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Book Reviews: Monographic Musings

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CQ Press continues to publish wide ranging policy related works:

- **Historical Guide to World Media Freedom: A Country-by-Country Analysis** (978-1-6087-1765-1, $150, Aug. 2014) offers comprehensive historical data on media freedom since World War II, providing “consistent and comparable measures of media freedom in all independent countries from 1948 to the present.”
- **Guide to U.S. Economic Policy** (978-1-4522-7077-7, $175, Aug. 2014) “explores the development of U.S. economic policies from the colonial period to today” and “delves into the federal agencies and public and private organizations that influence and administer economic policies … The book’s 30 chapters, which can be read sequentially to provide a comprehensive overview or separately to look at specific eras and topics, are organized into these five major sections…”
- **Science and Politics: An A-to-Z Guide to Issues and Controversies** (978-1-4522-5810-2, $150, July 2014) details health, environmental, and social/cultural concerns while looking “at the issues and controversies at the intersection of science and politics and investigates how historical and contemporary events, along with government regulation, have affected the practice of science.” This reference “covers this nexus of politics and science in 118 … A-to-Z entries.”

September sees Bloomsbury publish a new four-volume set:

- **Food History: Critical and Primary Sources** (9780857854230, $890, Sept. 2014) is “… a four-volume reference collection which focuses on the widest possible span of food in human history, to provide a comprehensive survey of problems and methods in the field of food history. Bringing together over 80 high-quality essays drawn from journal articles, book chapters, excerpts, and historical documents and supported by introductory essays and a wealth of contextual material, this … new reference work combines contemporary scholarship with selected primary sources…”

From the Reference Desk

**Book Reviews — Monographic Musings**

Column Editor: **Debbie Vaughn** (Adjunct Instructor, Clemson University) <vaughn.deborah@gmail.com>

**Column Editor’s Note:** Binge-watching television series is the new norm, as evidenced by a 2013 survey conducted by Netflix. A whopping 61% of those surveyed regularly binge-watch shows, and binge-watching behavior is relatively consistent across demographics. According to a TiVo survey conducted in the spring of 2014, *Game of Thrones*, the popular television drama inspired by **George R. R. Martin**’s series, *A Song of Ice and Fire*, is the third-most binge-watched series. Television programs and movies based on literary novels often spur a resurgence of interest in the original books — this year alone has seen numerous shelf-to-screen (big and small) titles such as *The Fault in Our Stars*, *Divergent*, *The Giver*, *Outlander*, and *The 100*. It is unsurprising, then, that libraries across the country have programs, blog posts, bibliographies, and read-alike resources pertaining to *Game of Thrones* and the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series. New reviewer **Brandon Lewter** examines another title to add to the list of *Game of Thrones* resources: **Valerie Estelle Frankel**’s *Women in Game of Thrones: Power, Conformity and Resistance*. Many thanks to **Brandon** for sharing his thoughts about **Frankel**’s title. Happy reading, everyone! — **DV**


Reviewed by **Brandon Lewter** (Interlibrary Loan Coordinator and Reference, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston) <lewtarbj@cofc.edu>

I started reading *A Song of Ice and Fire*, **George R.R. Martin**’s epic fantasy novel series, in 2005, around the time the fourth book in the series was published. Being a huge **Tolkien** and **Lord of the Rings** fan, **Martin** filled a void that had been empty in my literary life since high school, when I read the **Lord of the Rings** series a dozen times. My adult self really appreciates **Martin**’s R-rated writing, and his willingness to kill off his main characters in order to keep the plot moving and interesting.

By the time I finished the first four books in *A Song of Ice and Fire* it was 2006. I had a grueling four years to wait until **Martin** would publish the fifth installment in the series, *A Dance With Dragons*, in 2011. Fortunately, while I anxiously wait for **Martin** to publish the next book, I have had HBO’s television adaptation of the series, titled *Game of Thrones*.

**Valerie Estelle Frankel** has written a book on this television series, titled *Women in Game of Thrones: Power, Conformity and Resistance*, which examines feminism and the portrayal of women in the series, while sometimes drawing on **Martin**’s novels for comparison and analysis. While the television series, for the most part, stays true to the novels, **Frankel** argues women’s roles are more one-dimensional in the show, especially when compared to most of the men’s characters. **Frankel**’s argument by breaking her text into three sections: the first, dealing with the controversial issues in the show; the second, examining and analyzing female archetypes and historical tropes found in the series; and third, which deals with the gender roles in Westeros, the fictional land where the series takes place.

From the onset of the text, I must admit I was a bit off-put by **Frankel**’s suggestions. Being a huge fan of the novel series and the show, I had never thought of the series as being sexist. Yes, there are many nude scenes of women, but there are quite a few nude scenes of males as well. Yes, some female characters are treated as lesser beings compared to their male counterparts, but this series is supposed to take place in a medieval-like time period where women were, for the most part, with the exception of royalty, treated as property. Saying the show is sexist is pointing out the obvious about the time period in which it takes place.

But then, after some consideration and discussion with my wife, I tried looking at **Frankel**’s text from a different point of view and I found she makes several great points that are, depending on your stance, quite appalling when it comes to the way women are portrayed in the show, especially when you know the great lengths **Martin** takes in the novels to empower women and make them dynamic characters. For example, as **Frankel** points out, the directors of the show do often show female nudity for no reason other than showing female nudity. Many scenes where females are nude are not in the novels and do not seem to further the plot or character development, where the scenes with male nudity often have a purpose, such as showing a male character’s homosexuality. **Frankel** goes on to make several other eye-lifting points with her poignant analysis in this text.

*Women in Game of Thrones* is a thought-provoking read. Anyone who is a fan of the novel series or show should read it to get an interesting perspective that is backed up with convincing evidence. You do not have to be a feminist to buy what **Frankel** is selling.