of *Queer Eye* including the claims that the show’s camp humor is comparable to minstrelsy. Harris argues that the men on *Queer Eye* might fit comfortably into stereotypes, but they are individual men nonetheless. He suggests that these vitriolic critiques of stereotypes may come from an underlying sense of homophobia or desire for assimilation. Harris believes that critics advocate assimilationism pointing out, “the unexamined attitudes lurking beneath the surface of this outcry pose a more insidious and significant threat to the attainment of equity and the integrity of queer identity.” (35). Harris’ analysis of criticism surrounding the show is thought provoking in its attempt to challenge representations within the world of queer studies, especially those held by academics.

Highleyman, Liz. "Milestones for Queers on Television." *Lesbian News* 33.1 (Aug. 2007): 20-24. Academic Search Complete. EBSCO. 29 July 2009
<<http://ezproxy.gsu.edu:2048/login?url=http://ezproxy.gsu.edu:4518/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=26113120&site=ehost-live>>.

The small screen has been a hostile environment for homosexuality in any form. Liz Highleyman tracks the progress of LGBT portrayal on network and cable television,

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the latter providing more variety and breakthrough. From the early days of television where homosexuality was absent to the first appearances of gay men, some of which lost their job for appearing on television and admitting they were homosexual. As shows began to adapt the representations were still two-dimensional as LGBT characters often did not have the same character and plot development as their heterosexual counterparts. Highleyman says ratings, advertising and threats of boycotts both helped and hindered the LGBT on TV movement. While the Stonewall Riots helped the LGBT movement, the Christian movement was also gaining momentum and able to put more pressure on television executives. Decades separate milestones with notable homosexual characters coming in spurts even in the early and late 1990s. Highleyman sees growth for LGBT acceptance on TV, but not necessarily on the major networks. She says cable television has embraced LGBT roles more so than primetime networks. She cites Showtime's *Queer as Folk* and *The L Word*, as well as OutTV, a cable network dedicated to LGBT programming. Highleyman's analysis of queer programming is an insightful, but cherry-picked, historiography of the milestones in queer television.

Latham, Rob. "Sextrapolation in New Wave Science Fiction." *Science Fiction Studies* 33.2 (July 2006): 251-74. MLA International Bibliography. EBSCO. 12 February 2008. <<http://galileo.usg.edu>>

In this historical overview of sexuality in science-fiction genre in the United States and Britain, Latham explores how new wave science fiction differs from the beginning of the genre as popular fiction. He counters the idea of new wave rupture from previous science fiction and instead shows the gradual migration of science fiction first towards and then away from the puritanical editors of science-fiction digests. With a liberal use of literary examples dating from the 1940s, Latham explains the ongoing battle among writers, editors and readers that characterized the genre. While some writers "[had] been taboo ridden too long and seem[ed] incapable of accepting sex and bodily functions as a normal part of life," others "refused to self-sensor and were subjected to the merciless pruning of editorial blue pencils" (252). He then explains how the move to paperback novels and trail blazing editors like Phillip Farmer and Michael Moorcock were able to break through the taboos and revitalize the genre to reflect the current social and political climates of sexual liberation. Finally, he explores how the genre moved through taboo to burlesque and pornography, then was reigned in by feminist science-fiction writers and theorists like Ursula K. Le Guin. Despite being shrouded in literature studies, Latham shows a possible analog between the struggles of sexuality in science-fiction literature in the 60s and 70s and the overt shift of sexual depictions in British science-fiction television today suggesting the sexual televisual style typically associated with science fiction programming is deeply rooted in the genre's history.

LeBesco, Kathleen. "Got to Be Real: Mediating Gayness on Survivor." *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2004. 271-287.

