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Race Relations in America: Examining the Facts [Book Review]

Rob Tench

Old Dominion University, ftench@odu.edu

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opinion of journalists and his charge of “fake news” are represented here. The work also explores a wide range of viewpoints, from James Fenimore Cooper’s 1838 complaint about the tyranny of the press, to Barack Obama’s 2016 remarks about the polarization of the media. **VERDICT** A well-curated compilation of important primary documents representing more than 200 years of American aggression toward the media. General readers and students of journalism, communications, history, and political science will find this work useful.—**Rob Tench, Old Dominion Univ. Libs., Norfolk, VA**

LAW & CRIME

Selzer, Adam. *Murder Maps USA: Crime Scenes Revisited; Bloodstains to Ballistics, 1865–1939*. Thames & Hudson. Oct. 2021. 224p. ISBN 9780500252598. \$35. REF

In this engrossing work spanning the end of the Civil War through the start of World War II, Selzer (*H.H. Holmes: The True History of the White City Devil*) analyzes the scenes of notorious U.S. murders, including the killings of Lizzie Borden’s father and stepmother, the murder of Bobby Franks by Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, the kidnapping and murder of Charles Lindbergh’s infant son, and the assassinations of presidents Abraham Lincoln, James A. Garfield, and William McKinley. Selzer explains that this era saw huge technological advances in policing, criminology, and forensics, and the adoption of practices such as handwriting analysis, fingerprinting, and ballistics. Maps are a primary feature of Selzer’s book; each entry contains either a street map or floor plan of the site of the murder with fascinating details such as the murderer’s movements or the location of the victim(s). Each entry also includes a brief description of the murder, expert analysis, and numerous, often gruesome photographs. The volume features a brief introduction about the birth of criminology and modern forensics, a criminology matrix, more than 700 illustrations, and suggestions for further reading. **VERDICT** Due to the graphic nature of some of the photographs, this book is not recommended for everybody, but readers interested in true crime and forensics will appreciate Selzer’s singular volume.—**Dave Pugl, Elia Area P.L., Lake Zurich, IL**

LITERATURE

Westfahl, Gary. *Science Fiction Literature Through History: An Encyclopedia*. 2 vols. Greenwood. Jul. 2021. 766p. ISBN 9781440866166. \$204. REF

Westfahl (literature, Univ. of La Verne, CA; editor of *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Science Fiction and Fantasy*) has written widely on science fiction, but his new guide consists

of totally new content, beginning with a series of historical essays putting the genre in perspective—from “Science Fiction in the Ancient World and the Middle Ages” to “Science Fiction in the Twenty-First Century.” These are followed by thematic essays about the natural sciences and science fiction; literature, films, and television; fine art and graphic novels; gender and sexuality; racial issues in the genre; global science fiction; and more. Alphabetical entries, which comprise the bulk of the two-volume set, discuss authors of science fiction (Isaac Asimov, Octavia Butler, Olaf Stapledon, Roger Zelazny); writers outside the genre who significantly influenced the form (Aristophanes, Franz Kafka, William Shakespeare); subgenres (Black science fiction, gay and lesbian science fiction, space opera, steampunk); particular motifs (androids, extraterrestrial worlds, virtual reality, zombies); and major works (novels *Flatland* and *A Canticle for Leibowitz*, TV program *Doctor Who*, and sci-fi predecessors *The Divine Comedy*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and *The Odyssey*). Entries often include boxed sidebars and brief interviews with many of the living authors. **VERDICT** Although there are other similar guides to science fiction (from Routledge and Cambridge, for example), Westfahl’s clear and lively presentation and comprehensive knowledge and background will appeal to fans of the genre, as well as students (middle school through college) who are researching specific sci-fi authors, works, or themes.—**Marcia G. Welsh, formerly at Dartmouth Coll. Lib., Hanover, NH**

PERFORMING ARTS

Frazier, Paul. *The Cold War on Film*. ABC-CLIO. (Hollywood History). Jul. 2021. 166p. ISBN 9781440872129. \$63. REF

In this work about depictions of the Cold War in pop culture, Frazier (history, Gateway Community Coll., KY; *Germany at War*) covers nine films and one TV series. For each, he offers a plot synopsis, brief critical analysis, and historical background, then delves into the artistic aspects of the work, its cultural context, and its critical reception. Each entry also includes a list of further reading. The earliest of the films that Frazier examines is from the start of the Cold War (*The Third Man*, 1949), while the latest (*Charlie Wilson’s War*, *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*, *Bridge of Spies*, and the FX show *The Americans*) are from the 21st century. The book is part of ABC-CLIO’s “Hollywood History” series, which intends to address the accuracy of films and what they say about the eras in which they were made. This focus sometimes limits Frazier’s book; for instance, he doesn’t cover Atomic Age monster movies like

