

and hearing migrants and refugees, to complicate distanced and passive spectatorship, and to harness film, art, and visual media's capacities in order to produce active, dynamic observers who not only see and listen, but also are moved to act.

The structure of the collection is intelligently varied; essays that curate a corpus of work for analysis, such as Dudley Andrew's opening essay, mingle with those that opt for close readings of one or two works, such as Kara's study of *El mar la mar*. In this way, the collection proves useful for readers new to the subject matter while exposing experienced readers to emerging scholarship at the intersection of film, media, art, and migration and refugee studies.

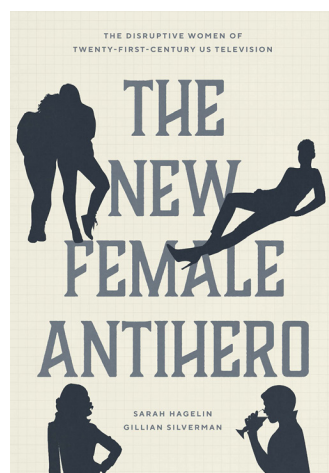
One of the most profound aspects of this collection is the editors' decision to cherish recurrence: a number of the contributors share an interest in approaching temporalities of suspension and a need not only to harness empathy, but also to critique the ways in which the camera mobilizes empathy, the tension between visibility and invisibility, and even the utility of such theoretical tools as Hamid Naficy's "accented cinema." Points of convergence such as these, as well as the decision to incorporate speculative conclusions from each contributor, enable the collection to maintain the iterative, conversational quality of the conference environment from which many of these works initially emerged.

HANNAH HUSSAMY is a PhD candidate in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Michigan.

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JESSICA CASEY

The New Female Antihero: The Disruptive Women of Twenty-First-Century US Television, by Sarah Hagelin and Gillian Silverman



Selfish, misanthropic, lawless, vengeful, apathetic, abject—those are just a few of the words used to describe women in Sarah Hagelin and Gillian Silverman's new text, *The New Female Antihero: The Disruptive Women of Twenty-First-Century US Television*. The catch, though, is that

these are not necessarily negative attributes when used to describe a female antihero. The authors define an antihero as "a character who undercuts the common good either through explicitly criminal acts or through pointedly solipsistic behaviors ... [who] must also position herself against the norms of civilization" (2). Unlike the transgressive women characters of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s—Mary Tyler Moore, Roseanne Barr, Ellen DeGeneres—the new female antihero is characterized "not by pluck but by punch and pathos" (x). Because the role of women in society has long been associated with reproduction and homemaking, Hagelin and Silverman suggest that the new female antihero's rejection of these norms in their pursuits of power and freedom offers a "more profound threat to the status quo" than the difficult men of quality television because they disrupt the normative narrative of growth and resiliency surrounding women (xiii).

The introduction provides the theoretical and ideological grounding for Hagelin and Silverman's work. They found their argument on the idea "that this emergent protagonist is an ambivalent response to the achievements and failures of liberal feminism" and elaborate on this with a thorough, yet concise, explanation of feminist-versus-post-feminist media debates (xi). After the introduction, the text is divided into two parts analyzing different genres of female antiheroes: the dramatic and the comedic. The authors claim that the difference between the two is that "both the dramatic and the comedic antihero know what they're up against, but the former compensates through massive displays of strength and invulnerability, while the latter often simply sits back and accepts her own powerlessness" (13).

The first half of the book, "Ambition TV," dives into the dramatic antihero's search for power and how she participates in patriarchal systems to achieve her goals. Using the characters Cersei Lannister (Lena Headey) and Daenerys Targaryen (Emilia Clarke) from *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011–19) as their foundational examples, they craft a narrative that Cersei and Daenerys are essentially the same character. Referencing the likes of Hortense Spillers, the authors demonstrate how the undeniable biological link between mother and child allows for someone like Daenerys to capitalize on "discourses of female empowerment and patriarchal domination," whereas Cersei, who is willing to sacrifice her own children in her quest for power, becomes an example for the viewer of how far is too far (33).

