

Could these films also be viewed not just as parables but perhaps omens for the real world strife that resulted from America's obsession with success? What was happening between the years of 1999 and 2001 that created such cinematic laments? Minor quibbles aside, Rindge's *Profane Parables* is an excellent work. It will appeal greatly to scholars of American Studies, film, religion, and popular culture.

Margaret Weber  
Iowa State University

*Happily Ever After: The Romance Story in Popular Culture*. Catherine M. Roach. Indiana University Press, 2016. 240 pp. \$26.00 cloth.

Is romance fiction to be condemned as patsy to the oppressive forces of patriarchy, homophobia, racism, ableism, and capitalism? Is it to be embraced as the "all you need is" salve for the world's wounds? Can there be a compromise between the two positions? Why do women even read romance novels? Catherine M. Roach teases out these questions in her book *Happily Ever After: The Romance Story in Popular Culture* to ultimately suggest that romance, and in particular, popular romance genre fiction, helps women to cope with living in a man's world, while at the same time working to reinforce some of the very systems that generate man's status in that world. As Roach puts it, "The romance story is a woman-centered fantasy about how to make this man's world work for her" (26). In elucidating how such a fantasy works, Roach deals with the complex "problem" that romance fiction's popularity poses to feminist scholars by refusing easy answers, and in doing so, *Happily Ever After* embraces a tension that has animated the rapidly growing field of popular romance studies since Janice Radway's path-breaking *Reading the Romance* (1984). Roach's book offers a unique perspective that draws on her experiences as a lifelong romance reader, as a feminist scholar of popular culture, and as a romance writer herself. She labels her scholarly position the "aca-fan-author" (31), drawing on and expanding beyond the limits of Henry Jenkins's concept of the "aca-fan" (38-39). *Happily Ever After* thus operates as what she calls a "performative ethnography" (43-45) that sketches out Roach's

“observant participation” (39, 41-42; cf. participant observation) in the romance writing and reading community. Such an approach allows Roach to encode her insights gained from writing and publishing two romance novels into the readings she provides of romance fiction’s potentially transgressive, even liberatory work in women’s lives. *Happily Ever After* is also, like few academic books published by university presses, written in part with a lay audience in mind.

Throughout the book, Roach demonstrates that readers are able to carve out potentially transformative moments and empowering personal experiences in their lives as heterosexual women living under patriarchy through reading, discussing, and writing popular romance fiction. She relies on interviews, personal experiences, and theory-driven readings of individual romance novels and trends in the romance publishing industry. The book is divided into eight chapters, plus a prologue and epilogue. Chapter one serves as introduction; chapters two, four, six, and eight are traditional academic studies that build an overall argument about the reparative and liberating work that romance fictions perform for readers. Among other things, Roach argues that romance fiction *is* pornography and, drawing on bell hooks, that romance’s liberating power lies in the embrace of “love as a practice of freedom” (119). Chapters three to five and seven are “more fully narrative in style” (15) and offer glimpses into the world of romance readers and writers, including a fictionalized interview between the author and her romance-writing alter-ego, Catherine LaRoche; an ethnography of the Romance Writers of America conference; and her account of writing, submitting, editing, and publishing a romance novel. The entire book is written in an accessible style that allows Roach to weave in and out of the alternating chapter sets without compromising competing demands of academic and lay readers, making the book simultaneously rigorous and entertaining.

While Roach’s study is revealing to the popular romance specialist, it provides a methodological framework that paves the way for popular culture scholars of all stripes, with its insistence that the scholar inhabit fan, critical, and productive spaces of the popular media landscape. Moreover, the aca-fan-author subject position that Roach innovates offers one way into the study of the industries that drive popular culture production, an aspect of popular culture

studies that is often limited to an analysis of industry trends instead of reflecting on scholars' participation in those industries as creators themselves. (Colin Harvey's *Fantastic Transmedia* [2016] is another example of a book that speaks with such insight). In addition to its methodological model placing fandom studies at the center of popular culture scholarship, *Happily Ever After* offers crucial insights into the practices of fan consumption and interaction with media. Like others before her, Roach asserts that "fans are by no means uncritical in their reading practices" (91), but the overall implications of her work are far more significant than this observation suggests. In her argument that romance fiction provides a reparative fantasy that helps women to live their lives more easily under patriarchy (176-188), for example, is the seed for an argument of great importance to fan studies, one that underscores the fundamental distinction between, say, a harshly critical approach to fan-beloved texts and a more loving, fannish one: that fan practices of engagement with media are largely reparative, even if they are simultaneously constitutive of the very forces (capitalism, racism, patriarchy, etc.) that cause the need for reparation. Roach also offers an argument that male-on-male sexual fan fiction is driven by an "erotic faith" (167-168) in the power of love to mend wounds; pursuing this further, scholars of fan fiction might develop new ways of thinking about a subgenre that has long intrigued fandom studies.

Roach's *Happily Ever After* is without doubt a methodological groundbreaker, and its effects will hopefully resonate throughout popular culture studies, fandom studies, and future approaches to other genres of popular fiction. *Happily Ever After* is ultimately an update of and a contemporary response to Radway's *Reading the Romance*, in that it asks many of the same questions (Why do women read romances? Are they good for women?) but does so with the hindsight of three decades of scholarship—some of which, including queer theory, fandom studies, and popular romance studies itself, did not exist in 1984. Roach's insights into romance fiction's political potentiality (though not always its realization of such), her exploratory readings of individual novels, and her refusal to settle on an either/or approach to analyzing romance and its role in popular culture also ensure that *Happily Ever After* will have perhaps as great an effect in popular culture studies as Radway's book did. Roach achieves what few scholars do: a book with appeal and import to

both academics and the layperson, and that truly embodies the necessary tension between fandom and the ivory tower.

Sean A. Guynes  
Michigan State University

*Tim Burton: Essays on the Films*. Ed. Johnson Cheu. McFarland, 2016. 256 pp. \$29.95 paperback.

Too often in academics, popular and commercial artists are not given serious academic attention, but this collection of essays edited by Johnson Cheu stands as an excellent example of a valuable popular culture study. Even those familiar with all of Tim Burton's films and his unique style and aesthetics will obtain new insights and angles to appreciate and critically engage with Burton's texts.

*Tim Burton: Essays on the Films* contains fourteen essays that are divided into three differing subsections in the book. The first subsection focuses on "outsider characters and other oddities." It examines Burton's interest in individuals who do not fit within their time and space, as well as examining the ideas of bodies, gender, creation, and capitalism, as they play out within the cinematic worlds that Burton shapes. It offers essays that critique his works from theoretical positions of post-colonialism, feminism, and structuralism. One essay focuses on Burton's *Ed Wood* in relation to queer identity. Another examines the hero quest as presented in Burton's *Pee Wee's Big Adventure* and *Edward Scissorhands*. The third essay looks at the role of varying body types on display in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, while the fourth essay examines the role of Ichabod Crane as a man torn between his faith in science and the mystical forces presented in the cinematic world of *Sleepy Hollow*. The final essay in this section examines the links made in several of Burton's films between women, nature, and capitalism.

The second section deals with Tim Burton's film adaptations of other texts. Essays here are devoted to his adaptation of the novel *Big Fish* in relation to poststructuralist theory, his reimagining of the film *Planet of the Apes* in relation to the human/animal binary and mimicry, his adaptation of a television soap opera into a feature film in relation to performativity, and a comparison of Burton's adaptation of a Broadway musical to his film version of the same story. The final two