The Woman Fantastic in Contemporary American Media Culture

Edited by Elyce Rae Helford, Shiloh Carroll, Sarah Gray, and Michael R. Howard II

Although the last three decades have offered a growing body of scholarship on images of fantastic women in popular culture, these studies either tend to focus on one particular variety of fantastic female (the action or sci-fi heroine), or on her role in a specific genre (villain, hero, temptress). This edited collection strives to define the “Woman Fantastic” more fully. The Woman Fantastic may appear in speculative or realist settings, but her presence is always recognizable. Through futuristic contexts, fantasy worlds, alternate histories, or the display of superpowers, these insuperable women challenge the laws of physics, chemistry, and/or biology.

In chapters devoted to certain television programs, adult and young adult literature, and comics, contributors discuss feminist negotiation of today’s economic and social realities. Senior scholars and rising academic stars offer compelling analyses of fantastic women from Wonder Woman and She-Hulk to Talia Al Ghul and Martha Washington; from Carrie Vaughn’s Kitty Norville series to Cinda Williams Chima’s The Seven Realms series; and from Battlestar Galactica’s Female Starbuck to Game of Thrones’ Sansa and even Elaine Barrish Hammond of USA’s Political Animals. This volume furnishes an important contribution to ongoing discussions of gender and feminism in popular culture.

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