Kathleen LeBesco's analysis of the first three seasons of *Survivor* demonstrates, "Gay characters, at least men, are no longer facing the issues of outright media invisibility that used to plague them." (271). Her article analyzes three queer contestants from the show, two openly gay and two read as gay, applauding reality TV for producing gay

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characters who extend beyond the “safe-gay of *The Real World*” (271). However, reality TV’s enthusiasm to produce quantity has left a longing for “quality” which LeBesco feels the need to pursue boasting, “Nevertheless, these divergent representations warrant analysis for quality, which can be accomplished by turning to the text of the show itself (*Survivor*) and the responses of its viewers.” (272). The remainder of her article focuses on characters from the first three seasons: (1) Richard Hatch – remarkably read for his personality and not his sexuality; (2) Brandon and Mitchell – assumedly closeted by the fans on MightyBigTV.com (MBTV); (3) Quinton – the stereotypical queen whose sexuality was the topic of conversation but not a fault. LeBesco’s incorporation of MBTV message boards to interpret queerness on the show is somewhat problematic in that it seemingly lessens the value she puts on “Quality” gay characters. Her quest for quality stems from the show as a complete text and not from the fan message boards which she relies on to support her claims of “Quality.” Her refusal to acknowledge the lack of lesbian characters on the show is ironic in her quest for “quality” which ultimately results in the exclusion of (lesbian) sexuality.

Lee, Pei-Wen, and Michaela Meyer.. ““We All Have Feelings For Our Girlfriends”:
Progressive (?) Representations of Lesbian Lives on the "The L Word"." *Conference Papers -- International Communication Association (2006 Annual Meeting 2006): 1-28. Communication & Mass Media Complete*. EBSCO. 2 Aug. 2009
<<http://ezproxy.gsu.edu:2048/login?url=http://ezproxy.gsu.edu:4518/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=27204884&site=ehost-live>>.

Pei-Wen Lee and Michaela Meyer argue the character relationships illustrated by Showtime’s *The L Word* reinforce heterosexism and homophobia through an obvious lack of challenging homosexual relationships with heterosexuals. The lesbian representation found on the show, “ultimately supports a hegemonic position in the landscape of television” by refusing to incorporate heterosexual/queer experience. The characters’ submersion into a uniquely all lesbian world is problematic, negating the homosexual experience within the queer world, or vice versa. Using a textual analysis of the first season, Lee and Meyer analyze the main characters of the show, crediting the show’s writers with creating a platform in which to educate heteronormative audiences on the quasi-culture performed and developed in the characters’ worlds, but ultimately, criticizing the show’s perpetuation of, “lesbian as itself limiting.”(19). The isolation displayed through the show’s portrayal of an all lesbian world also, “perpetuates the heteronormative gaze,” (20) as it refuses to challenge the heteronormative binary associated with sexual relationships. While Lee and Meyer offer interesting insight to the show’s diegetic world, their analysis refuses to acknowledge the value of the women centered community as a representation of lesbian culture.

Lynch, John. "Memory and Matthew Shepard: Opposing expressions of public memory in television movies". *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 31:3, (July 2008), 222-238. *CIOS Sage Journals Online*. 1 Aug. 2009.
< <http://ezproxy.gsu.edu:4182/cgi/reprint/31/3/222>>

In this article, John Lynch's focal point is the development of public memory through a "series of iterations or drafts that appear first in television and print journalism and then dramatized television treatments." (222). Lynch explains, " If journalism is the

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first draft of public memory, then television movies are the second draft, and the public memories television movies express are shaped—and constrained—when they follow generic conventions." (222). Lynch argues the made-for-television movies, *The Matthew Shepard Story* and *The Laramie Project* represent two attempts to write the public memory of gays and lesbians. Lynch organizes his argument into three parts about the drafting of public memory: (1) addressing public memory studies and the remembrance of gays and lesbians as "victims and as problems encountered by heterosexuals." (223); (2) examining *The Matthew Shepard Story* as a second drafting of "hegemonic and heteronormative public memory that builds off the first draft found in television news." (223); and (3) examining the *The Laramie Project* as an attempt to break from heteronormative public memory and to write a new memory of gays and lesbians. Lynch's argument illustrates how the conventionality of form and representational content within *The Matthew Shepard Story* drafts a public memory that reaffirms the hegemonic public memory drafted by television journalism. In order to break away from the draft of public memory found in journalistic television, progressive enactments of alternative public memory must avoid "typical generic forms" (235). In *The Laramie Project*, Shepherd's character shows that the film's unconventional form and representation of gays and lesbians strips "away the mythology surrounding heterosexual places thereby problematizing heteronormative attitudes by making them explicit and open to critique." (236). Lynch's textual analysis of these televisual films provides a unique approach to reading and interpreting representations of homosexuality within the heteronormative vehicle of televised journalism.

