

Art for Someone Else's Sake

“Works of Art, in my opinion, are the only objects in the material universe to possess internal order, and that is why, though I don’t believe that only art matters, I do believe in Art for Art’s sake.” —E. M. Forster, *Two Cheers for Democracy*

I have long been a fan of Forster’s essay “Art for Art’s Sake.” Perhaps those of us who enjoy fantasy (and perhaps science fiction as well) are particularly drawn by that possibility of internal order. At one point, I wrote an essay (for the first issue of *Critical Studies in Television*) declaring that the works of Joss Whedon would survive a hundred years from now, even if the social issues he and his collaborators address had become completely irrelevant. The essay was in part an indignant response to the superciliousness of the semi-intellectual who would not contemplate the possibility that a fantasy television series could be art.

In my calmer moments, however, I believe that the world created by art is inextricable from the social forces in which that art grows (I hear the quietly emitted “duh” floating out from many a reader at this point). Many television scholars have, for years, been asking that those who study the form consider the effect the business of television has on each creation. This is not new. If we could ask a fifteenth-century painter about the role of a patron, we would certainly learn something about the social forces in that artistic life. And surely these forces are even more significant for any creation that connects with the popular.

These thoughts occurred to me as I looked at the essays contributed to this issue of *Studies in Popular Culture*, as we enter our thirty-fourth year. Every contribution deals, in one way or another, with the interaction between social forces and popular art—or, if not art, at least popular culture. Larry Dale Gragg presents the history of the powerful Las Vegas business community’s interference with the production of two Las Vegas-based television series in the early 1960s. Kyle Christensen analyzes the subtext of sexism in a horror movie character type (the Final Girl) often taken to represent the strength of womanhood—and identifies an alternative offered within the same subset of films. Ashli Dykes discusses the voiceover in the *Sex and the City* television series, and its implications for society’s attitudes towards gendered sexual behavior. Paul Gansky reaches farther into the past to explore the surprisingly significant representations of refrigerators in many media, particularly focusing on masculine characters’ interactions. Kenneth White and Mirya R. Holman investigate the question of political bias in the long-running cartoon television series *The Simpsons*. Patrick Osborne argues for concern about “social strain” in the videogame *Grand Theft Auto IV*—and the specifics of pos-

sible anti-social influence. Finally, Eir-Anne Edgar invites us to ask whether the television series *RuPaul's Drag Race* provides a queer or, in some ways, a surprisingly conservative representation of gender.

As always, this issue owes a great deal to those named on the masthead page, including editorial board members who served as blind peer reviewers. Emphatic thanks are also due to others who have provided their expertise as blind peer reviewers, including Pam Bedore, Don Butts, Doug Davis, John Davis, Carol-Ann Farkas, Donna Waller Harper, Jeremy Justus, Jim Keller, Bennett Kravitz, and Mary Alice Money. All of us hope that readers find this issue illuminating.

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