

Sci Fi, Fantasy & Futurism

The Postapocalyptic Black Female Imagination

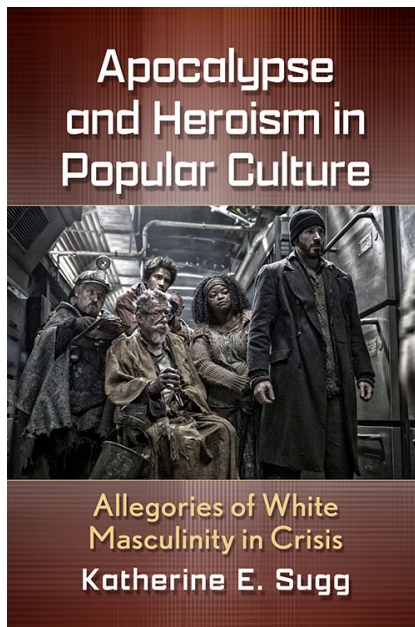
Maxine Lavon Montgomery, 2021 - Bloomsbury

Exploring post-apocalypticism in the Black literary and cultural tradition, *Post-Apocalypticism and the Black Female Imagination* extends the scholarly conversation on Afro-futurist canon formation through an examination of futuristic imaginaries in representative 20th and 21st-century works of literature and expressive culture by Black women in an Afro-diasporic setting. The book demonstrates the implications of Afro-futurist literary criticism for Black Atlantic literary and critical theory, investigating issues of hybridity, border crossing, temporality, and historical recuperation. Covering a wide range of writers – including Octavia Butler, Edwidge Danticat, Nalo Hopkinson, Toni Morrison, Jesmyn Ward and Beyoncé - Maxine Lavon Montgomery shows how Black women artists attempt to recover a raced, gendered heritage in framing an evolving social order existing as a part of, yet separate and distinct from, the past.



Apocalypse and Heroism in Popular Culture: Allegories of White Masculinity in Crisis

Katherine E. Sugg, 2022 - MacFarland



Over the past two decades, stories of world-ending catastrophe have featured prominently in film and television. Zombie apocalypses, climate disasters, alien invasions, global pandemics and dystopian world orders fill our screens—typically with a singular figure or tenacious group tasked with saving or salvaging the world. Why are stories of End Times crisis so popular with audiences? And why is the hero so often a white man who overcomes personal struggles and incredible obstacles to lead humanity toward a restored future?

This book examines the familiar trope of the hero and the recasting of contemporary anxieties in narratives like *The Walking Dead*, *Snowpiercer* and *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Some have familiar roots in Western cultural traditions yet many question popular assumptions about heroes and heroism to tell new and fascinating stories about race, gender and

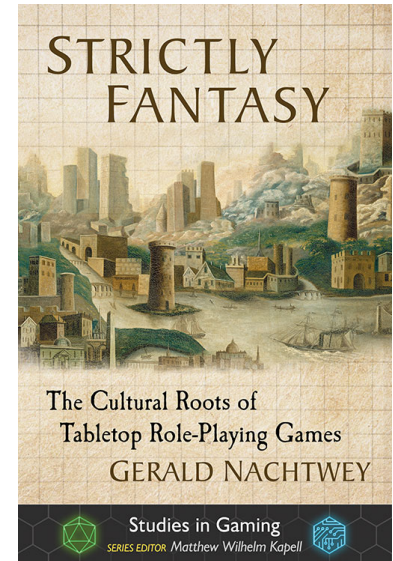
society and the power of individuals to change the world.

