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STUDIES IN POPULAR CULTURE

October 2006

29.1

- 1 *Reinventing the Hero: Gardner's Grendel and the Shifting Face of Beowulf in Popular Culture*
Michael Livingston and John William Sutton
- 17 *Cowboys, Indians, and Iraq: Jessica Lynch, Lori Piestewa, and the Great American Makeover*
Gioia Woods
- 41 *Artistic Schizophrenia: How Fight Club's Message is Subverted by Its Own Nature*
Kyle Bishop
- 57 *Michael, Are You OK? You've Been Hit by a Smooth Criminal: Racism, Controversy, and Parody in the Video Clips "Smooth Criminal" and "You Rock My World"*
Elena Oliete
- 77 *"Sigmund Freud, Analyze This": How Madonna Situates "Die Another Day" Beyond the Pleasure Principle*
David Sigler
- 99 *Linguistic Variation in Judge Greg Mathis' Courtroom*
Milford A. Jeremiah
- 119 **Book Reviews**
- 119 *Sex and the Cinema* by Tanya Krzywinska (Linda Badley)
- 123 *Andy Kaufman: Wrestling with the American Dream* by Florian Keller (David Janssen)
- 126 *The Aesthetics of Culture in Buffy the Vampire Slayer* by Matthew Pateman (Elizabeth L. Rambo)



Editorial Note: On Variety

One of the first things I noticed at my first popular culture conference (the 1989 PCAS) was its generous variety of subject matter. There were papers on: Superbowl XIX commercials; nineteenth-century popular literature for workmen; women and silence in detective fiction; smokers as untouchables; the rhetoric of the pick-up line; the Bible in marketing; baseball and the visual symbolism of *Bull Durham*; working artists including narrative quilters; R.E.M.; Donna Reed; Barbie as ideology; eighty years of comics in *The Atlanta Journal* (a content analysis); and a paper I still vividly remember on “The Lovely Load”—the woman carried in the monster’s arms. There was even a paper on—ah!—okra. As for me, I was there for television. But I came to realize that television studies in itself is a field constituted of an almost infinite set of combinations of disciplines—from long-term narrative arcs to camera angles to music to literary allusions to acting to sociological implications to multifaceted symbolism to corporate influences on creativity to auteur writer/producers and on and on—and believe me, I could go there. But I’ll spare you. If you are reading this you probably already know what I mean. My words here are meant mainly as a reminder for us to rejoice in our richness. Popular culture covers an extraordinary range of human experience and our thought about it—from the glorious to the abysmal, from dreck to inspiration.

And *Studies in Popular Culture* provides a forum for that variety. The current volume contains work on television, film, music video, and literary history, moving from *Beowulf* to Madonna to Judge Mathis. The analyses are psychological; sociological; linguistic; literary. They contemplate material from the traditional canon as it moves through popular culture; the role of television in framing our view of social relations; an attempt to change consumer practice through a consumer product, a Hollywood film; the complex intertwining of race and sex in the case of videos by the King of Pop; the psychological games of the visual played by the Material Girl; a linguistic case for acknowledging the purposeful playfulness of television language as power. The first three articles show us very different heroes; the next two show us very different ways to see music videos; the fourth and sixth show us very different views of the racial roots of popular phenomena. In fact, these essays are both varied and tied by connecting threads—as is so often the case when we look at the culture that shows us our minds.

I want to finish with a few brief thank-you’s; inside the back cover, I have named some of those I’d like to thank. But I’d like to offer a special thank-you to Sara Dunne and Rob Koch, who taught me Pagemaker. And thanks to both Sara and Michael Dunne for welcoming me into their home while Sara taught me. I also want to thank the members of the editorial board, who spent long hours reviewing articles for this issue. Currently our acceptance rate is about twenty-five percent, which means that there is much work that our readers never see. The feedback that the board members are giving will, I hope, help those who submit work. I am grateful to all those who submit the essays (accepted or not) that make this journal possible. You are an education of marvelous variety.

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