

Book Reviews

Chess, Shira. *Play Like a Feminist*. MIT Press, 2020.

In her timely book, *Play Like a Feminist*, Shira Chess examines video games as contemporary cultural productions. The author is particularly interested in analyzing the role of play at the nexus of feminisms and gaming. Critical of the status quo of video games as often “violent, addictive, and predictors of toxic masculinity” (108), Chess wants her book “to call everything into question and challenge our understanding of play as it relates to larger inequalities” (xiii – “A Note About Feminism”). *Play Like a Feminist* is informative, well-researched, engaging, and fun to read. It is both suitable for scholars of gaming and media studies and accessible to wider audiences beyond academia interested in gaming and its implications for our understanding of contemporary society.

An Associate Professor of Entertainment and Media Studies in the Department of Telecommunications in the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia, Chess has widely published on gaming and digital media in general, including numerous scholarly articles, as well as the monographs *Ready Player Two: Women Gamers and Designed Identity* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017) and *Folklore, Horror Stories, and the Slender Man: The Development of an Internet Mythology* (Palgrave Pivot, 2014, with Eric Newsom). 2020’s *Play Like a Feminist* continues this expertise at the intersections of gaming and various feminisms.

The introduction highlights the role of play and interprets playing as a “tool of radical disruption” (6). Chess defines play as “an issue of equality” (6), focusing on the power of play (7) and the intersectionality of play and feminisms (13). Employing theoretical approaches from game studies, gender studies, media studies, and design studies, Chess argues that, in gaming, “feminisms can find new strategies for overcoming political and cultural oppression” (7). The author positions her book as “an intervention and provocation” in light of these claims (14).

Play Like a Feminist is divided into five major chapters. The first chapter, “Playing Like a Girl,” explores the origins of this phrase. Though arguing for its empowering and positive potential, Chess points out its problematic nature since “it maintains the narrative of cisgendered ideologies” (34). The book does not

reinforce binary oppositions, instead it emphasizes the act of playing like a feminist as “a disruptive yet inclusive practice” (40). In fact, Chess refers to “feminisms” in the plural throughout the book and stresses the potential of “disrupting patriarchal hegemonies” (39).

In Chapter 2, “PWNing Leisure,” Chess focuses on the importance of leisure and what people can learn from feminist gaming for everyday life. Detailing the complex nature of leisure, which is not necessarily the same as play, the author contextualizes contemporary notions of leisure in feminist leisure studies. Coupling this with reflections on social class (55), Chess argues that, “feminists need to fight for leisure ... to PWN our leisure” (58). The term “PWN” is taken from video game leetspeak, a form of internet lingo that modifies words via alternate spellings or character replacement (i.e., “l337” in place of “leet”). As a footnote indicates, “PWN” is pronounced “pone,” as a misspelling of, and in an allusion to, “own” (58). Chess explains that the word can be “used aggressively (‘I PWNED YOU’) or self-deprecatingly (‘We got PWNED’)” (58). Either way, according to the author, it “indicates a win and a kind of domination within a playful space” (58).

Turning the focus to social protest, Chapter 3, “Play to Protest,” argues that play can function as a “source of agency for feminists and activists” (67). Chess admits that the relationship between activism and play is seemingly contradictory but historicizes playful protests (71-72) and calls for more gaming activism that includes play. Citing Hélène Cixous’s reading of the laugh of Medusa (81), Chess also views laughter as “the ultimate tool of playful protest” (79).

Chapter 4, “Gaming Feminism,” continues to explore the intersections of feminisms and gaming cultures. Throughout the book, Chess alludes to GamerGate which she defines in a footnote as, “a hashtag campaign perpetrated by the alt-right, deliberately targeting women within and around the video game industry” (3). This chapter explicitly attacks such attitudes, as Chess writes: “I want to annihilate the toxic cultures, mediocre products, and public reputation of this industry” (86). Highly critical of some of the sexist practices of gaming, Chess expresses her aim in writing this book: “I want to destroy the industry, disrupt the playground, and find ways to make games better” (86). The author is adamant: “To reiterate: I want to destroy the video game industry. Not to see it gone forever, and not to end the medium, but rather to see it rise like a phoenix into a new form that lights up the world with its fury” (105). This hopeful note situates Chess’s work in the transformative potential of feminist gaming.