Gaming

Strictly Fantasy: The Cultural Roots of Tabletop Role-Playing Games

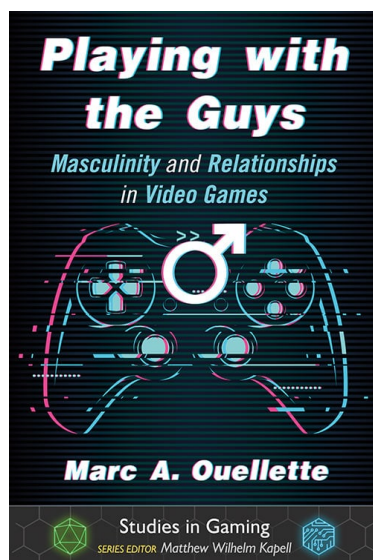
Gerald Nachtwey, 2021 - MacFarland

Role-playing games seemed to appear out of nowhere in the early 1970s and have been a quiet but steady presence in American culture ever since. This new look at the hobby searches for the historical origins of role-playing games deep in the imaginative worlds of Western culture. It looks at the earliest fantasy stories from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, at the fans—both readers and writers—who wanted to bring them to life, at the Midwestern landscape and the middle-class households that were the hobby's birthplace, and at the struggle to find meaning and identity amidst cultural conflicts that drove many people into these communities of play. This book also addresses race, religion, gender, fandom, and the place these games have within American capitalism. All the paths of this journey are connected by the very quality that has made fantasy role-playing so powerful: it binds the limitless imagination into a “strict” framework of rules. Far from being an accidental offshoot of marginalized fan communities, role-playing games’ ability to hold contradictions in dynamic, creative tension made them a necessary and central product of the twentieth century.



Playing with the Guys: Masculinity and Relationships in Video Games

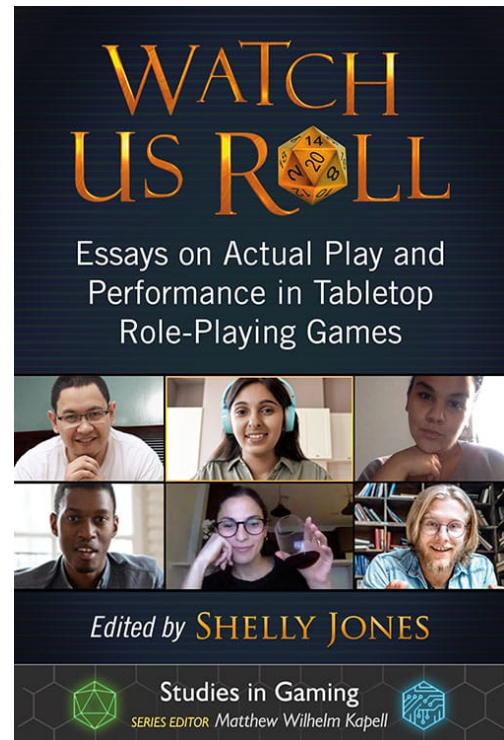
Marc A. Ouellette, 2021 - MacFarland



A lot of work has been done talking about what masculinity is and what it does within video games, but less has been given to considering how and why this happens, and the processes involved. This book considers the array of daily relationships involved in producing masculinity and how those actions and relationships translate to video games. Moreover, it examines the ways the actual play of the games maps onto the stories to create contradictory moments that show that, while toxic masculinity certainly exists, it is far from inevitable. Topics covered include the nature of masculine apprenticeship and nurturing, labor, fatherhood, the scapegoating of women, and reckoning with mortality, among many others.

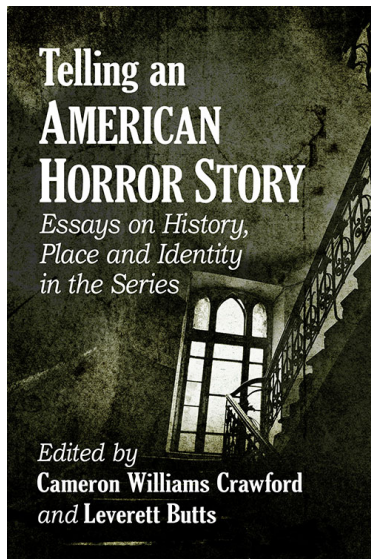
Watch Us Roll: Essays on Actual Play and Performance in Tabletop Role-Playing Games
Shelly Jones, 2021 - MacFarland

Actual play is a movement within role-playing gaming in which players livestream their gameplay for others to watch and enjoy. This new medium has allowed the playing of games to become a digestible, consumable text for individuals to watch, enjoy, learn from, and analyze. Bridging the gap between the analog and the digital, actual play is changing and challenging our expectations of tabletop role-playing and providing a space for new scholarship. This edited collection of essays focuses on *Dungeons and Dragons* actual play and examines this phenomenon from a variety of different disciplinary approaches. Authors explore how to define actual play, how fans interact with and affect the narrative and gameplay of actual play, the diversity of gamers (or lack thereof) within actual play media, and how audiences can use actual play media for more than mere entertainment.