Maher, Jennifer. "What Do Women Watch? Tuning In to the Compulsory Heterosexuality Channel." *Reality TV: Remaking Television Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2004. 197-213.

Jennifer Maher analyzes the daytime line up on cable network channel TLC using seminal works from Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," and Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*, to illustrate women's attraction to shows like: *A Wedding Story*, *A Dating Story*, and *A Baby Story*. Maher suggests women are drawn to these shows in an attempt to fulfil the promise of compulsory heterosexuality. The success of these shows seems to stem from women's allegiance to the heterosexual myth of, "the nothing-without-a-man ethos," (199) which is, more than not, unfulfilled. Drawing on Radway, Maher begins to unravel the myth stating, "For many women, you don't challenge the compulsory heterosexual system of marriage as state-sponsored monogamy, you find ways to soothe yourself within the system. You pop in *Pretty Woman*, read *The Thorn Birds*, or, now, turn on TLC. Ultimately, Maher concludes through analyzing message boards on TLC's website that women are drawn to the line up of daytime programming to confront the disappointment associated from compulsory heterosexuality, "as she discovers that her real romantic life is not as exciting as the televised narrative, the viewer soothes the pain of the dissimilarity between experience and fantasy by watching another episode that evokes the same romance-fantasy emotions, which of course, serves to sustain the fantasy. And the cycle begins anew." (212). Maher's article is striking in its portrayal of sexuality as performance, ritual, and expectation. I've included this article in this bibliography due to its poignant look at sexuality and gender as performance rituals, a topic which is rooted in queer studies as well as gender studies.

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Pope, Al. "Spongebob Squarepants, PRO-HOMOSEXUAL PROPAGANDIST." *Canadian Dimension* 39.3 (May 2005): 7-7. Academic Search Complete. EBSCO. 25 July 2009. <<http://ezproxy.gsu.edu:2048/login?url=http://ezproxy.gsu.edu:4518/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=17049568&site=ehost-live>>.

In this article, Al Pope argues that Canadians wishing to adopt North American principalities need to look towards the tolerance of SpongeBob Squarepants and not the alleged homosexual undertones. Pope counters James Dobson's, leader of the conservative Christian organization Focus on Family (FOF), argument that SpongeBob and other cartoon characters attempt to convert children to either: (a) become homosexuals or (b) sympathize with homosexuality. The We Are Family Foundation developed a video using popular cartoon characters including SpongeBob to encourage tolerance. Dobson claims the video promotes pro-homosexual thoughts. Pope finds this claim almost laughable as he delves into the history of FOF and its current supporters, including mass murderer David Berkowitz (Son of Sam). Pope suggests instead that Canada citizens viewing the video should take it for what it is – a lesson on tolerance. Pope says while America may still be “in the heart” of others, we still have short comings including literacy and educational gaps. Therefore, while others shout homosexuality, Pope offers a cheer for tolerance in its place.

Sandfort, Theo. “Homosexuality, Psychology, and Gay and Lesbian Studies.” *Lesbian and Gay Studies: An Introductory, Interdisciplinary Approach*. Eds. Sandfort, Theo, et al. London: SAGE, 2000.