Finally, Chapter 5, “Gaming in Circles,” proposes an experiment for people to start gaming in circles, which Chess envisions as akin to book clubs (109). The author suggests that this would provide a “sense of community” (123). It might also attract what Chess calls the “game curious” as an audience, people who might be interested in games, but have, for one reason or another, not yet had a chance to engage with gaming playfully (108). The book’s conclusion extends this vision by positioning playing like a feminist as a “call to arms” (133). Chess invites people to “Play More” (129), while also providing a “Blueprint for Starting Your Own Gaming Circle” in the appendix (135-141).

An engaging call for reform in the gaming industry and a powerful call for action to anyone interested in gaming and feminisms, *Play Like a Feminist* provides a much-needed examination of video games and the cultural practices surrounding them. Chess proposes play as a powerful medium of agency to dismantle some of the problematic practices. The book stages an intervention and suggests innovative ways to escape such oppression. It is both educating and entertaining to read in its call to play more – and to play like a feminist.

Jana Fedtke

Northwestern University in Qatar

Johnson, Malynnda, and Christopher J. Olson, eds. *Normalizing Mental Illness and Neurodiversity in Entertainment Media: Quieting the Madness*. Routledge, 2021.

The media landscape, as it pertains to mental illness and neurodiversity, has been wrought with negative, stereotypical, and inaccurate portrayals. This can feed into the cultural reproduction of beliefs about mental illness and neurodiversity, leading to further social stigma. Malynnda Johnson and Christopher J. Olson’s edited 2021 collection *Normalizing Mental Illness and Neurodiversity in Entertainment Media: Quieting the Madness* offers an important look at these representations and their potential for positive influence. Each chapter assesses the significance of representation, the approaches to destigmatizing mental illness, and the place that media holds in a broader cultural conversation.

In Chapter 1, Malynnda Johnson and Tara Walker emphasize the importance of representations of mental health, mental illness, and neurodiversity. They outline

the tone of the collection, which emphasizes the depictions available, their shortcomings, and the potential held by media to reduce stigma and increase understanding. Chapter 2 by Jerralyn Moudry shifts the focus to children-centered programming with her examination of *The Loud House*. The author notes media's potential to combat stigma, particularly through children's television. Continuing with media aimed at younger audiences, Hayley T. Markovich uses Chapter 3 to highlight how media can change over time. In the case of *Finding Nemo* and *Finding Dory*, the way that Dory is written shifts from humorous to a more serious and encouraging look at navigating the world with a disability.

Chapter 4 by Ali Gattoni moves the discussion toward media for older audiences and the presence of more complicated stories about relationships with mental illness. These illustrations may not reflect best practices or be wholly accurate but can resonate with audiences who have had similar experiences. According to Gattoni, the American family drama television series *This is Us* (2016-2022) effectively subverts common stereotypical representations while illustrating the importance of family contexts for coping with mental illness. In Chapter 5, Craig A. Meyer and Daniel Preston discuss the *Star Trek* franchise's positive representations of neurodiversity and how media can have profound impacts on viewers who live with disabilities, showing them potential futures and realities that do not stigmatize or pathologize disability.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 move the discussion toward representations of the autism spectrum. In Chapter 6, Benson Rajan addresses implied representations in *The Big Bang Theory* and *Community*, juxtaposing the potential to educate and raise awareness with the tendency for sitcoms to use these experiences for humor. This can lead to misunderstandings and social hesitations toward neurodiversity. Chapter 7 by Malynnda Johnson further considers the autism spectrum with an analysis of Sherlock Holmes. Although the character is not officially diagnosed, many readings of the character suggest autism. Holmes has been celebrated by many with autism as a chance to identify with media representation and to positively shift perceptions about neurodiversity. Chapter 8 by Magnus Danielson and Mike Kemani also considers a character with autism in the Swedish/Danish co-production *The Bridge*, noting that although the show's main character is treated well by other characters, the story still pathologizes her and presents her as abnormal.

In Chapter 9, the focus shifts toward depression in media. McKenzie L. Caldwell and Rodney F. Dick consider Joe Wright's 2005 adaptation of *Pride and*

Prejudice. Departing from common depictions, the main character experiences life and love without portraying depression as insurmountable. Chapter 10 by Marta Lopera-Mármol, Mònika Jiménez-Morales, and Manel Jiménez-Morales considers depression alongside eating disorders in *My Mad Fat Diary*. The authors point out that *MMFD* highlights personal acceptance and honest depictions of mental health without deemphasizing the possibility of recovery. Sarah Symonds LeBlanc uses Chapter 11 to explore postpartum depression in sitcoms. Highlighting the potential of television to explore real experiences and communicate personal stories of mental illness to expand beyond stereotypical representations and, in some cases, lend support to audiences with similar experiences.