Monsters & Horror

Telling an *American Horror Story*: Essays on History, Place and Identity in the Series
Cameron Williams Crawford & Leverett Butts, 2021 - MacFarland



This volume collects essays from new and established critics looking at the many ways horror anthology series *American Horror Story* intersects with and comments on contemporary American social, political and popular culture. Divided into three sections, the chapters apply a cultural criticism framework to examine how the first eight seasons of *AHS* engage with American history, our contemporary ideologies and social policies. Part I explores the historical context and the uniquely-American folklore that *AHS* evokes, from the Southern Gothic themes of *Coven* to connections between *Apocalypse* and anxieties of modern American youth. Part II contains interpretations of place and setting that mark the various seasons of the anthology. Finally, Part III examines how the series confronts notions of individual and social identity, like the portrayals of destructive leadership in *Cult* and lesbian

representation in *Asylum* and *Hotel*.

Fandom and Geek Culture

The Politics of Fandom: Conflicts That Divide Communities

Hannah Mueller, 2021 - MacFarland

Fandom has been celebrated as a harmonious, tolerant space as often as it has been dismissed as apolitical and detached from reality. Yet fandom is neither harmonious nor apolitical. Throughout the past century, fandom has been shaped by recurring controversies, which often determined the future direction of fan communities or sparked the emergence of new circles, platforms, and discourses.

Since the earliest days of science-fiction fandom, fans have conceived of their communities as quasi-political bodies, and of themselves as public actors in discursive spaces. Accordingly, they are concerned with the organizational structures, norms, and borders of fandom as well as their own position within the larger public sphere. In the 21st century, this latter concern has moved to the forefront as fan practices and platforms have increasingly been coopted by the entertainment industry and by political actors, forcing fans to situate their fannish and political identities in relation to both sprawling transmedia franchises and right-wing groups exploiting fannish formations for political ends. Through case studies of *Glee* and *The Hunger Games* fandoms as well as events such as Gamergate, RaceFail '09, and the controversies surrounding the Hugo Awards, this book explores the complexities of political fandom.



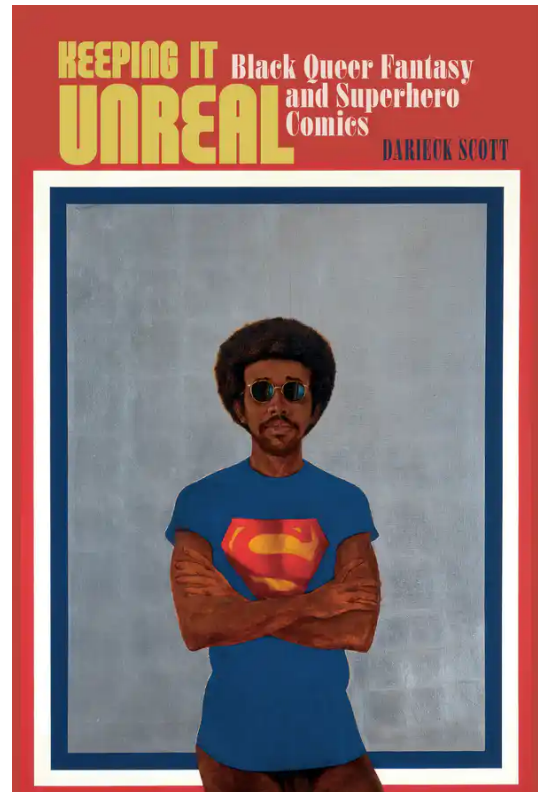
Comics and Superheroes

Keeping It Unreal: Black Queer Fantasy and Superhero Comics

Darieck Scott, 2022 - NYU Press

Characters like Black Panther, Storm, Luke Cage, Miles Morales, and Black Lightning are part of a growing cohort of black superheroes on TV and in film. Though comic books are often derided as naïve and childish, these larger-than-life superheroes demonstrate how this genre can serve as the catalyst for engaging the Black radical imagination.