In this article, Sandfort gives the reader a historical survey of homosexuality in psychological disciplines. He explains the three roles psychological studies can perform for homosexuals. Positive studies can be helpful for “supporting people in their expression of homosexual desires and in building gay and lesbian identities and lifestyles; counteracting homophobic tendencies and actions; [and] promoting the emancipation of homosexuality” (15). He then covers how the growth of empirical research in the field and explores the existence and origin of homosexuality; anti-homosexual attitudes and attempts to change them; psychological functioning of gay men and women; the process of becoming and being gay and lesbian; and interpersonal relationships including intimate relationships and parenthood. Finally, Sandfort explores the challenges for gay and lesbian psychology and how it has been integrated (both successfully and unsuccessfully) into mainstream psychology. While this article does not have a direct bearing in media studies, it serves as a great source of empirical facts gleaned from queer studies.

Schuyler, Michael T. "Camp for Camp's Sake: Absolutely Fabulous, Self-Consciousness, and the Mae West Debate." *Journal of Film & Video* 56.4 (Winter2004 2004): 3-20. Communication & Mass Media Complete. EBSCO. 1 Aug. 2009 <<http://ezproxy.gsu.edu:2048/login?url=http://ezproxy.gsu.edu:4518/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=17679399&site=ehost-live>>.

In this article, Michael Schuyler re-examines camp and identifies its major forms as iconic, retrospective, and self-conscious. Schuyler argues camp is targeted at the gay male audience, but does so in a way as to not compartmentalize gay men into a singular representational group. His thorough analysis of camp is further analyzed

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through the British sitcom, *Absolutely Fabulous*. Schuyler argues the masculinization of *Absolutely Fabulous* is recognizable through its leading characters. As the show centers around Edina Monsoon (Jennifer Saunders) and Patsy Stone (Joanna Lumley), two very campy divas, Schuyler borrows from Daniel Harris' thoughts on symbolic sex change, "divas actually become gay men, undergoing a strange sort of sex change operation from which they emerged, not as women, but as drag queens, as men in women's clothing." (12). In its use of diva-type leading roles, the masculinization of the characters' names – Eddie and Pats, and focus on real life divas, *Absolutely Fabulous* emerges as a text ripe with gay symbolic references strengthening Schuyler's reconception of camp.

Class Readings

Industry

Johnson, Catherine. "Telebranding in TVIII: The Network as Brand and the Programme as Brand." *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 5:1 (April 2007): 5-24. TAYLOR & FRANCIS.

<<http://www.tandfco.co.uk./journals>>

Kompare, Derek. *Rerun Nation: How Repeats Invented American Television*. New York: Routledge: 2005.

Polan, Dana. "Cable Watching: HBO, The Sopranos, and Discourses of Distinctionl." *Cable Visions: Television Beyond Broadcasting*. Eds. Sarah Banet-Weiser, Cynthia Chris, and Anthony Freitas. New York : New York University Press, 2007. 261-283.

The selections by Dererk Kompare, Dana Polan, and Catherine Johnson assigned during *Industry* week offer specialized insight into television studies, especially television programming and branding. Kompare's book, *Rerun Nation*, offers the most thorough examination of television programming as a leading cultural contributor. The historiography offered by Kompare, beginning with the repetition of studio films and telefilms on early network television and ending with the advent of home video, effectively argues the impact of rerun programming on American culture. Kompare credits his ability and, to a much larger extent the American peoples' ability, to remember and revisit the past through rerun programming legitimized in the seventies. The central argument in this book claims a significant and specialized form of American heritage derived from watching rerun television programming. Rerun programming affects American audiences in ways which seek to unite citizens through a collective knowledge obtained from tuning in to the same programming throughout the years. While Kompare's argument is an intriguing look at American heritage from the second half of the 20th century to present day, the argument that television heritage is unique to Americans (and American culture) is absent from the work. How do reruns translate in other nations? Kompare's work focuses intentionally on American rerun programming, but fails to mention the uniqueness of the heritage he is attempting to capture.