Chapter 12 by Sherryl Wilson continues to explore uses of media to empower and educate audiences about mental illness, emphasizing how individuals, including comedians, can use media as a platform to express their own experiences and connect with audiences going through similar struggles. Chapter 13 sees Jason Lee discuss representations of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the films *Taxi Driver* (Martin Scorsese, 1976) and *You Were Never Really Here* (Lynne Ramsay, 2017), noting that such depictions have been an important means of raising cultural awareness and exposing audiences to some of the effects of PTSD. Again, this creates opportunities for audiences to learn and see their own experiences reflected in media. More opportunities to underscore understandings are covered in Chapter 14, with Shannon O'Sullivan discussing the approach of *Shameless* in portraying experiences with bipolar disorder in ways that avoid harmful stereotyping. A primary positive takeaway noted by the author is engaging with characters and their experiences as more than one-dimensional and stereotyped tropes.

Finally, CarrieLynn D. Reinhard and Christopher J. Olson use Chapter 15 to address mental health and eating disorders among professional wrestlers. Being closer to reality, professional wrestling provides unique opportunities to address mental health challenges, but the authors point out that this can be limited and incomplete. The approach typically emphasizes individual stories of overcoming challenges, with less focus on the broader picture of mental health. However, this still offers chances to highlight, call attention to, and alleviate some of the stigma associated with mental health struggles.

These essays provide valuable insights into the scope of media representations and the significant place that they can hold for shaping self-perceptions and cultural understandings. Although each chapter focuses on different topics and forms of

media, they each center their focus on representation, impact, and the potential that media holds to influence cultural viewpoints for the better. Specifically, there is an emphasis on the position that media occupies when it comes to stigma and the barriers that this can produce for society as well as individuals who receive these messages. Although these are snapshots of a broader landscape when it comes to representation in media, each example and investigation presents a clearer picture of what is and has been happening with media portrayals of mental illness and neurodiversity. In a social environment that often presents these topics in negative ways by relying on stereotypes or reducing these experiences to plot points, shifting representation and impacts on audiences are essential to consider and explore.

The topic of representation of neurodiversity and mental illness is complex, and this collection captures the nuance of these discussions well. In some cases, representations of these experiences are wholly off the mark, succumbing to tropes using storylines in ways that make them sensational, stereotypical, or even only briefly use them to move a narrative forward. In other cases, however, it is important to center the audiences' experiences and readings, whether these overlook narratives that try to move away from stereotypical illustrations or emphasize the significance of representations that may remain unnamed in an official capacity. The interplays between content and interpretation are important and can expand or hinder the effectiveness of these representations. Media – as well as audience engagement with it – can offer both mirrors and roadmaps for cultural tendencies, stagnations, and change. The essays collected in *Normalizing Mental Illness and Neurodiversity in Entertainment Media* serve as signposts that help point readers toward more honest portrayals of mental illness and neurodiversity.

Christine Tomlinson
University of California, Irvine

Osmond, Andrew. *BFI Film Classics: Spirited Away*. Bloomsbury, 2020.

When discussing Hayao Miyazaki's oeuvre, it is difficult to find an entry more lauded by critics and fans than his monolithic film *Spirited Away*. Colorful and mysterious, the film follows Chihiro, an adolescent who is suddenly transported to a bustling bathhouse in the spirit world. Viewing this classic, it is difficult to avoid

escapism as endless parades of gods and their attendants crowd the screen. Yet this pleasant escape often causes viewers to miss a variety of cultural references and commentaries on the contemporary world, thus warranting multiple viewings. As such, Osmond's book is an illuminating volume, but in other aspects it becomes a contradictory work of criticism and commentary on this beloved film.

