

Book Review: Gabrielle Zevin's *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow*

Novi Setyo Wulansari¹
Universitas Islam Majapahit
novisetyo89@gmail.com

Submitted: August 2025

Accepted: November 2025

Published: January 2026

Book Information

Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow (2022) is a contemporary literary novel written by Gabrielle Zevin and published by G. P. Putnam's Sons. The book consists of 384 pages and carries ISBN 9780593158273. Centered on the lifelong creative partnership between Sam Masur and Sadie Green, the narrative follows their journey as video-game designers whose personal histories, artistic ambitions, and emotional struggles shape the evolution of their collaboration. The novel moves across multiple time periods—from childhood to adulthood—while exploring themes of friendship, trauma, identity, creativity, and the intersection of digital and artistic culture. Zevin structures the story through shifting perspectives, nonlinear chronology, and intermedial narrative forms influenced by video-game logic. These narrative choices invite readers to reconsider how human relationships are built, fractured, and repaired over time. This review presents an overview of the book's central ideas and major chapters, offering an objective summary before engaging with a critical evaluation of its literary qualities. The strengths and limitations of the novel are assessed in terms of narrative clarity, theoretical value, character depth, stylistic innovation, and contribution to contemporary English literature. The review concludes with a reflection on the book's usefulness for both academic and general audiences, emphasizing its relevance to discussions of digital art, narrative theory, and representations of creative labor. Ultimately, Zevin's novel stands as a significant contribution to twenty-first-century literary fiction through its thoughtful portrayal of artistic collaboration and emotional resilience.

Keywords: *Book review; Gabrielle Zevin; Tomorrow*

SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

Gabrielle Zevin's *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow* traces the intertwined lives of Sam Masur and Sadie Green, two characters who first meet in childhood under difficult circumstances (Zevin, 2022). Their early connection forms in a hospital where Sam is recovering from injuries caused by a car accident, and Sadie is visiting her sister during cancer treatment. Their shared love for video games becomes the foundation of an emotionally meaningful friendship. This initial period establishes the psychological backgrounds of both characters, including Sam's chronic physical pain and Sadie's emotional isolation within her family. As they grow older, their friendship is strained by misunderstandings and personal insecurities. Sadie's sense of betrayal during adolescence ends their early connection, and they separate for several years. Their reconnection in adulthood occurs unexpectedly when Sam sees Sadie at a subway station in Boston, where both are university students—Sam at Harvard and Sadie at MIT. The reunion reignites their shared passion for game creation, eventually motivating them to design a game together. Their collaboration blends Sadie's artistic talent and conceptual design with Sam's programming expertise and intuitive understanding of player experience.

Their first major game, *Ichigo*, becomes a critical and commercial success, dramatically altering both their personal lives and career trajectories. The novel dedicates considerable space to the development of this game, highlighting how their creative choices reflect their emotional states. The success of *Ichigo* leads to the formation of their own company, *Unfair Games*, with the support of Marx Watanabe, Sam's college roommate.

Marx becomes an essential presence, acting as a mediator, organizer, and emotional anchor for both Sam and Sadie. Zevin uses the growth of the company to explore the complexities of collaboration. The novel illustrates tensions between artistic integrity and commercial demands, as well as the challenges of maintaining a stable partnership in a high-pressure industry. As Sam and Sadie work together on subsequent projects, their personal histories once again influence their interactions. Sadie experiences professional insecurity and emotional frustration, particularly within a field dominated by male voices. Sam continues to struggle with physical pain and traumatic memories, which occasionally affect his communication and decision-making.

The novel shifts across multiple timelines, allowing readers to witness the long-term development of the characters' emotional and professional identities. Chapters vary in form, with some presented as linear narrative, others as flashbacks, and several mimicking the structure of video-game levels or scripts. This diverse narrative architecture highlights the book's central metaphor: life is a series of choices, restarts, and alternate possibilities, much like a game. A major turning point in the novel occurs when a tragic event disrupts the fragile balance of Sam, Sadie, and Marx's partnership. This event deepens the emotional divide between Sam and Sadie, prompting both characters to withdraw, reevaluate their priorities, and confront unresolved pain. The aftermath is portrayed through introspective chapters that reveal the psychological impact of grief and the difficulty of rebuilding trust.

Over time, both Sam and Sadie embark on separate creative and personal journeys. Sadie continues designing games independently, while Sam grows increasingly isolated. Despite their separation, they remain connected by the shared legacy of their work. The narrative leads toward a gradual reconciliation, built not on romantic love but on mutual recognition of their enduring creative bond. The novel concludes by revisiting the central themes of collaboration, identity, and resilience. Zevin emphasizes that partnership—particularly creative partnership—is a complex, evolving process shaped by individual histories, vulnerabilities, and aspirations. The ending suggests that although life is marked by loss and conflict, the possibility of “tomorrow” remains open, echoing the cyclical imagery of gaming and the Shakespearean reference embedded in the title.

