CFP: Critical Essays about Cartoon Network’s "Adventure Time"

Discussion published by Paul Thomas on Wednesday, October 28, 2020

Overview: In 2010, Cartoon Network debuted a new animated series called Adventure Time, and within just a few short years, the show had become both a pop culture phenomenon and a critical darling; perhaps this reception is best exemplified by the words of the George Foster Peabody Awards Board of Jurors, which praised the show for “subtly teach[ing] lessons about growing up, accepting responsibility, and becoming who you’re meant to be.” But despite this admiration, not many works of scholarship have looked at the show through a critical lens. This proposed anthology, which will be published by McFarland and Company, thus seeks to fill a hole in the literature by giving the series the critical attention it deserves.

Chapters in this collection will focus on Adventure Time, with a critical emphasis on the profounder messages inherent to the series. Authors may choose to analyze the portrayal of certain characters, the show’s myriad story arcs, or even individual episodes. Chapters should function as critical readings or close analyses that employ a particular theory or theoretical lens (e.g., critical feminism, queer theory, psychoanalysis, Marxism) to elucidate the show’s deeper meaning(s). Possible chapter topics include:

- how characters like Marceline, BMO, and Princess Bubblegum subvert/uphold norms about gender and/or sexuality, or how they queer/affirm aspects of normative gendered culture
- the narratological structure of Adventure Time, and the role played by the show’s mytharc/mythology
- the show’s interest in philosophical topics, such as humanism, existentialism, or transhumanism
- the politics of Ooo and how the series played around with topics like democracy, monarchy, capitalism, political oppression, and the social contract
- how the series (re)developed its tone and its characters over time
- Adventure Time’s interest in spirituality
- the humor and affect of the series, and its impact on the viewer
- how the series used music to tell stories, advance the plot, or sell character emotions
- a critical or ethnographic look at the show’s fandom, either in person or online
- close readings of individual episodes or closely-connected story arcs (e.g., the
miniseries), in which the author explains some overarching thematic point.

Finished chapters should be around 4,000 to 6,000 words. This collection is aimed at a scholarly audience, but final write-ups should be as accessible as possible, employing simplified language, clear explanations of academic terms, and brief overviews of any major theories that might be employed. Please format chapter drafts according to the Chicago Manual of Style 17th edition.

**Deadline for Proposal:** January 31, 2021.

**How to Submit a Proposal:** Formal chapter proposals of 250-500 words (or completed articles)—along with a brief biography, resume, or CV—should be sent to Paul Thomas (paulthomas@ku.edu) with the subject line “Adventure Time Essay Proposal.” Inquiries about potential chapter topics not mentioned here are also welcome.

**About the Editor:** Thomas—a library specialist at the University of Kansas—is the author of *Exploring the Land of Ooo: An Unofficial Overview and Production History of Cartoon Network’s “Adventure Time”* (2020), published by the University of Kansas Libraries. He has also written *I Wanna Wrock! The World of Harry Potter-Inspired “Wizard Rock” and Its Fandom* (2018), an ethnographic monograph published by McFarland.

**About the Publisher:** McFarland & Co. is a leading independent publisher of academic nonfiction. They specialize in books about pop culture, sports, military, and history, in addition to many other topics. McFarland currently offers nearly 7000 books in print.