As an entry in the British Film Institute's "Film Classics" series, Osmond's work seeks to blend criticism and interpretation with an overview of the film's plot (whether this blend is successfully maintained will be discussed later). This volume is 116 pages and consists of eight chapters. The first four chapters give readers critical context surrounding the film's inception and inspiration and are respectively titled "Being Spirited Away," "On the Train," "Background," and "The Origins of *Spirited Away*." Conversely, the following three chapters rehash the film's plot while mixing in interpretations of scenes and homages to cultural references of which readers may not be aware. These chapters are titled "Into the Woods: The Journey Begins," "In the Bathhouse," and "Adventures in Wonderland," and are followed by a conclusive chapter that offers Osmond's reflections on the film and its legacy.

Throughout his contextual chapters, Osmond is adept in bridging the gaps between the film and its larger background. Over the course of this section, readers are treated to an overview of a contemporary critic's responses to the film, a brief history of Miyazaki's career within the larger context of Japanese animation, and a dive into the film's production history and inspirations. As Osmond recounts the peaks and valleys of Miyazaki and Studio Ghibli's work, readers are pushed to root for *Spirited Away*'s success as much as its creators did. Other insights such as the effect that WWII had on Miyazaki and which children's books inspired some of the film's visuals add context to many of its creative choices.

However, following these background chapters are three which review the entirety of the film's plot in detail. While these sections include fascinating insights into the influence that Shintoism and Japanese culture had on the film and feature quotations from the staff, they are ultimately dominated by a bloated plot summary. This leads to my primary concern with Osmond's text: it is not sure what it wants to be, nor is it sure of its intended audience. For fans of Miyazaki and Ghibli, the contextual chapters truly shine, giving the film an added touch of humanity and a sense of sacrifice for the labor of love that appears on screen. Yet these fans soon find themselves agonizing through the slog that becomes Osmond's film summary, contenting themselves with the nuggets of cinematic interpretation that he

occasionally peppers into the text. However, if this book is meant for people who have not seen *Spirited Away*, then they may be better off simply watching the film. As a critic of animated films himself, Osmond would certainly agree that *Spirited Away*'s genius is better recognized on the screen than rehashed in print.

Aside from these generic difficulties, there are some notable inaccuracies in Osmond's volume that necessitate concern. Throughout his work he occasionally misses the mark with his research, which becomes apparent even to casual fans of Studio Ghibli. In particular, there are many moments where he misnames Miyazaki's films or characters. One instance of this occurs when Osmond discusses the 1984 environmental film *Naussicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, which he repeatedly calls "*Naussicaä of the Valley of Wind*" (35, 36), omitting the additional "the" from the film's title. More heedless, though, is Osmond's overview of *My Neighbor Totoro* where he correctly identifies its principal characters while setting up the film but then mixes them up in his next paragraph. Initially he tells us that the protagonists are "the toddler Mei and her big sister Satsuki" but goes on to inaccurately note that "Satsuki, on the brink of adolescence, hesitates before leaping on the nature god Totoro's chest" (38). This wouldn't seem nearly as careless if Osmond had failed to include an image of this scene below that clearly shows "the toddler Mei" rather than her older sister. Although this may seem pedantic to some, it is important to note that these mistakes have remained in place after this volume was revised and republished in 2020. While the occasional error is not a cardinal sin, it seems out of character for a work published by the British Film Institute and unfortunately leads readers to distrust Osmond's authority. This casts a shadow of doubt on the other research he has done thus far, calling into question its accuracy.

Much like *Spirited Away*'s villain Yubaba and her nicer counterpart Zeniba, Osmond's volume seems to live a double life. In its most illuminating portions, readers are exposed to background information that makes the film much more meaningful for them. Basking in the warmth of the Zeniba's cottage, readers find themselves relaxing and enjoying this aspect of Osmond's book. Yet, at other times, his work becomes more like Yubaba, demanding and somewhat careless, as readers trudge through a bathhouse crowded with tired plot summaries and textual mistakes. Reflecting on this volume, it is hard not to treat it like Miyazaki's witches: Both witches are identical, but radically different in character, leading one to question whether they are truly related or the clever trick of one witch who is playacting. Similarly, readers will find two Osmonds in this volume, one that is reliable and engaging, and another that casts doubt on the first while pushing

readers through lengthy synopses. Like Chihiro's labor in the bathhouse, parsing out these Osmonds and determining this volume's use becomes a task itself.

Samuel Grant
Danville Area Community College and Indiana State University

Swalwell, Melanie. *Homebrew Gaming and the Beginnings of Vernacular Digitality*. The MIT Press, 2021.

