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By Julie Carle. The modern day action heroine is being redefined in movies, comic books, television and literature says a BGSU popular culture faculty member. In his new book “ Beyond Bombshells: The New Action Heroine In Popular Culture ,” Dr. Jeffrey A. Brown looks at action heroines and addresses the shift in how female characters are portrayed in popular culture today.

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Beyond Bombshells analyzes the cultural importance of strong women in a variety of current media forms. Action heroines are now more popular in movies, comic books, television, and literature than they have ever been. Their spectacular presence represents shifting ideas about female agency, power, and sexuality. Beyond Bombshells explores how action heroines reveal and reconfigure perceptions about “how” and “why” women are capable of physically dominating roles in modern fiction, indicating the various strategies used to contain and/or exploit female violence. Focusing on a range of successful and controversial recent heroines in the mass media, including Katniss Everdeen from The Hunger Games books and movies, Lisbeth Salander from The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo novels and films, and Hit-Girl from the Kick-Ass movies and comic books, Brown argues that the role of action heroine reveals evolving beliefs about femininity. While women in action roles are still heavily sexualized and objectified, they also challenge preconceived myths about normal or culturally appropriate gender behavior. The ascribed sexuality of modern heroines remains Brown's consistent theme, particularly how objectification intersects with issues of racial stereotyping, romantic fantasies, images of violent adolescent and preadolescent girls, and neoliberal feminist revolutionary parables. Individual chapters study the gendered dynamics of torture in action films, the role of women in partnerships with male colleagues, young women as well as revolutionary leaders in dystopic societies, adolescent sexuality and romance in action narratives, the historical import of non-white heroines, and how modern African American, Asian, and Latina heroines both challenge and are restricted by longstanding racial stereotypes.

Dangerous Curves: Action Heroines, Gender, Fetishism, and Popular Culture addresses the conflicted meanings associated with the figure of the action heroine as she has evolved in various media forms since the late 1980s. Jeffrey A. Brown discusses this immensely popular character type as an example of, and challenge to, existing theories about gender as a performance identity. Her assumption of heroic masculine traits combined with her sexualized physical depiction demonstrates the ambiguous nature of traditional gender expectations and indicates a growing awareness of more aggressive and violent roles for women. The excessive sexual fetishism of action heroines is a central theme throughout. The topic is analyzed as an insight into the transgressive image of the dominatrix, as a reflection of the shift in popular feminism from second-wave politics to third-wave and post-feminist pleasures, and as a form of patriarchal backlash that facilitates a masculine fantasy of controlling strong female characters. Brown interprets the action heroine as a representation of changing gender dynamics that balances the sexual objectification of women with progressive models of female strength. While the primary focus of this study is the action heroine as represented in Hollywood film and television, the book also includes the action heroine's emergence in contemporary popular literature, comic books, cartoons, and video games.

What do the comic book figures Static, Hardware, and Icon all have in common? Black Superheroes, Milestone Comics, and Their Fans gives an answer that goes far beyond “tights and capes,” an answer that lies within the mission Milestone Media, Inc., assumed in comic book culture. Milestone was the brainchild of four young black creators who wanted to part from the mainstream and do their stories their own way. This history of Milestone, a “creator-owned” publishing company, tells how success came to these mavericks in the 1990s and how comics culture was expanded and enriched as fans were captivated by this new genre. Milestone focused on the African American heroes in a town called Dakota. Quite soon these black action comics took a firm position in the controversies of race, gender, and corporate identity in contemporary America. Characters battled supervillains and sometimes even clashed with more widely known superheroes. Front covers of Milestone comics often bore confrontational slogans like “Hardware: A Cog in the Corporate Machine is About to Strip Some Gears.” Milestone’s creators aimed for exceptional stories that addressed racial issues without alienating readers. Some competitors, however, accused their comics of not being black enough or of merely marketing Superman in black face. Some felt that the stories were too black, but a large cluster of readers applauded these new superheroes for fostering African American pride and identity. Milestone came to represent an alternative model of black heroism and, for a host of admirers, the ideal of masculinity. Black Superheroes, Milestone Comics, and Their Fans gives details about the founding of Milestone and reports on the secure niche its work and its image achieved in the marketplace. Tracing the company’s history and discussing its creators, their works, and the fans, this book gauges Milestone alongside other black comic book publishers, mainstream publishers, and the history of costumed characters.

Hollywood’s live-action superhero films currently dominate the worldwide box-office, with the characters enjoying more notoriety through their feature film and television depictions than they have ever before. This book argues that this immense popularity reveals deep cultural concerns about politics, gender, ethnicity, patriotism and consumerism after the events of 9/11. Superheroes have long been agents of hegemony, fighting for abstract ideals of justice while overall perpetuating the American status quo. Yet at the same time, the book explores how the genre has also been utilized to question and critique these dominant cultural assumptions.

An authoritative guide to the action-packed film genre With 24 incisive, cutting-edge contributions from esteemed scholars and critics, A Companion to the Action Filmprovides an authoritative and in-depth guide to this internationally popular and wide-ranging genre. As the first major anthology on the action film in more than a decade, the volume offers insights into the genre’s historical development, explores its production techniques and visual poetics, and provides reflections on the numerous social, cultural, and political issues it has and continues to embody. A Companion to the Action Film offers original research and critical analysis that examines the iconic characteristics of the genre, its visual aesthetics, and its narrative traits; considers the impact of major directors and stars on the genre’s evolution; puts the action film in dialogue with various technologies and other forms of media such as graphic novels and television; and maps out new avenues of critical study for the future. This important resource: Offers a definitive guide to the action film Contains insightful contributions from a wide range of international film experts and scholars Reviews the evolution of the genre from the silent era to today’s age of digital blockbusters Offers nuanced commentary and analysis of socio-cultural issues such as race, nationality, and gender in action films Written for scholars, teachers and students in film studies, film theory, film history, genre studies, and popular culture, A Companion to the Action Film is an essential guide to one of international cinema’s most important, popular, and influential genres.