Johnson analyzes HBO's branding efforts through an in-depth study of the network's logo, slogan, and its cultivation of the idea of Quality programming. Her interrogation of TVIII consumption confronts the relationship between television producer and consumer. Johnson compares the HBO logo to nostalgia associated with

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television from the Golden Age of US television – a notion Kompare thoroughly explains as the myth of legitimizing programming from 1950s to critically interpret as Quality. HBO brands itself as “high pop” through significant ties associated with nostalgic, Quality programming while manipulating its audience to perceive the network outside the realm of television – which is typically associated with low culture, hence, the HBO slogan, “It’s not TV, It’s HBO.” The network’s ability to play on, “the bourgeois devaluation of television as a cultural form,” is striking in that it is ironically endorsing seemingly elite, high-brow programming to a mass audience while criticising the medium necessarily needed to sustain its existence and profits. The second half of this article analyzes the branding strategies of HBO’s *The Sopranos* and *Six Feet Under* through the careful play between fantasy and authenticity. Johnson recognizes the success of a show is not found solely in its premise, ie... Tony Soprano as a mob boss, but in the sympathetic relationship between character and viewer, ie... Tony Soprano as father and husband. Show merchandise tends to focus on this relationship as it expands the show’s branding power through the relationship of fantasy and authenticity. Johnson identifies three forms of merchandise: diegetic, pseudo-diegetic, and extra-diegetic. A show’s merchandise reflects the show’s brand as Johnson specifically cites the, “increase need for strong brand identities for televisions programmes in order to provide a coherent identity across the range of media platforms and products that will form the texts of television.” (20). Her analysis of telebranding is an insightful look at the future of television networks and programming as television and new media converge.

Legitimizing television programming is a key theme in all of these readings. Polan interrogates the role of academic writing concerning “Quality” programming in HBO’s *The Sopranos*. She begins by identifying academia’s affinity for texts which deal primarily in message and theme citing critics’ fascination with the auteurs of the “so-called Golden Age of 1950s television, writers such as Paddy Chayefsky, Rod Serling, and Reginald Rose who offered up stirring narratives of little people who fought against the system,” (263) and expands this idea to cover Tony Soprano’s life quandaries through the gleam of his gangster get up. She continues to analyze the perplexities of “Quality” television by comparing the mise en scene of Golden Age dramas and adaptations to *The Sopranos*; ultimately deducing the American standard for Quality programming rests squarely in the ability of the writer to produce an “Everyman” character who, “appealed to the wizened liberal who could watch from a position of superiority but who could also appreciate those moments when the working-class stiff found insight from within the heart of his inarticulateness.” (264). In her ability to analyze and critique the concept of Quality programming, Polan confronts the notion of academic objectivity through her examination of scholarly work specifically relating to HBO as a brand. Ironically, her, albeit thorough, examination of academia’s role in contributing and canonizing HBO programming is in itself contributing to the canonization. Citing Jeffrey Sconce’s notion of replaying specific genres consistently, Polan is galvanizing Kompare’s theory of repetition as cultural contributor and concluding her argument with the notion that components of cultural heritage are found in, “intertextual reference where one show will throw out mentions of culture-at-large to flatter the viewers who catch the reference.” (280)

Reality TV

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Collins, Sue. "Making the Most Out of 15 Minutes: Reality TV's Dispensable Celebrity." *Television New Media*. 9:87 (January 2008): 87-110. SAGE. 10 June 2009. <<http://tvn.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/9/2/87>>

Hill, Annette. *Reality TV: Audiences and Popular Factual Television*. London & New York: Routledge, 2005.

Annette Hill's ethnographic examination on the genre of reality television is a thorough, concise study providing a historiography of reality TV and how it emerged as a legitimate genre worthy of academic study. Hill argues that the deregulation and marketisation of media coupled with networks' desire to produce less expensive shows gave rise to reality TV. As a distinctive genre, reality TV stems from tabloid journalism, popular entertainment, and documentary – a complex blending of genres, which Hill concludes as, "television's ability to cannibalise itself in order to survive in a commercially uncertain media environment." (39). She expands her examination of reality TV as a unique genre by including reception practices associated with reality TV. Focusing on education, entertainment, and ethics, Hill concludes the reality TV audience differs by nation and expectation. Reality TV as a device for learning is appreciated more by UK audiences where Americans are focused more on the genre as entertainment. Her final chapters deal with ethical values placed and enforced by reality TV audiences. Hill argues that reality TV challenges the development of personal ethics by encouraging audiences to adopt and/or question the ethical situations provided by reality TV programming. Through this ethnographic study of reality TV as genre, Hill is attempting to brand the genre as a hopeful and positive form of entertainment in light of the negative criticisms and associations it commonly has with low culture (or non-Quality television programming). Her analysis is effective in placing reality TV as a genre worthy of continued study, but at the risk of seeming overly optimistic, and somewhat biased, of reality TV's prospect of delivering "Quality" programming.