People with a passing knowledge of early video game history are likely familiar with the Golden Age of Arcades; classic games like *Pong*, *Space Invaders*, and *Pac-Man*; and major companies like Atari, Nintendo, and Sega. Gaming history has often focused on the parallel video game centers of America and Japan, but in *Homebrew Gaming and the Beginnings of Vernacular Digitality*, Melanie Swalwell explores a more obscure, though no less significant, track: the use of 8-bit microcomputers as gaming machines in the late 1970s to mid-1980s in Australia and New Zealand. By turning the lens on computers made by brands such as Microbee, Amiga, Commodore, Atari, Apple, and others, Swalwell expands our understanding of early video games and everyday practices of amateur computer users.

Seeking to rectify gaps in both computer history and video game history, Swalwell contends in Chapter 1 that during this era computers moved beyond the realm of research labs and universities and into the homes of consumers. In the beginning, the average person struggled to understand what computers were used for and why anybody would purchase one. Swalwell answers that question by showing how "ordinary" people, many of them learning to code for the first time, created uses for these new machines. One of those uses was the creation of video games.

The book's title, *Homebrew Gaming*, suggests a focus on amateur programmers creating video games without any formal training or corporate oversight, inventing new ways of programming these machines. While gaming is a major topic of discussion (the games discussed are frequently esoteric and largely forgotten by the masses, though by no means uninteresting), the overriding focus is more on these everyday folks and what they did with computers, both from a software and hardware standpoint. The study pulls together multiple sources of information,

utilizing archival research on video games, computer magazines, computer advertisements, and other artifacts from the period, supplemented with extensive interviews with homebrew coders, many of whom were teenagers at the time they owned a microcomputer. While acknowledging that memories have faded nearly forty years after this period ended, Swalwell compellingly argues that computer historians owe it to future generations to document this era now, before it disappears from public consciousness altogether. This approach is broad and thorough, providing readers with a multifaceted view of microcomputers. For the reader who has no practical experience with these now-outdated machines, Swalwell paints a detailed portrait of what this historical moment was like.

In Chapter 2, Swalwell explores the discourses surrounding microcomputers, including how the average person had little use for them and the idea that they were “a technology in search of a use” (p. 33). These early computers had limited software libraries, so if users wanted to get anything out of them, they often needed to learn how to program new software. Swalwell traces the rise of computer user groups and trade magazines as sites for both education and distribution of software. In this milieu, many programmers got their start, cutting their teeth on BASIC and other coding languages, experimenting and freestyling their way into both avocation and vocation.

Chapter 3 is influenced by Michel de Certeau’s theory on consumption as a form of production. It takes some time for Swalwell to make the connection between theory and the specific subject matter of microcomputers, taking a long detour to explain the translation history of de Certeau’s *The Practice of Everyday Life*. She argues that English-language scholars have largely ignored the second volume of this work, which was translated much later than the first volume, and which forms the basis of her analysis. With the groundwork laid in Chapters 1, 2, and the beginning of 3, Swalwell digs more fully into ethnographic interviews with home coders in the remainder of this chapter. She explores the home environment that supported programming activities, the emerging gendering of these activities (most of her informants are male, as was typical of the time), and the reasons young people engaged in programming video games. While some of her interviewees would go on to sell their programs by mail-order or in computer magazines, earning modest incomes for their efforts, most simply enjoyed the challenge of programming for these machines and the satisfaction of seeing their programs function.

Chapter 4 sees Swalwell take a deep dive into the games themselves, with informants explaining the games they created and the challenges they faced in making them. Microcomputers were simple machines by today's standards and featured numerous constraints on computing power. This was a period in which a single person could create an entire video game – graphics, sound, story, programming, marketing, and all. Swalwell spends significant space on discussing the fact that many of these games were “clones” of other, more established games, like *Donkey Kong*. In the minds of her informants, cloning a game was not seen as an act of intellectual piracy, but rather, as a necessary way of learning how to code by mimicking and revising the games others created. Swalwell is sympathetic to this position, thinking of these games as something more significant than a mere clone or copy. Programmers often had to conceive of unusual solutions when cloning games, such as thinking through how to take an arcade game (which featured more advanced sound, graphics, etc.) and converting it to a less powerful machine. Cloning of game designs, mechanics, and graphics was also rife in the commercial game industry during this period, which makes it harder to argue that what home coders were doing was anything nefarious or out of the norm. She acknowledges that “copyright in software was still being worked out at this time in Australian and New Zealand jurisdictions” (89), making discussion of the ethics of software piracy more of an intellectual exercise than a legal one.

