The global turn in Asian American studies has not been without controversy: some scholars oppose it for fear of endangering the cultural nationalism that Asian American activists have been fighting for since the 1960s, while others embrace it because the turn widens the field’s purview from the domestic to the international. For instance, Sau-Ling Wong worries that a global, transnational approach to Asian American studies may blunt the community’s critical edge in battling the US nation-state’s legal and social exclusions of Asian Americans; by contrast, Kandice Chuh argues that interpreting Asian American topics through a transnational lens will open up a new hermeneutic dimension in the field – with Asian American subjects (both humans and nonhumans) standing as evidence testifying to the “effects of negotiations of unstable and changing global power relations.”

Shilpa Davé, Leilamni Nishime, and Tasha Oren’s edited collection _Global Asian American Popular Cultures_ takes the latter, affirmative approach to the global turn in Asian American studies to track the porous openings, flows, and exchanges between the US and Asia in the arena of popular culture. Expanding their scope of interests from local Asian American popular cultures in their previous collection, _East Main Street_ (2005), to popular cultures that emerge as products of, and in response to, global-scale exchanges, Davé, Nishime, and Oren trace the way twenty-first-century Asian Americans’ identities online and offline, on and off the silver screen, impact and are impacted by their families and communities, mainstream American culture, and neoliberalism. The editors do so by organizing their collection into the following sections: “Stars and Celebrities,” which examines how Asian American artists and celebrities are complicit in, and resistant to, racism and neoliberalism in making themselves legible and exceptional under the spotlight; “Making Community,” an illumination of the structures of feelings that songs, radio programs, arts, and food have formed across communities in Asia and the diasporas; “Wading in the Mainstream,” which analyses mainstream American media’s incorporation of Asian/Americans, and their employment of media visibility to assert agency; and last but not least, “Migration and Transnational Popular Culture,” an interrogation of the influences of Asian history, politics, and economics on immigration patterns in the US, and how they shape Asian Americans’ representations and participation in American popular cultures.

The collection is at its best in illustrating the convergence of Asians and Americans in the consumption, circulation, and production of global media. Two chapters stand out in demonstrating the global media’s facilitation of the intimacies between the two

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continents. Constancio Arnaldo’s “I’m Thankful for Manny: Manny Pacquiao, Pugilistic Nationalism and the Filipina/o Body” is one of such chapters. It exemplifies how sport spectacles from Asia – in this case Pacquiao’s boxing matches – offer Filipino immigrants strength in the face of emasculation and marginalization. Furthermore, Arnaldo teases out the subtle ways in which American popular cultures position Pacquiao as an icon of global masculinity that also appeals to black and white men by drawing our attention to third-generation Filipino American artist Manila Ryce’s Thug Passion of the Christ (2009) – a visual portrait of Pacquiao’s half-naked body onto which are transposed the legendary African American rapper Tupac Shakur’s tattoos; and Mayweather/Pacquiao: At Last (2015), HBO’s documentary about the Filipino boxer, which frames him as a family-oriented, philanthropic, and Christian man who made his fame by discipline and hard work. All these, as Arnaldo convincingly suggests, are aesthetic strategies that popular cultures have deployed to transform Pacquiao into an identifiable figure of resistance for ethnic minorities, and a colonial subject for white America.

Another forward-thinking piece is Christopher B. Patterson’s “Making Whales out of Peacock: Virtual Fashion and Asian Female Factory Hands,” in which the author brings virtual fashion to bear on the discussion of sweatshops in the global South. Reflecting on his experience playing the game Guild Wars 2 – spending hours mining for gold in return for rags and scraps that he used to suture a dress for his avatar – Patterson makes the case that the simulated process of dress-making in the virtual world delivers a lesson to game players of the global North: that their glossy products depend on the time and sweat of the Asian sweatshop laborers. Per Patterson’s logic, spending money on virtual fashion in “freemium” (short for free and premium) games can be considered a means of carrying out social responsibility, because, on the one hand, the money will subsidize game companies to continue to offer the games for free, and on the other hand, virtual fashion decreases the player/consumer’s purchasing desires in reality, and hence thwarts sweatshops’ achievement of profits.

Perhaps, due to the lack of an explicit definition in the introduction, the reader is kept wondering what the editors meant by “global Asian American popular cultures” – whether they refer to the Asian cultures that have infiltrated American culture, or homegrown Asian American cultures that have become popular worldwide. But the editors’ expansive approach to the term proves generative for the contributors, whose essays weave together cultural narratives crucial to the burgeoning fields of fashion, food, museum, and music studies, and consolidate substantial theoretical exegeses that offer new lenses and vocabulary to discuss the perennial issues of masculinity, motherhood, and memory in Asian American studies.

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