The strongest achievement of this book is its focused scope, which allows each chapter to stand on its own while still building off the others in the book. While this is not a definitive statement on all aspects of sexuality in 1970s TV (Levine leaves aside for the most part a discussion of socially relevant sitcoms and the backdrop of policies that ushered in those programs), *Wallowing in Sex* will prompt readers to rethink the way in which they remember this decade of TV and the ways in which they assess current trends of sexual depictions in TV also. Levine clearly and adroitly lays out the impact of something as “simple” as the highly rated daytime soap wedding between Luke and Laura on *General Hospital* or the sexual innuendoes of *Three’s Company*, asking readers to take television seriously as a voice in how our country develops understandings of something as fundamental as sexuality. This move alone should lead many to read this book and consider how popular culture today is continuing to negotiate this very personal aspect of our lives.

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Eithne Quinn’s exceptionally executed study, *Nuthin’ but a “G” Thang: The Culture and Commerce of Gangsta Rap* signifies the fullest potential of Hip Hop scholarship and its undeniable place in the fields of American Studies and Cultural Studies proper. At the onset, Quinn situates her argument squarely within one of the longstanding and ongoing debates in Cultural Studies. On the one side oppression like that resulting from the social invisibility, unchecked globalization, and post-industrialism that plagues the West Coast US urban environs (from which gangsta rap emerged in the late 1980s) can create a critical consciousness. The kind of social critique found in powerful rap lyrics like NWA’s anti-police brutality anthem “Fuck the Police” or Tupac’s redemptive “Dear Mama.” Yet more often then not gangsta rap also reflects a pervasive false consciousness in the Marxist sense where ideology is posited as “a kind of ‘veil’ over the eyes of the oppressed” (Quinn 15). False consciousness is reflected in much of the misogyny that runs rampant through the lyrics of gangsta rap; where women have become the local (and easy) targets of choice for too many rappers and too many songs to name here. More importantly for Quinn though is the consumerism reflected in the “blinged-out” era of gangsta rap music where spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on jewelry and cars is commonplace for artists who ‘represent’ communities in desperate need of economic resources.

According to Quinn, gangsta rap inhabits the deconstructed spaces between these two pillars of argumentation amongst scholars and researchers. “[G]angsta rap tends to represent false consciousness and at the same time reflect on it; to angrily spout antiprogressive sentiments, and to see the pitfalls and despair of this stance; to verbally abuse women in the most offensive terms, while registering the power of the opposite sex; to enact marketable stereotypes of black masculinity, and then to critique these very depictions” (Quinn 15). Her writing eloquently ushers the reader into her discourse. Her opening “parable” brilliantly analyzes gangsta rap’s precarious relationship to commercial culture through an incisive interpretation of an Ice Cube malt liquor “advert” and that same brand’s requisite product placement in the film *Boyz N the Hood*. She characterizes the shift from the flagrant promotion of malt liquor to the more subtle product-placed mode thusly: “[t]he shift in emphasis can be summarized as the superseding of commodified authenticity with a new subcultural articulation of authentic commodification” (Quinn 7). From there she establishes her framework, the politics of representation, a triangulation
of structuralism, culturalism, and Marxism that allows her to excavate and explicate “the wider structures and deeper determinants that shape the popular-culture terrain” (Quinn 17).

Some of these determinants are the forefathers of gangsta rap such as Stackolee (or Stagolee) and other Bad Nigger figures that precede the Tupacs and Ice Cubes of the genre. Quinn’s objective handling of African American folk and cultural history suggest an academic expertise unparalleled thus far in studies on gansta rap music and culture. Her chapter on Tupac Shakur stands as the single most reflective historical explication of one of the most written-about figures of Hip Hop Culture and unlike others she does not betray herself to be a fan of the genre or as one of the misguided haters attempting to censor that about which they know little. Her only misstep may be that she invests a bit too much in the politics of representation as tools of empowerment for the artisans and entrepreneurs of this currently fading super subgenre of Hip Hop music. But considering her astute management of one of pop culture’s (and Black Music’s) most complex and conflicted forms, Nuthin’ but a “G” Thang is by far the definitive scholarly work on gangsta rap music and culture.

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