Sue Collins redefines celebrity in the wake of second wave reality television programming as a new form of cultural commodity. Offering a brief historiography of celebrity, Collins introduces the new, reality TV, form of celebrity as, "a new level of celebrity stratification producing novelty that is easily and cheaply produced" (95). She continues to examine the abilities associated with the genre of reality TV to produce the new form of celebrity, ironically, Collins cites many of the same authors Hill uses to valorise, or at least, legitimize reality television. This article, through the mention of reception studies towards the end of the study, is ultimately centered in an industrial re-vamping of celebrity. Collins works through the networks' control over creating and sustaining reality TV celebrity status through carefully considered contracts with contestants, and finishes with her theory of *celebrity place*. The overall look of reality TV celebrity Collins offers is considerably more cynical than Hill's view of reality TV as a new genre. If Hill's argument is predominantly based in an ethnographic look at genre, then Collins' examination of celebrity through the reality TV genre is focused primarily on industry's reconception of celebrity.

Gender

Arthurs, Jane. "Sex and the City and Consumer Culture." *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*. Eds. Charlotte Brundson and Lynn Spigel. Second Edition. Berkshire: McGraw Hill Open University Press, 2008. 41-56.

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Banet-Weiser, Sarah. "Girls Rule!" *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*. Eds. Charlotte Brundson and Lynn Spigel. Second Edition. Berkshire: McGraw Hill Open University Press, 2008. 191-210.

Dow, Betty J. "Ellen, Television, and the Politics of Gay and Lesbian Visibility." *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*. Eds. Charlotte Brundson and Lynn Spigel. Second Edition. Berkshire: McGraw Hill Open University Press, 2008. 93-110.

Lotz, Amanda D. and Sharon Marie Ross. "Bridging Media Specific Approaches" (PDF) Television and the Internet Syllabus, Summer 2009.

Oulette, Michelle. "Take Responsibility for Yourself." *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*. Eds. Charlotte Brundson and Lynn Spigel. Second Edition. Berkshire: McGraw Hill Open University Press, 2008. 139-153.

Smith, Greg M. and Pamela Wilson. "Country Cookin' and Cross-Dressin." *Television New Media* 2004; 5; 175. SAGE.
< <http://tvn.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/5/3/175>>

Springer, Kimberly. "Divas, Evil Black Bitches, and Bitter Black Women." *Feminist Television Criticism: A Reader*. Eds. Charlotte Brundson and Lynn Spigel. Second Edition. Berkshire: McGraw Hill Open University Press, 2008. 72-92.

In "Bridging Media Specific Approaches," Lotz and Ross give an overview of the origin of feminist television studies drawing from Communication Studies, British Cultural Studies, and US Feminist Film Criticism giving an overview of how each of these contributed to the modern (and somewhat homeless) discipline of feminist television studies in the practices of textual analysis. The "theorization of audience members as active meaning makers" (189), and the study of gender stereotypes in mass media and the "connections between content and women's lack of access to positions as creators and owners of media content and industries" (190) combined with feminist television studies' innovations in "institutional analysis of audiences and ownership" (191) to create a powerful synthesis of understanding in the context of culture. Lotz and Ross proceed by making the case that Feminist Film Criticism could also benefit from this synthesis to become a richer, more dynamic and reinvigorated field. Using the example of *Legally Blonde* (Robert Luketic, 2001), they explore the unique questions that the feminist television studies approach could bring. How was the film received? What roles did the director, producers and focus groups have on the adaptation of the script from the book? What does Reese Witherspoon's new celebrity mean for her now as a producer and actress in Hollywood? (194-195)

In "Country Cookin' and Cross-Dressin'" authors Greg Smith and Pamela Wilson take the critical approaches of feminist television studies and explore new sub-sets of identity politics. They use a southern cooking show with public-access roots, *Cookin' Cheap* to interrogate dominant conceptions of a "scientific" or showmanship in "the cooking genre itself, gender roles, social class, and regional culture" (177). Also, they explore how the show breaks the fourth wall to include cast and audience into the show's narrative.