Hagelin and Silverman note, though, that because Daenerys often receives more favorable shot framing and musical scores, she is raised to the status of idol while Cersei falls to the role of villain. They also pay specific attention to how both women are subjected to political marriages and in turn use those to cement their own roles as matriarchs. These ideas of motherhood and marriage, and the ways they can be subverted to become tools of power, are a through line in the first half of the book, which also discusses the conventional womanhood that Elizabeth Jennings (Keri Russell) performs in *The Americans* (FX, 2013–18) and the threat to domestic stability that Carrie Mathison (Claire Danes) presents in *Homeland* (Showtime, 2011–20).

The book's second half, "Shame TV," turns to the comedic female antihero, which Hagelin and Silverman suggest is a more powerful and subversive character because of her unwillingness to participate in the fight against the patriarchy. Unlike Murphy Brown's professional competence or Carrie Bradshaw's attachment to romantic coupling, these comedic female antiheroes are "apathetic instead of ambitious, trapped instead of triumphant" (xi). The show *Girls* (2012–17) is one of their primary examples. Hannah Horvath (Lena Dunham) is "narcissistic, failure prone, economically unstable, and uninterested in pursuing likeability," often even a willing participant in her own humiliation (118).

She shares these traits with the other comedic antiheroes of Shame TV: Ilana Wexler and Abbi Abrams in *Broad City* (Comedy Central, 2014–19), Issa Dee of *Insecure* (2016–21), and Bridgette Bird of *SMILF* (2017–19). The characters in *Girls* have an anti-aspirational streak that "thwarts the logic of self-making, progress, and reproductive futurity." The authors astutely observe that Horvath (Dunham) stops being an antihero when she becomes pregnant because she no longer reflects the ideals of apathy she had previously perpetuated. She is no longer an edgy and rebellious protagonist who refuses to conform to society, but instead becomes an example of someone who seemingly grows out of her unlikability, as if equating antiherodom with youthfulness.

Hagelin and Silverman maintain, however, that female antiheroism is both a choice and a movement, regardless of age, ability, or race. Female antiheroism on television is an exploration of how a woman does not have to meet or desire to meet every social norm set before her. The authors recognize that the site of female antiherodom is still developing in television and acknowledge that

many of the characters they reference in their book hold traditional racially and economically privileged positions. Where white female comedic antiheroes are often characterized as being "anti-aspirational," their Black counterparts are not afforded the same luxury (161). Hannah Horvath does not have to try to achieve job stability or be concerned about the public/private divide of her life in the same way that Issa Dee (Issa Rae) does in *Insecure*.

This distinction opens up an interesting conversation about the respectability politics of Black characters and how they reflect the contemporary sociopolitical standing of Black Americans and Black women. Building on the theoretical work of W.E.B Du Bois, Rebecca Wanzo, and Kristin Warner, Hagelin and Silverman showcase how characters like Issa Dee and Olivia Pope (Kerry Washington) in *Scandal* (ABC, 2012–18) have to contend with the abjection of blackness and must negotiate the ways in which they want to rebel against systemic oppression. They argue that the creation of these characters and their authentic depictions of blackness and black communities provide a more politically charged television landscape than that of their white equivalents because "the cost of transgressing feminine social norms is higher for Black characters, who are often expected to be models of middle-class decorum" (6). There is an added risk factor, too, for Black female antiheroes on the basis of their race intersecting with their gender, making any rebellious acts, no matter how small, significantly more dangerous than those undertaken by their white counterparts.

The New Female Antihero is a call to action for all women, and all viewers, to challenge the problematic female characters that they are televisually consuming and the stereotypes they are engaging with in their lives. As Hagelin and Silverman conclude, the antiheroes are "not giving up. And neither should we" (207). They provide an unapologetic look at the unlikability and abjection of femininity and the power that those who embody it can hold.

JESSICA CASEY holds a BFA in filmmaking from Virginia Commonwealth University and is currently pursuing her master's degree in English, also at VCU. Her research interests include media studies, critical race theory, Indigenous studies, and feminist theory.

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