Contributions by Dorian Alexander, Janine Coleman, Gabriel Gianola, Mel Gibson, Michael Goodrum, Tim Hanley, Vanessa Hemovich, Christina Knopf, Christopher McGunnigle, Samira Nadkarni, Ryan North, Lisa Perdigao, Tara Prescott, Philip Smith, and Maite Ucaregui The explosive popularity of San Diego's Comic-Con, Star Wars: The Force Awakens and Rogue One, and Netflix's Jessica Jones and Luke Cage all signal the tidal change in superhero narratives and mainstreaming of what were once considered niche interests. Yet just as these areas have become more openly inclusive to an audience beyond heterosexual white men, there has also been an intense backlash, most famously in 2015's Gamergate controversy, when the tension between feminist bloggers, misogynistic gamers, and internet journalists came to a head. The place for gender in superhero narratives now represents a sort of battleground, with important changes in the industry at stake. These seismic shifts--both in the creation of superhero media and in their critical and reader reception--need reassessment not only of the role of women in comics, but also of how American society conceives of masculinity. Gender and the Superhero Narrative launches ten essays that explore the point where social justice meets the Justice League. Ranging from comics such as Ms. Marvel, Batwoman: Elegy, and Bitch Planet to video games, Netflix, and cosplay, this volume builds a platform for important voices in comics research, engaging with controversy and community to provide deeper insight and thus inspire change.

Women Who Kill explores several lines of inquiry: the female murderer as a figure that destabilizes order; the tension between criminal and victim; the relationship between crime and expression (or the lack thereof); and the paradox whereby a crime can be both an act of destruction and a creative assertion of agency. In doing so, the contributors assess the influence of feminist, queer and gender studies on mainstream television and cinema, notably in the genres (film noir, horror, melodrama) that have received the most critical attention from this perspective. They also analyse the politics of representation by considering these works of fiction in their contexts and addressing some of the ambiguities raised by postfeminism. The book is structured in three parts: Neo-femmes Fatales; Action Babes and Monstrous Women. Films and series examined include White Men Are Cracking Up (1994); Hit & Miss (2012); Gone Girl (2014); Terminator (1984); The Walking Dead (2010); Mad Max: Fury Road (2015); Contagion (2011) and Ex Machina (2015) among others.

Harrison Ford is known for such iconic roles as Han Solo, Indiana Jones and Rick Deckard - but his career of 50 years (and counting) encompasses a plethora of other thought-provoking roles. His off-screen persona has been no less intriguing. Covering a wide timespan, this book assesses Harrison Ford as 'star' from the difficult Hollywood studio years where he began, his blockbusters of the 1980s, through to the impact of ageist culture on his artistry of recent years. The author argues that Ford has generally been seen as a potent, irresistible combination of tradition and modernity. He is an actor who both reflects and utilises changing ideas about American masculinity in the context of Hollywood film production: particular male types are revealed as much in his trademark trustworthy hero act as in his more fallible, less conservative and therefore commercially riskier characters. Luzon Aguado explores these particular star identities and every fluctuation in between. She gives due attention to his much-neglected acting abilities while examining the crucial interplay between star persona and the constraints and conventions of genre. Going beyond standard accounts of Ford's production and pinpointing overlooked aspects of his work, and the creation of the star through cultural artefacts like magazine interviews and advertising campaigns, this book reveals the depth and dimensions of the enduring American screen legend that is Harrison Ford.

The superheroes from DC and Marvel comics are some of the most iconic characters in popular culture today. But how do these figures idealize certain gender roles, body types, sexualities, and racial identities at the expense of others? Hot Pants and Spandex Suits offers a far-reaching look at how masculinity and femininity have been represented in American superhero comics, from the Golden and Silver Ages to the Modern Age. Scholar Esther De Dauw contrasts the bulletproof and musclebound phallic bodies of classic male heroes like Superman, Captain America, and Iron Man with the figures of female counterparts like Wonder Woman and Supergirl, who are drawn as superhumanly flexible and plastic. It also examines the genre's ambivalent treatment of LGBTQ representation, from the presentation of gay male heroes Wiccan and Hulkling as a model minority couple to the troubling association of Batwoman's lesbianism with monstrosity. Finally, it explores the intersection between gender and race through case studies of heroes like Luke Cage, Storm, and Ms. Marvel. Hot Pants and Spandex Suits is a fascinating and thought-provoking consideration of what superhero comics teach us about identity, embodiment, and sexuality.

The T&T Clark Handbook of Jesus and Film introduces postgraduate readers to the critical field of Jesus and/on film. The bulk of biblical films feature Jesus, as protagonist, in cameo, or as a looming background presence or pattern. The handbook assesses the field in light of the work of important biblical film critics including chapters from the leading voices in the field and showcasing the diversity of work done by scholars in the field. Movies discussed include The Passion of the Christ, The King of Kings, Jesus of Nazareth, Monty Python’s Life of Brian, Son of Man, and Mary Magdalene. The chapters range across two broad areas: 1) Jesus films, understood broadly as filmed passion plays, other relocations of Jesus, historical Jesus treatments, and Jesus adjacent cinema (privileging invented characters or “minor” gospel characters); and 2) other cinematic Jesuses, including followers who imitate Jesus devotionally or aesthetically, (Christian) Christ figures, antichrists, yet other messiahs, and competing Jesuses in a pluralist world. As one leaves the confines of Christian theology, the question of what a film or interpreter is doing with Jesus or Christ becomes something to be determined, not necessarily something traditional.

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