The "frugal-to-the-point-of-excess show produced with broken appliances, low-brow tastes, and a pointed lack of attention to find details of food preparation"

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(176) stands in stark contrast to the Gods of Food traditions of European chefs or more recent showmanship based chefs like Emeril Lagasse or Martin Yan (177). Instead the show goes "back to a feminine, working-class, regional tradition—the everyday cooking practices of rural Southern women" (178). This tradition also challenges popular conceptions of Southern masculinity such as the redneck or the racist "good ole boy." Instead we are presented with the gentle feminized southern man, the "Mamma's Boy" that is apparent in many overlooked Southern figures like Jimmy Carter (189). The authors also explore how Southern culture has become a part of the larger American culture and how taking recipes from viewers and making the crew part of the dialog challenges the dictatorial nature of most television.

In her article, "Take Responsibility For Yourslef," Laurie Ouellette uses the example of *Judge Judy* to examine the codification of neoliberal ideals into an authoritative substitute for Althusser's RSA structure of power that has been dismantled in American government and culture and replaced by a politics of personal responsibility based on the myth that everyone has the same opportunities if only they are smart, wise, determined enough to manage risk and work hard (140). Couched in the authoritative trappings of a courtroom, Judge Judy (Judith (Judy) Sheindlin) dispenses an ideology of personal responsibility (142). Ouellette goes on to explain how neoliberalism as exemplified by Sheindlin's advice-cloaked-as-rulings undermines the advances of Feminism by ignoring its existence. For example, on the issues of nuclear family, a woman who is dependent on her (preferably) husband is foolish and should be more independent with her own career and money, but in the case of an estranged mother and lesbian daughter, the daughter's quest for independence is a betrayal of family (150). In the end, Ouellette shows how women, while free of dependence, are now expected to be radically self-sufficient. Any blame on a man or anyone else for her problems is a "victim mentality" no matter the circumstances (143).

In "*Ellen*, Television, and the Politics of Gay and Lesbian Visibility," Bonnie J. Dow deconstructs the idea that the coming-out episodes of the show and Ellen DeGeneres's coming-out narrative were an indicator of public acceptance of homosexuality, or a complete depiction of the homosexual experience. While power of the personal confessional is very real and powerful (94) its narrative construction here is hamstrung by desexualized Ellen who rejects the political reality of heterosexism and subsumes her experiences in order to allow the heterosexual characters (and audience) be the true narrative. This Foucauldian "ruse of confession" (94) is set up in a way that all the power is given to the recipient. She is at the mercy of others' reactions to her truth because the character is neutered, depoliticized that makes her safe for middle-american heterosexual consumption. She does not demand equality, she just hopes they don't hate her (97). It wouldn't be until years later that homosexual characters escape all of the basic rules of 90s depictions of homosexuality: "no sexual interaction, treating Ellen's revelation as a "problem" to be dealt with by her heterosexual friends and family, and minuscule representation of any sort of lesbian community" (102).

In "Divas, Evil Black Bitches, and Bitter Black Women," Kimberly Springer examines new tropes in a postfeminist and post-civil rights popular culture. Using specific deviations, she shows the consequences suffered by a powerful Black woman who deviates from a modern form of the Mammy, the Black Lady. In order to join the ranks of the middle and upper classes, "black professional women must adhere to the role of the black lady, a role designed to counter accusations of black female licentiousness and one that can accommodate the ascension to

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middle-class status through work outside the home" (78). Springer explores the boundaries of the Black Lady using George W. Bush's Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. By "[d]isavowing affirmative action, claiming success solely based on merit and determinedly asexual, Rice epitomizes the black professional lady at the height of her success." She disconnects her success from the struggles of the civil rights movement saying "with proud defiance, 'I should've gotten to where I am'" (87).