Them! or communist allegories like *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*; the most fantastical works are *The Manchurian Candidate* and *From Russia with Love*. The USSR produced many great films in the Cold War era, but most didn’t deal with contemporary matters and so fall outside Frazier’s scope. **VERDICT** It’s difficult to decide whom this volume is suited to. The history is accurate but very brief, while the film discussion is largely consumed by plot synopses. Not recommended.—**Robert Mixner, Bartholomew Cty. P.L., Columbus, IN**

★**Hall, Richard A. & others. *Robots in Popular Culture: Androids and Cyborgs in the American Imagination*. Greenwood. Jul. 2021. 325p. ISBN 9781440873843. \$97. REF**

Hall (*Pop Goes the Decade: The 2000s*) and contributors Lisa C. Bailey, Keith R. Claridy, and Josh Plock address depictions of robots in pop culture, as well as related issues and moral questions. Thematic essays discuss robots and slavery, robots as heroes and villains, and more. Signed, alphabetically arranged articles offer fascinating examinations of the creature in *Frankenstein*, the Buffybot on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Apple’s Siri, and Microsoft’s Tay chatbot. Each article covers the history of a particular robot, discusses the work in which it appears, explores the robot’s purpose, and includes a bibliography, black-and-white images, and references for further reading. Entries indicate when modern robotics and AI have caught up with fiction. For its proper historical perspective of literary robots and AI throughout popular culture, this title works well with Gregory Jerome Hampton’s *Imagining Slaves and Robots in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture: Reinventing Yesterday’s Slave with Tomorrow’s Robot*. Other works on the topic tend to focus more on the creation, design, and use of robots; tech’s effect on human behavior; or specific pop culture robots. **VERDICT** Fun, thought-provoking examination of contemporary society’s use of robots and the continual evolution of AI and robotics. Will fascinate sci-fi buffs, ethicists, computer scientists, programmers, and robotics engineers.—**Laurie Selwyn, formerly at Grayson Cty. Law Lib., Sherman, TX**

SOCIAL SCIENCES

★**Khanna, Nikki & Noriko Matsumoto. *Race Relations in America: Examining the Facts*. ABC-CLIO. (Contemporary Debates). May 2021. 284p. ISBN 9781440874000. \$65. REF**

In this extremely well-crafted addition to ABC-CLIO’s “Contemporary Debates” series, Khanna and Matsumoto (both sociology, Univ. of Vermont) expertly tackle some of the thorniest topics in current American race relations. They answer 34 questions

across seven chapters on the definitions and realities of race, systematic racism, power and privilege, crime and criminal justice, social policies, immigration, and the future of race relations in the United States. Their aim, which is superbly outlined in the preface, is to persuade readers to examine race in the context of historical circumstances and contemporary research rather than through their inherent biases and limited personal experiences. The format is simple: Each chapter

contains a brief general introduction; a series of questions with one- to two-page answers that use quantifiable, evidence-based data; a detailed explanation of the facts behind the answers; and a list of resources for further reading. Khanna and Matsumoto discuss white privilege, show that Black Americans are more likely than white Americans to be killed by the police, and dispel the misconception that immigrants take jobs away from U.S.-born workers. The volume concludes

with a thought-provoking piece asking if the election of Barack Obama marked the beginning of a new “post-racial” United States. In their responses, the authors plainly argue that American society is marked by systemic racism that is far from resolved. **VERDICT** A balanced and thorough look at the United States’ most important contemporary race issues, with timely content and excellent supporting documentation.—**Rob Tench, Old Dominion Univ. Libs., Norfolk, VA**

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Comics Plus

LibraryPass; comicsplusapp.com/

■ *By Francisca Goldsmith*

CONTENT Comics Plus is a database of new and backlist comics and graphic novels from more than 120 publishers. In addition to the comics, the resource contains topical and genre lists and well-designed training and publicity materials for library staff. New titles are added every Wednesday.



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USABILITY Comics Plus offers unlimited access and simultaneous use for all content. All reading is done within the LibraryPass ecosystem, on a smartphone or tablet or within a web browser. Once a title is selected and opened, it is considered moved to the user’s personal shelf and remains there until the user removes it. Manga published in traditional right-to-left orientation maintains that format in the screen versions. Readers can easily track their relative place in the story, as all books indicate the number of pages read and the total number of pages.

The LibraryPass platform is designed to make the sequential art format more accessible through libraries, including public, school, and academic institutions. Authentication options specifically for public libraries and those geared to school libraries are provided, and directions are supplied for school libraries using Mackin-Via accounts. A well-working app for iOS is currently available, and an Android app is forthcoming.

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PRICING Pricing for annual subscriptions varies by package, institution (public,

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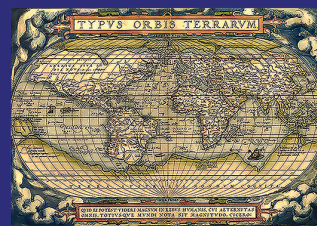
VERDICT Comics Plus is an excellent resource to build and expand both sequential art collections and public awareness of the format’s diversity and appeal. The content is broad, deep, rich, and nuanced and offers high-interest options for dedicated and novice comics readers alike. Supporting resources, including the fea-

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