



Falkenberg, Saffyre. *Beyond Damsels In Distress: Female Heroism In Young Adult Fantasy Fiction And Fantasy Role-Playing Video Games* (2018)

This thesis argues that an analysis of the fantasy genre through a girls' studies lens reveals that diverse representations of girlhoods through female heroes can empower girls despite the genre's patriarchal roots. To support this argument, I analyze representations of gender and sexuality in *A Court of Thorns and Roses* and *Dragon Age*. The first chapter argues that Maas cultivates many visions of the female hero through Feyre while negotiating issues of identity, agency, and power central to Feyre's heroic transformations that empowers certain girlhoods. The second chapter argues that *Dragon Age*, although catering to the male gaze, becomes more progressive over time in its gendered narratives by educating players about queer identities and cultivating heroism through a sisterhood of side characters. The importance of looking at fantasy media with a girls' studies lens is illustrated by the popularity of fantasy media and the increasing focus on girl characters.

Fransen, Abigail. *Rewriting the Romance: Adaptation and Appropriation in Contemporary Historical Romance* (2018)

This project analyzes the intertextual relationship between popular historical romance and the canonical long-nineteenth century texts it frequently adapts and appropriates. This reading reveals both the cultural capital of the source texts and their inherent problems of race, class, and gender. First, I analyze popular historical romance novels that cite Mary Wollstonecraft and discuss the ways in which these texts portray Wollstonecraft's reputation as scandalous rather than as feminist as scholars typically view her today. Second, I analyze popular historical romance novels that appropriate Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and discuss how these texts uncover *Jane Eyre*'s connection to the "monster bridegroom" fairytale tradition and also use *Jane Eyre* to legitimize abusive relationships. Finally, I discuss how technology has allowed writing and reading romance to become even more collaborative, which allows for readers to voice their varied expectations of romance novels, including their critique of problematic tropes in the genre.

Severs, Axel Conrad. *(Self-)Love Matters: A Discursive Analysis of #BlackLivesMatter on Twitter, 2012-2015* (2017)

Though the Black Lives Matter movement now holds a ubiquitous position in public consciousness, the movement originally took form as a hashtag on Twitter, a much smaller public arena within which the hashtag constitutes an online counterpublic discourse community. An analysis of #BlackLivesMatter discourse reveals myriad insights into how rhetors use activist hashtags as a tool for exercising (self-)love, building communities, engaging in critical civic discourse, and affirming their lived experiences before a global audience. This study focuses on the rhetorical operations of #BlackLivesMatter within Twitter discourse during the first three years of its existence and explores three central questions: What does the first three years of #BlackLivesMatter Twitter discourse look like? What might the qualities and shifts within the discourse across these three years suggest about the rhetorical functions of the hashtag? Finally, and most importantly, with what sorts of powers does #BlackLivesMatter rhetoric imbue its rhetors?

Kuntz, Jamie Lynn. *Mothers, Maidens, and Queens: Revisionist Mythmaking in the Plays of Eva Gore-Booth, Lady Augusta Gregory, and Maud Gonne* (2016)

This thesis investigates how female playwrights during the Irish Literary Revival revised Celtic mythology to discuss politics, gender, and sexuality. These female writers also used mythology in their plays in order to promote a cultural revival in Ireland, making the plays nationalist pieces of literature. My analysis of Eva Gore-Booth's *The Buried Life of Deirdre* (1908), Lady Augusta Gregory's *Grania* (1912), Gregory and W.B. Yeats's *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902), and Maud Gonne's *Dawn* (1904) illuminates some of the cultural changes these women were attempting to implement in modern Irish society.

Mason, Jacquelyn Danielle. *Mental Disability and the Great War: the New Modernism of West, Woolf, and Ford* (2016)

This thesis investigates how British culture struggled with the representation of psychologically disabled soldiers in the fairly immediate aftermath of World War I. My analysis of Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925), and Ford Madox Ford's *Parade's End* (1924-1928) exposes how mental illness complicates cultural perceptions of disabled soldiers, how social space is determined for the disabled, and how trauma is an ongoing mental process. This research joins the emerging field of New Modernist Studies, which reimagines the concepts that constitute a modernist text. I argue why it is important to consider how the aesthetics or style of modernism enables these authors to represent disabled bodies in a new way. The fiction of West, Woolf, and Ford elicit a social reassessment of war, trauma, and the disabled mind, thus revealing how war and disability are persistent preoccupations of modernism.

Poole, Megan. *Burke and Optics: Re-envisioning Rhetorical Theory through an Optical Lens* (2016)

This thesis reevaluates Burke's most visual terms in *Permanence and Change*, orientation and perspective by incongruity, and suggests that scholars cannot truly understand the nuances of these terms without understanding their relation to optical science. In *Permanence and Change*, Burke implies that the brain can only relay perceptual information, whether through words or images, fallibly. Thus, Burke targets mental images in the hopes that wrenching apart our images will wrench apart our language associations, and subsequently our worldview. This thesis traces Burke's engagement with Gestalt theory and optical science in order to properly evaluate the visual, optical, and neurobiological implications of the major terms in *Permanence and Change*. Though recent scholarship has begun to read Burke biologically, this thesis proposes that scholars must also read him ophthalmologically.

Snitzer, Kathryn Lee. *Of Domestic Monsters and Complex Marvels: Serialization, Richard III, and The Marvel Cinematic Universe* (2016)

Within this text, I identify the key concepts of the serial form in order to introduce my own work concerning the serial's future within New Media and its overlooked past within the early modern period. Within my first chapter, "Heading to the 'Mothership: Narrative Complexity, Transmedia, and the Future of Serial Storytelling,'" I place Jason Mittell's definition of narrative complexity into conversation with transmedia storytelling in order to argue for a more nuanced definition of narrative complexity that is not limited to the medium of television. Meanwhile, within my second chapter, "'Destiny is Anatomy: Richard III's Feminized Body, Ambiguous Gender, and the Elizabethan Patriarchy,'" I argue the ways in which Shakespeare simultaneously demonstrated that the actions of both male and female social transgressors were unnatural and threatened the established social order of the established Elizabethan patriarchal society through his dramatic representation of Richard III as embodying both the effeminate male and the masculine female.

Waltrip, Preston. *Memorials for the Unmourned: Presentations of Politicized Violence in Contemporary U.S.-Mexico Border Fiction* (2016)

Utilizing theoretical frameworks from Giorgio Agamben, Judith Butler, Alexander G. Weheliye, and Achille Mbembe, *Memorials for the Unmourned* analyzes fictional depictions of racialized, gendered, and state-sanctioned violence in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. Through readings of Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, Carmen Boullosa's *Texas: The Great Theft*, and Roberto Bolaño's *2666*, this thesis explores fiction's capacity to memorialize unmourned victims of borderlands violence and to provide conceptual blueprints for combating the insidious biopolitical mechanisms that make such violence possible. In the face of historical and contemporary narratives that continue to devalue Latina/o and indigenous American lives, fiction that memorializes the ungrievable interrupts the ontological violence inherent in the racial, cultural, gendered, and national differentiation between various bodies in the borderlands, and enables readers to contest the colonial narratives and erasures that would frame indigenous American and Latina/o lives as "not-quite-human."

Theses 2008-2015

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