In Chapter 5, Swalwell moves past examination of games and software to focus on “hardware hacking,” the propensity of some amateurs to play with the hardware of their machines, building them, customizing them, modding them (i.e., modifying hardware to alter its intended functionality or appearance), and making them their own. Swalwell returns to her argument that this era of computing has been unfairly overlooked by historians, perhaps because scholars have not viewed the culture of “ordinary” computer users as worthy of attention compared with other forms of fandom. She critiques fan and media scholarship for focusing too much on fan cultures promulgated by the internet, which the masses began adopting in the mid-1990s, long after the era of the microcomputer had passed.

Meanwhile, in Chapter 6, Swalwell turns to the legacy of this era, arguing that microcomputers are still relevant in the present. The rise of indie games in the modern era, often by one person or small teams, mimics the game design approach of the microcomputer era. Similarly, many indie games today are purposely created in a retro or 8-bit style, incorporating graphics, sounds, and game mechanics popular decades prior. She also explores users who contemporaneously develop

games for these outdated machines, either for the challenge of it or in appreciation of what these computers were capable of. Finally, she discusses current efforts by digital archivists to preserve software, and the challenges in doing so, given incompatibilities between modern and earlier operating systems.

The seventh and final chapter is a send-off to the subject matter, offering several lines of future scholarship. She argues again that computer historians have overlooked the everyday uses of the microcomputer, perhaps because the period is too recent, or too ordinary. She posits that historical study of this era is not only necessary to archive software and experiences before they fade from memory but also to examine how events in the past influence contemporary gaming culture. She asks, “How have our ways of using computers for ends not productivity related developed and changed over the decades? Are users still able to find joy in creating with computers, given that they are such a part of the workday world?” (174-75). Swalwell suggests scholars apply the format of this study to contemporary computer users: for example, how do users today tinker and mod software and hardware?

Meticulously researched and documented, *Homebrew Gaming* stands as a necessary part of early video game history. While the word “gaming” is right there in the title, Chapters 3 and 4 offer the most concrete historical analysis of homebrew coders themselves and the games they designed. The front third and back third of the book are more concerned with justifying the scholarly focus (i.e., microcomputing in the late 1970s to mid-1980s in Australia and New Zealand), critiquing the perceived failings of computer historians for not focusing on this period enough, and discussing the discourses around microcomputers, their hardware, and users. While much of this work is valuable in making her arguments, Swalwell could have spent more time on the games and coders, especially considering in previous research projects she has helped archive these games, suggesting that she likely knows more about these games than most people today. That said, anybody interested in video games, computers, or computer users will benefit from reading this informative book.

Dennis Owen Frohlich
Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania

Yang, Jeff, Phil Yu, and Philip Wang, et al. *Rise: A Pop History of Asian America from the Nineties to Now*. HarperCollins, 2022.

The last half-decade has been characterized by the hypervisibility of Asian Americans. After *Crazy Rich Asians* became a huge hit in 2018, movies by and about Asians have sprung up like bamboo shoots after the rain. Likewise, K-pop has emerged as a dominant force in the global music scene. At the same time, however, the COVID-19 pandemic has made Asians especially vulnerable to hate crime for their alleged connection with the virus. Considering this context, Jeff Yang, Phil Yu, and Philip Wang invited eighty contributors, all artists and activists of Asian descent, to help write *Rise*, which documents the history of Asian American popular culture from the 1990s to the 2010s. Following a chronological sequence, the nearly five-hundred-page book is divided into five sections that deal with “Before,” the 1990s, 2000s, 2010s, and “Beyond.” Rather than establishing Asian cultural canons, *Rise* explores the question of what being Asian has meant in each of the three decades it covers. *Rise* engages with various genres of Asian American culture, including film, TV shows, fashion, activism, poetry, sports, e-sports, animation, blogs, and YouTube. It also has a colorful presentation, with tongue-in-cheek annotations of Asian spaces such as the home, grocery store, boba shop, K-town, and life during quarantine.