And if a Black woman is not deferential? If she's talented and pushy, she's a diva. Springer uses examples like Diana Ross, Whitney Houston, and Mary J. Blige to show how erratic behavior, extravagant demands, or having a nervous breakdown equates to diva behavior if attributed to a woman of color (78). This is in stark contrast to the recent treatment of Brittany Spears who was called perhaps tragic but not a diva.

If a Black Woman is too ambitious, she then runs the risk of becoming The Evil Black Woman. Springer examines how Reality TV uses this nearly mythical constructed identity to create a double standard for African-American women. "Reality TV shows are not far removed from unsupervised social psychology experiments that create controlled environments using identity as a mere prop" (81). Using the example of an African-American female contestant on *The Apprentice*, Springer reveals "a double standard that paints her and other black women as liars and bitches, but white contestants as smart and shrewd" (82).

Finally, she addresses what happens when a Black woman attempts "to climb higher than one's racially prescribed station, exhibiting characteristics usually lauded in men. [This] results in a violation of the modern mammy and black lady stereotypes." This Bitter Black Woman, at least in films targeted to Black women, inevitably finds herself unhappy and alone. In these films the female protagonist retreats. Either back home to more traditional female roles, or into a no-man's land of sister-friends (86).

These new tropes highlight the continued need for feminist and civil-rights critique. "To bring current Audre Lorde's metaphor, the master's house has not, in fact, been dismantled, but instead has added additional rooms and annexes in which to harbor oppressive variations of racist, sexist, classist, and heterosexist themes" (89).

Focusing on the re-mediation of "the familiar forms of the television sitcom and the glossy woman's magazine" in the HBO dramedy *Sex and the City*, Jane Arthurs explores the cultural influence of the "bourgeois bohemians," a new class fraction that is defined by "their ability to reconcile the contradictions between bourgeois and bohemian values and lifestyles." The leading women of the show embrace the sexual and emancipation of the bohemian movement, but also embrace the materialism of consumer culture (44). This tension continues with the "aesthetized values of consumer culture and its unequal structuring of the 'look.'" The same sort of consumerism and embrace of the pleasures of aesthetics both objectifies their bodies and empowers them (45). By choosing their clothes and shoes carefully as expressions of real moods and personalities, the consumer lifestyle of the women "is presented not as a series of commodities to be bought, but as an integrated lifestyle to be emulated" with the how-to of glossy women's magazines as a field guide (48). In the end, Arthurs applauds the show and its ability to help the audience examine their "own complicity in the process of commodification women's narcissistic relation to the self, the production of fetishistic and alienated sexual relations - that continue to undermine our self-esteem and contentment" (54).

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In "Girls Rule!," Sarah Banet-Weiser explores the television network Nickelodeon's trailblazing efforts over the last two decades in bringing strong girl characters to children's television. First in their "1991 hit, *Clarissa Explains It All*, and more recent animated programs such as *As Told By Ginger*, *Rocket Power*, and *The Wild Thornberries* initiated a new trend in programming that actively rejected the conventional industry wisdom that children's shows with girl leads could not be successful" (192). Banet-Weiser also explores the role of *Nick News*, the weekly non-fiction show that worked to relate world events to children's lives. In her analysis of *Clarissa* and *Ginger*, she explores the inherent tension of Third-Wave Feminism summed up on a special episode of *Nick News*, "The Fight to Fit In:" "Grown ups will tell you how easy it is to be a kid. Kids know better. There is, at your age - at any age really - a natural struggle between the desire to be part of a group and the desire to be an individual" (204). In order to be "cool" girls are encouraged to participate in commercial culture, but they also want the authenticity of genuine friendship, two things often at odds in the shows (202).