

Novel Subjects and Cardon's *Fashioning Character*, both of which also, in their own ways, celebrate the infinite possibilities of subject formation.

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Julia Havas, *Woman Up: Invoking Feminism in Quality Television* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2022, \$34.99). Pp. 282. ISBN 978 0 8143 4656 3.

Two issues are immediately apparent to anyone undertaking the study of quality television. Firstly, the terms of the enquiry are highly contested – just how *do* we define “quality,” who exactly is the “we” that provides the definition, and to what extent are these definitions adopted by audiences? The other issue, one that is particularly pertinent to those of us interested in issues of equality in the creative industries, is that both the content of quality television and the academic work on it has overwhelmingly focussed on men; as Havas herself states, the canon of quality television was formed almost exclusively of an “exploration of white masculinities” (23). This masculine focus has remained strong despite the prominence of shows such as *Homeland* (2011–20), *Girls* (2012–17) and *Broad City* (2014–19). The persistence of such issues makes Julia Havas's book *Woman Up: Invoking Feminism in Quality Television* all the more timely and makes the depth and breadth of its academic enquiry all the more welcome and important.

Combining traditional feminist research methods with the burgeoning field of television aesthetics, the core argument in *Woman Up* is that what made feminist quality television at the start of the twenty-first century unique was how it overtly responded both to the quality television that had come before it and to developments in feminism, particularly postfeminism. Thus, for Havas, feminist quality television “strategically mixes different modes of transgression by linking discursively novel treatments of form and narrative with novel thematizations of content associated with popular feminism” (33–34). Indeed, it is this admixture of gender politics along with the formal and stylistic experimentation that accompanied it that Havas argues is central to the designation of “quality” in feminist quality television. Havas advances this argument using a series of in-depth case studies organized into two sections, the first focussing on comedies and the latter focussing on dramas. *30 Rock* (2006–13) and *Parks and Recreation* (2009–15) are analysed as prominent examples of feminist quality comedies, whilst *The Good Wife* (2009–16) and *Orange Is the New Black* (2013–19) are used as key examples of female-centred prestige dramas.

Chapter 1 lays out the theoretical groundwork for the enquiry that follows, and it is in this that the breadth of Havas's research is most on display. Simultaneously defining quality television and discussing the dominant arguments in its field of study, Havas ably navigates the reader through the complex intersections of meaning inherent in research on quality television in general, and feminist quality television in particular. The chapter also does sterling work in reinscribing women into the history and development of quality television. Identifying quality television's concerns with gender issues as well as aesthetic and structural experimentation in shows such as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970–77) and *Cagney and Lacey* (1981–88), Havas demonstrates that rather than being separate from it, feminist concerns have been central to quality television since its beginnings.

In a canny structuring move on Havas's part, the chapters in each constituent section largely mirror each other. Thus chapters 2 and 5 both focus on the interplay

between gender and genre, whilst chapters 3 and 6 analyse how the respective series respond to issues raised by the increased visibility of postfeminist discourse from the early 2000s. Such a structuring device allows Havas to both subtly emphasize the series' commonalities and tease out the individual treatments of genre, gender, and feminist engagement which make each show unique. Chapter 4 breaks with this overall symmetry to give an analysis of representations of the female body in the comedies under discussion. Whilst this may suggest that Havas feels on firmer ground discussing comedy, the inclusion of this chapter is justified both by the centrality of the body to comedy and feminism and by the depth of analysis that she provides.

It is this depth of analysis that is the one of book's chief virtues, especially the way in which Havas links her impeccable close readings to an impressive array of shows from across the quality-television spectrum. This is particularly evidenced during an extended discussion of *Parks and Recreation* and its links to mockumentary. Here Havas compares *Parks* with other shows in the mockumentary vein such as *The Office* (both the UK and US versions) and *The Comeback* (2005–14). Havas argues that what makes *Parks* so unique in the quality-television canon is how it shifted the content of mockumentary away from the mocking, cringe comedy that had previously been its forte, to focus instead on the challenges of constructing and maintaining feminist ideals in a patriarchal world (96–102).

At the same time, however, this close reading can also be detrimental to the wider scope of the book as alluded to in its subtitle. Whilst the minute analysis does indeed amply demonstrate the feminist credentials of the shows under discussion, at times it becomes so bespoke to the episode or even the scene analysed that it becomes less about the wider scope of feminist quality television and more about the individual shows in isolation. It also results in some of the shows under discussion receiving less focus than others, as happens with *Orange Is the New Black*. Whilst Havas rightly points out the importance of *Orange Is the New Black* in focussing on stories of women beyond the white, heterosexual and middle-class archetype, it is the least focussed on of the four and does make you wonder what other observations could have been revealed with a larger word count. However, these are small quibbles in what is otherwise an excellent work that makes a valuable contribution to refocusing and redirecting scholarly attention on quality television.

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Kevin Fellezs, *Listen but Don't Ask Question: Hawaiian Slack Key Guitar across the Transpacific* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019, \$28.95). Pp. 336. ISBN 978 1 4780 0671 8.

Stephanie Vander Wel, *Hillbilly Maidens, Okies, and Cowgirls: Women's Country Music, 1930–1960* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2020, \$25.95). Pp. 272. ISBN 978 0 2520 8495 9.

Michael Lasser, *City Songs and American Life, 1900–1950* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2019, \$34.99). Pp. 318. ISBN 978 1 5804 6952 4.

The study of popular music has a problem: because of its focus on commercial actors, it cannot account for ways in which people make music outside commercial parameters and the ways in which that music then helps form a community or an individual's