In the “Before” section, Yang discusses why a collective Asian American culture is important. He traces the origin of “Asian America” to the height of the civil rights movement when Yuji Ichioka and Emma Gee hoisted a banner painted with “Asian-American Political Alliance” to represent a group of Asian activists in 1968. Since then, Asians have been exploring the meaning of Asian America, which Yang claims demands “the creation of Asian American culture: collective experiences and memories; shared heroes, symbols, traditions, and lore” (3). Representation matters because Asians were once portrayed as foreign and alien in mainstream American popular culture. As evidence, Yang contributes a piece that collects the propaganda images of Asians as dangerous and inhuman which were repeatedly used against multiple groups of Asians.

The 1990s section describes Asian lives in a time when newspapers were a major means of communication, although early social media had emerged. Yang opens this section with his story of publishing the now defunct Asian American magazine *A Magazine* and his observation of major events affecting Asians during the decade. For example, early television shows with Asian subjects were still very

vulnerable to negative comments, and *All-American Girl*, featuring Korean American stand-up comedian Margaret Cho, was canceled in part because of Yang's criticism. However, there were also many other forms of entertainment. Asians coming of age could be either connected by AZN (an early social media platform) or involved in import tuning (Asian car fans remodeling and exhibiting Japanese vehicles). Asian families also found themselves enjoying Hong Kong cinema, Bollywood movies, and Disney's 1998 animated feature movie *Mulan*.

Essays in the 2000s section deal with how Asians represented themselves and inherited a legacy of activism on platforms such as blogs and YouTube. The section opens with Yu's essay on how young Asians, including himself, used the blog *Angry Asian Man* to express collective anger toward the harassment of Sikhs after 9/11, a racist T-shirt design by Abercrombie & Fitch, and Rosie O'Donnell's use of "chingchong" – a racist approximation of Asian language – while making fun of Danny DeVito's drunkenness on television. This section also highlights art created by Asians, such as the activities of Filipino American DJs and Chinese American rapper MC Jin, and Asian America's first crime drama *Better Luck Tomorrow*, directed by Justin Lin (who later directed several entries in the *Fast & Furious* franchise). Moreover, Asians actively engaged with activities that made them visible, including exclusively Asian nightclub parties ("Asian Nights"), reality shows, and early YouTube videos.

Wang's essay opens the 2010s section by highlighting the fundamental roles played by the internet and social media in helping Asian Americans produce more complex and multifaceted representations of themselves, although they also may have led to new stereotypes such as boba, Asian food bloggers, and Asian dancers. This was the decade when Asians were more connected than ever, and Asian experiences became increasingly normalized as more Asians entered the spotlight. For instance, the success of NBA player Jeremy Lin led to the rise of a national "Linsanity," a group of Asian YouTubers gained nearly twenty-eight million subscribers, the Asian parenting style known as "Tiger Mother" caused controversy, and Asian celebrity chefs popularized Asian cuisine while building their culinary media empires. Meanwhile, Asians continued to fight against stereotypes: Hari Kondabolu directed *The Problem with Apu*, in which he contends that Apu, an Indian immigrant character on *The Simpsons* voiced by Hank Azaria, reinforced negative stereotypes of South Asians.

The last section, "Beyond," opens with a collective work by Yang, Yu, and Wang. They point out new shared struggles of Asians due to the racialization of

COVID-19 and call for the continued rise of Asian representation. They all contend that inclusivity is premised on visibility. Recognizing Asian accomplishments after the 2010s, they select essays introducing the lives and work of Awkwafina, Sandra Oh, Simu Liu, and Maya L. Harris, a lawyer and the sister of the current U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris. This section also emphasizes Asian experiences beyond the United States and examines interactions within the global Asian diaspora.

Written by three cisgender East Asian men, *Rise* mainly examines the cultures of heterosexual East, Southeast, and South Asians, and it lacks pieces on LGBTQ+ groups and Pacific Islanders. Despite this weakness, *Rise* is the first book documenting the collective memories of Asian Americans and it invites future works to fill the gap. The production of Asian representations accompanies the new media revolution that offers opportunities for marginalized groups to unite for a magnified political voice. *Rise* is a fun book through which Asians can relate to their own lives of being Asian and non-Asians can get to know Asians better. *Rise* could be used as an undergraduate textbook to introduce Asian American Studies or American popular culture, but it will also be of general interest to the reading public.

Ying Ma
The University of Texas at Dallas