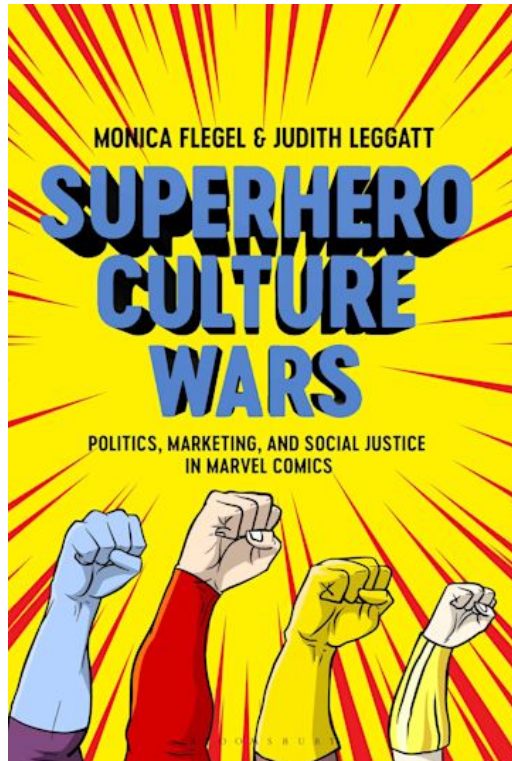
Keeping It Unreal: Comics and Black Queer Fantasy is an exploration of how fantasies of Black power and triumph fashion theoretical, political, and aesthetic challenges to—and respite from—white supremacy and anti-Blackness. It examines representations of Blackness in fantasy-infused genres: superhero comic books, erotic comics, fantasy and science-fiction genre literature, as well as contemporary literary “realist” fiction centering fantastic conceits.



Darieck Scott offers a rich meditation on the relationship between fantasy and reality, and between the imagination and being, as he weaves his personal recollections of his encounters with superhero comics with interpretive readings of figures like the Black Panther and Blade, as well as theorists such as Frantz Fanon, Eve Sedgwick, Leo Bersani, Saidiya Hartman, and Gore Vidal. *Keeping It Unreal* represents an in-depth theoretical consideration of the intersections of superhero comics, Blackness, and queerness, and draws on a variety of fields of inquiry.

Reading new life into Afrofuturist traditions and fantasy genres, Darieck Scott seeks to rescue the role of fantasy and the fantastic to challenge, revoke, and expand our assumptions about what is normal, real, and markedly human.

Superhero Culture Wars: Politics, Marketing, and Social Justice in Marvel Comics
Monica Flegel & Judith Leggatt, 2021 - Bloomsbury



The reactionary Comicsgate campaign against alleged “forced” diversity in superhero comics revealed the extent to which comics have become a key battleground in America's Culture Wars. In the first in-depth scholarly study of Marvel Comics' most recent engagement with progressive politics, *Superhero Culture Wars* explores how the drive towards greater diversity among its characters and creators has interacted with the company's commercial marketing and its traditional fan base.

Introduction: Mockingbird and Milkshakes:
Comicsgate, Identity, and the Politics of Marketing in
an Age of Outrage; Chapter One: From Stan's
Soapbox to Twitter: Politics and Story-Telling in the
Marvel Universe; Chapter Two: Diversity Done Right?:
Miles Morales and Kamala Khan; Chapter Three:
“Captain America is Black and Thor is a Woman”:
Gender- and Race-Bent Mantle Passing in Marvel's
All-New, All-Different Campaign; Chapter Four:

Rethinking Secret Empire: Writing and Marketing Political Comics in an Age of Rising Fascism;
Conclusion: Marvel Legacy and Fresh Start: Selling (and Selling Out) Progressive

Tech & the Internet

Digital Black Feminism

Catherine Knight Steele, 2021 - NYU Press

Black women are at the forefront of some of this century's most important discussions about technology: trolling, online harassment, algorithmic bias, and influencer culture. But, Catherine Knight Steele argues that Black women's relationship to technology began long before the advent of Twitter or Instagram. To truly "listen to Black women," Steele points to the history of Black feminist technoculture in the United States and its ability to decenter white supremacy and patriarchy in a conversation about the future of technology. Using the virtual beauty shop as a metaphor, *Digital Black Feminism* walks readers through the technical skill, communicative expertise, and entrepreneurial acumen of Black women's labor—born of survival strategies and economic necessity—both on and offline.



Positioning Black women at the center of our discourse about the past, present, and future of technology, Steele offers a through-line from the writing of early twentieth-century Black women to the bloggers and social media mavens of the twenty-first century. She makes connections among the letters, news articles, and essays of Black feminist writers of the past and a digital archive of blog posts, tweets, and Instagram stories of some of the most well-known Black feminist writers of our time. Linking narratives and existing literature about Black women's technology use in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century, *Digital Black Feminism* traverses the bounds between historical and archival analysis and empirical internet studies, forcing a reconciliation between fields and methods that are not always in conversation. As the work of Black feminist writers now reaches its widest audience online, Steele offers both hopefulness and caution on the implications of Black feminism becoming a digital product.