CRITICAL EVALUATION

Gabrielle Zevin's novel stands out as an innovative contribution to contemporary literature due to its unique blending of digital culture with traditional narrative artistry. One of the novel's primary strengths is its nuanced portrayal of character psychology. Sam and Sadie are written with emotional depth and flawed humanity, allowing readers to understand how trauma, insecurity, ambition, and love—non-romantic yet deeply intimate—shape their actions. The author's commitment to psychological realism enhances the narrative's authenticity, especially in depictions of chronic pain, grief, and the emotional labor of artistic collaboration. The thematic incorporation of video-game development is another distinctive achievement. Rather than treating games as superficial entertainment, Zevin frames them as expressive works of art capable of conveying complex themes. This elevates the novel's theoretical value by encouraging academic discussions about intermediality, narrative theory, and the evolving boundaries between digital and literary forms. Chapters modeled after game structures demonstrate an experimental approach that broadens the possibilities of contemporary fiction.

The novel's emotional and conceptual strengths are occasionally offset by limitations. Some sections become overly detailed in their descriptions of programming processes or

game mechanics, potentially overwhelming readers unfamiliar with technical terminology. Moreover, the novel's pacing occasionally slows during these passages, creating temporary distance from the emotional core of the narrative. In terms of clarity, Zevin's nonlinear structure—shifting between time periods and stylistic modes—may challenge readers who prefer straightforward narration. However, these shifts serve a deliberate artistic purpose, reinforcing the idea of life as a series of “levels” or “restarts.” At times, emotional resolutions appear somewhat idealized or simplified, particularly after major conflicts. This can make certain developments feel less tense or realistic than expected.

Despite these weaknesses, the book's academic contribution remains significant. Its exploration of grief, identity, and creative partnership invites interdisciplinary analysis in fields such as media studies, trauma studies, and digital humanities. Short illustrative lines—such as Sam's reflection that “games are the most immersive art form,” or Sadie's admission that “creating together is its own kind of love” (paraphrased)—highlight the emotional intensity of the characters' creative labor. Overall, the novel's strengths in characterization, thematic innovation, and stylistic experimentation outweigh its limitations. Zevin succeeds in bridging digital culture with literary depth, making the novel a valuable text for academic reading and critical engagement.

REFLECTION & CONCLUSION

Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow offers substantial value for readers seeking a narrative that examines human relationships through the lens of creativity and digital artistry. One of the book's most compelling contributions lies in its ability to portray friendship as a form of emotional and intellectual partnership that is just as meaningful as romantic or familial bonds. The novel underscores how shared creative work can function as a space for healing, self-expression, and mutual growth. This emphasis makes the book particularly relevant for readers interested in artistic collaboration, identity formation, and the psychology of creativity. For scholars and students in English literature, the novel provides rich material for analysis. Its experimental structure engages with narrative theory, particularly concepts of nonlinear storytelling, metafiction, and intermediality. The integration of video-game aesthetics into a literary format positions the book within emerging conversations on digital humanities and the evolving nature of narrative in the twenty-first century. Researchers examining representation, trauma, and disability will also find the novel valuable due to its sensitive portrayal of chronic pain, emotional repression, and the lasting effects of loss.

The book is equally useful for general readers. Its accessible prose, engaging characters, and emotionally resonant themes make it appealing beyond academic circles. The story offers insight into the pressures of creative industries, the fragility of relationships shaped by ambition, and the difficulty of balancing personal vulnerability with professional commitment. Readers who have experienced complex friendships or collaborative partnerships may find particular relevance in Sam and Sadie's dynamic. The novel's contribution to contemporary literature lies in its unique combination of emotional realism, stylistic experimentation, and attention to digital culture. Zevin does not merely depict video games; she elevates them as legitimate artistic expressions that shape identity and meaning. This perspective broadens the thematic possibilities of English literature and reflects the shifting landscape of creative media in the digital age.

In conclusion, Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow is a powerful and thoughtful novel that succeeds both as a compelling narrative and as a meaningful exploration of art, friendship, and resilience. Its emotional depth, inventive structure, and

cultural relevance make it highly recommended for academics, educators, and general readers. The book stands as a significant addition to modern literary fiction, offering insight, originality, and enduring thematic richness.

REFERENCES (if any)

Zevin, G. (2022). *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow*.
<https://libgen.li/ads.php?md5=a06e258e1446a2b2c4ee357089b828bf>