In Memory of Jane Feuer (April 24, 1951-January 8, 2021)
Mimi White and Matthew Tinkcom

Professor Jane Feuer passed away on January 8, 2021. She was a ground-breaking scholar of film and television, whose writing and teaching offered critical insights into the pleasures of popular media in contemporary life.

Jane grew up in Ohio and attended the University of Indiana where she majored in English, before going to the University of Iowa for her MA (1975) and PhD (1978) in film and broadcasting. In 1981 Dr. Feuer joined the Department of English at the University of Pittsburgh, where she taught undergraduate and graduate courses for nearly 40 years. Jane was also an advocate for people experiencing discrimination both in the academy and beyond. She served on and chaired the University of Pittsburgh's Anti-Discrimination Policy Committee, which, among other things, worked to establish domestic partner policies at the university. With her wife Kathie Ferraro, she was also an active supporter of Pittsburgh's Women's Law Project.

Jane had an abiding interest in film and popular media. Indeed, when asked why she went to graduate school, she replied that someone in Iowa had offered her money to watch movies for five years, so it seemed like a good idea. Many people will recognize Jane's humor in her explanation. She did much more than just watch movies, even if her pathbreaking work on the Hollywood musical and in television studies was always grounded in careful and insightful readings of texts. This includes three books--the co-edited *MTM: Quality Television* (1985), *The Hollywood Musical* (2nd ed., 1993), and *Seeing Through the Eighties: Television and Reaganism* (1995), along with numerous journal articles and book chapters where she addressed genre theory, liveness, quality television, and melodrama and serial form, among other topics. She was particularly interested in the specific appeals of popular media, and the ways in which they mobilized what she would call high art and modernist practices, especially through media reflexivity. While she deftly probed and exposed the cultural and ideological dynamics of the texts she studied, she never lost sight of the pleasure they brought to viewers, including Jane herself.

In addition to her publications, Jane presented her work at conferences and speaking engagements around the world. Over the course of her career she held fellowships at Cornell University, Curtin University in Australia, Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, Germany, and the University of Tübingen, where she was the Fulbright German Distinguished Chair in American Studies. In 1989 she helped found Console-ing Passions, a feminist media studies conference that held its first conference in 1992.

Jane was also plain-spoken, down to earth, and frequently hilarious. She was willing to say things that she thought needed saying, often things that others might be thinking but didn't have the nerve to say. Her candor could offer a refreshing and productive perspective. For example, in the mid-1980s, when television work was still rather new at SCMS (then simply SCS), the more frequent approach to the medium saw it as one of passivity. Jane extended the

critical discussion to understand the specific appeals of genres to audiences, a persistent question that shaped all her thought. In an early panel on television that emphasized the consumerist function of TV, she responded that, “We all know that. It’s nothing new. And it doesn’t tell us anything about the specific appeals of different programs.”

Jane understood that popular culture—including television—was never just one thing over and over again. Rather, it was different things to different people at different times. It meant there were many ways to approach and analyze television. She modeled this in her own work, variously focused on industry practices, the textual and cultural dynamics of particular genres or programs, and questions of reception and viewing formations. Her appreciation of popular culture extended beyond film and television, especially to the material culture of Christmas, and she avidly collected glass Christmas ornaments and vintage Christmas cards.

A few weeks after the loss of her beloved wife, Kathie, last summer, Jane received a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer and was in hospice care at home until her death. She was a dear friend to many people in our field and beyond. Indeed, this past fall she expressed surprise that she had so many friends and people who loved her. For all of us who knew her, this was no surprise. Her loss will be felt by many, even as we have her work to console us.