

“Lifestyle culture,” as he calls it, now takes precedence in defining the identities of teens and twenty-somethings, which, in the independent context, is not such a bad thing. The “do-it-yourself” creative philosophy proves more empowering than distracting for today’s youth who are not brain-washed by the masses but produce entertainment on their own terms and for their own consumption through counter-cultural involvement. With this, Niedzviecki reminds us that the production of art is often more for the well-being of artists than their prospective audience, although by no means is youth culture closed off from the outside world. The works produced by young people in bands, zines and theatre groups express their perceptions of society in ways far more genuine and personally relevant than what is presented in the mainstream. To Niedzviecki, the obsessive creation and consumption of culture is a healthy form of validation for current youth, which is a point that is hard to argue.

Much as he promotes the underground, Niedzviecki can never truly condemn the joys of pop culture to which he refers with a kind of post-teenage suburban nostalgia that I found easy to relate to. After all, what could be more interesting to the culturally obsessed than 327 pages of probing into the likes of “eighties cartoons,” Beck and the Museum of Bad Art? To some this may seem like the blind and trendy validation of everything “low culture” in the name of art. Yet, Niedzviecki adds credibility to his topics by drawing on classic streams of cultural analysis (for example linguistics, semiotics and “the spectacle”). When quoting McLuhan and Sartre, the casual tone he adopts makes them more palatable to the general public. In other words, the writer’s style is equally appealing to the seasoned academic and the young cultural consumer. Of further relevance to the discipline of Cultural Studies are Niedzviecki’s deeper questions, such as “What does it mean to create art in the twenty-

first century?” “What is creativity and how does it help to get us through the day?” “What is culture,” and, most pressingly, “what is reality for the current youth,” a “new breed” raised with media overload and mass-cultural influences woven right into their psyches? Niedzviecki’s writing entertains but is deceptively multifaceted, valuable on many levels and for a varied audience.

The author’s only flaw in the tone of this book is a tendency to lapse into the cynical. Although his views are well-defined, Niedzviecki fluctuates between affection and bitterness for his chosen subjects. One might say that his contrasting treatment of mass and underground culture serves to fulfill a certain “journalistic obligation,” although the strength of Niedzviecki’s opinions make them come across as a bit discordant. Nonetheless, his pure joy in the study of culture overshadows this minor flaw. Every word he writes is a celebration of art by and for the consumption of everyone, projecting his enthusiasm for freedom of expression and mass involvement in the creation of culture. Niedzviecki’s book, in a word, is *relevant* to its audience of twenty-first century Canadian youth. After all, it is they who “want some too,” and, like Niedzviecki, can have it with some spunk and attitude.

Entre Femmes et Jeunes Filles: Le Roman Pour Adolescentes en France et au Québec

Daniela Di Cecco. Montréal: Remue-ménage, 2000.

PAR CAROLINE CARON

Un ouvrage fort intéressant que celui de cette professeure de français de l’Université de Caroline du Sud.

Également très pertinent puisqu’à la croisée de deux littératures négligées par la recherche et par le fait même dévalorisées: la littérature jeunesse et la littérature féminine. Quelles sont les représentations de la féminité que les auteurs proposent à leurs lectrices qui sont des femmes en devenir?

Cette question sera posée dans une double perspective. Celle de l’aspect commercial du livre, qui fait intervenir la soumission des représentations sociales aux règles de la commercialisation, puis le contenu, qui véhicule des valeurs ainsi qu’une idéologie de la féminité. Il est par ailleurs intéressant que l’auteure compare ces deux dimensions entre le Québec et la France.

La conclusion frappante de ce travail, c’est que la littérature pour adolescentes constitue à elle seule un champ d’investigation. Conclusion qui est basée sur une étude approfondie d’un corpus de travaux de recherche en littérature ont reposé jusqu’ici sur un modèle d’analyse masculin, donc non universel. En conséquence, les théories doivent être questionnées et révisées. De plus, l’ouvrage révèle que par l’écriture de romans destinés aux adolescentes, les auteures tentent une communication entre elles et la génération qui leur succède. Cependant, ce sont les impératifs du marché qui orientent les choix des éditeurs qui publient pour le public cible que constitue le lectorat féminin. Un ouvrage de référence en littérature jeunesse et féminine, inspiré et documenté par d’autres auteurs, travaux et théories, particulièrement les théories littéraires et féministes.

Girl Talk: Adolescent Magazines and Their Readers

Dawn H. Currie. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.

BY KELLI DILWORTH

When I was growing up, my friends

and I would find copies of *YM* and *Seventeen* in the bedrooms of older sisters. Behind closed doors we would gobble up the glossy pictures, advertisements and advice columns. We were so flattered that these magazines were written exclusively for us: *young girls*. But for some reason, we felt as if we were indulging in material that our parents disapproved of. To this day, there is something appealing and pleasurable, yet somehow scornful and embarrassing, about reading teen magazines. As a feminist, I feel as if I've been encouraged to believe that I'm not supposed to like them, let alone read them. However, I don't think this can be said by the thousands of girls and young women who consume adolescent magazines every month.

As Dawn Currie demonstrates in *Girl Talk: Adolescent Magazines and Their Readers*, (second wave?) feminism has tended to define teen-zines and women's magazines in two general ways: as scripts which reproduce gender (and race) identities through a male gaze, or as a vehicle for pleasure which is not to be confused with reality. Relating these concepts specifically to adolescent readers, Currie uses a number of theories—from literary to poststructuralist to materialist theory—to examine why young girls read these magazines and what we can learn from their perception of what they read.

Girl Talk investigates the status of adolescent magazines in the lives of young women by conducting a sociological examination into everyday practices surrounding identity formation. Currie discusses how textual analysis can show that the dominant reading of text can reinforce traditional femininity (in discussions of fashion, advertisements, quizzes and advice) by using advice and guidance about feeling good about one's self. She discusses how adolescent magazines interpellate young readers through articles and advertisements which promote heterosexual romance, physical beauty and personal hygiene. This is accomplished

amidst messages which urge young readers to 'be themselves' and 'accept themselves' as they are, and to put their own needs above those of boys and men. Currie finds that girls are encouraged to acquire the skills surrounding the creation of a 'feminine' appearance and at the same time, are given messages that reinforce the idea that feeling good is the result of looking good. As Currie postulates, this message means that teenzines contribute to both the doing and undoing of the reading "Subject." In opposition to studies which have shown girls' resistance to clever advertising or 'girl-y' articles, Currie ultimately finds that through this process, readers question *themselves*, instead of questioning the texts.

Currie's examination of teen magazines and their readers is illuminating, and clearly articulates an extensive range of theoretical concepts surrounding literary texts. Adolescent magazines are not examined as static objects; instead, her analysis includes ways in which meaning is taken up as a process by their readers.

What makes this book an interesting read is not only that it highlights academic reading of social texts and theory, but that such readings are complemented by the voices of young women themselves. The sample of young women consists of both self-identified readers and non-readers of adolescent magazines. The observations of these young women are based on the philosophy that youth themselves need to define what they feel is important, instead of looking at what researchers find the most relevant. Using the voices of her participants, Currie looks at the convergence between the discursive and experiential world of female adolescent realities.

One of the most notable parts of this research is that it acknowledges the reading pleasure which teenzines and women's magazines can provide, and that to get pleasure out of reading these magazines is not to betray one's commitment to feminism. Admittedly, not having read through a lot of theory in a while, it took a lot

longer to read this book than I had expected. Getting through the theory was challenging, but after turning the last page, I felt it was well worth the read. Currie has enabled me to articulate reasons why adolescent magazines are read and enjoyed by girls and young women, but also why these magazines and their readers should be a part of rigorous feminist analyses.

Education, Student Rights and the Charter

Ailsa M. Watkinson. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Purich Publishing Ltd., 1999.

BY SHARON FERGUSON—
HOOD AND MARIE TOUELL
WALKER

Ailsa Watkinson, in her book *Education, Student Rights and the Charter*, does an admirable job of interpreting the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms for educational institutes. She describes its application to date, and the changes that are necessary in the educational system to fully reflect its intentions.

Watkinson studied human rights laws and education while earning a doctorate in educational administration and she has worked with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission for over twelve years. This knowledge and experience is apparent in her book—she gives an overview of what the charter was designed to do, and clarifies each point with examples. She also describes several similarities and differences between the Canadian Charter and the American Constitution. It was a surprise to find that our courts relied so heavily on rights and freedoms deci-