

audiences understand them. Writers could realise the indirect influence they have on young adults and bear this in mind in their next works. This study is intriguing and rather provoking, since it makes its audience reconsider their thoughts on maturation and growing up.

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Girlhood in U.S. Media

Sarah Projansky. 2014. *Spectacular Girls: Media Fascination and Celebrity Culture*. New York: New York University Press. 295 pp. ISBN 978-0-8147-2481-1

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As mediascape is densely populated with girls, they are, as Sarah Projansky says in her new book, turned into *spectacles* – visual objects on display (5). Projansky claims that all girls are spectacular, but this is not the case in contemporary U.S. media. Some are spectacularised through scandals, others through personal achievements. However, the media offer narrow versions of girlhood, neglecting some aspects such as the importance of race and alternative sexualities. In contemporary media, some girls are more spectacularised than others. In *Spectacular Girls: Media Fascination and Celebrity Culture*, Projansky wants to enlarge the scope of girls considered to be spectacular by drawing our attention to unconventional girlhood. The idea behind this is that ideal girls should not be presented as white blondes who currently dominate the mediascape. The author emphasises how so-called can-do girls are usually presented as white, while “at-risk” girls are portrayed as African Americans. They all exist simultaneously, but the can-do girls are dominant. They gain their idealised status through career, fashion and lifestyle choices. Projansky argues that the spectacularisation of girlhood mostly takes place within celebrity culture.

The main focus of this book is the question of what girlhoods in contemporary U.S. media are if they do not belong to either the adored or the disdained ones. The answer, according to the author, is alternative girls, who do not fit into the can-do/at-risk dichotomy and do not appear in media often. Projansky uses a number of feminist media studies to highlight the presence of that kind of girl in media. One has to think critically about the representation of girls in media and in this book. Critical thinking will enable the reader to decide whether the book provides answers about the representation of alternative girlhood. Ultimately, it leads to raising general awareness of the issue of presenting different kinds of girlhood in media. *Spectacular Girls* is easy to follow due to the author’s organised writing. The key concerns of the book, such as finding alternative girlhoods, are explained in the introduction. It focuses on the relationship between girls and media, and is, as one might expect, related to feminist and media studies. Its starting points are clearly defined and open new issues. In the introduction, the author gives an overview of the history of “girl studies” and clearly and simply defines a “girl” as someone under the age of eighteen. The concluding pages at the end of each chapter and at the end of the book summarise the basic ideas.

Each chapter in the book is partly a case study dealing with different positions of girls, for instance as movie stars in films about girls, on magazine covers, in real-life tragedies and everyday life. Through close analysis of Tatum O’Neal’s emergence as a star during

the 1970s in the first chapter, it is explained that girls have been important figures in media since the beginning of the 20th century. Some of them became important media figures quite early. There are a few words about early sexualisation and the question of determining the line between a child and an adult. Chapter 2 focuses on the mass-market magazines *Time*, *Newsweek* and *People*, and the domination of white girls, as well as girls belonging to the can-do/at-risk dichotomy on the covers of those magazines. The author tries to determine whether one can find any other alternative type of girlhood in the photographs used as covers, such as girls of colour.

Several “girl films” from the first decade of the 21st century which led to public discussion about feminism in media are identified in the third chapter. They are *Mean Girls* (2004), *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006), *Juno* (2007) and *Precious* (2009). For the reader, it would be very useful to see the movies under discussion in the book before reading it, although the author does a fine job organising her writing and providing ample illustrations. Projansky says that understanding these films’ pedagogical usefulness for girls can anticipate and extend discussions about girlhood at a national level. The films anticipate the simultaneous adoration and denigration of girls also covered in the book. These movies are in a way contradictory to the general image of alternative girls created in media. In *Precious*, for example, African American girlhood is presented as valuable and vibrant. Heteronormativity is implicitly criticised in *Mean Girls*, while *Little Miss Sunshine* deals with girls’ autoeroticism. A girl who makes her own choices drives the narrative in *Juno*.

In chapter 4, Venus Williams, as one of the key figures in sports, is compared with other girl tennis players, and some live television coverage of her career is analysed. By depicting situations based on live television events, Projansky manages to earn the trust of the reader. Her goal is to shed light on the public image of Venus as an African American girl athlete and the development of her image in public. The issue of racism in the world of female tennis is presented. Projansky claims that Venus not only changed tennis, but also contributed to media fascination with girls of different race. Chapter 5 brings to the forefront the local and alternative press, which reported extensively on the death of Sakia Gunn, an African American girl killed on account of her sexual orientation. She embodies the displacement of heteronormative whiteness in society. It is pointed out that she was also spectacular, but one has to dig deeper to find information about her since there was less coverage in the national media on Gunn than there was on the other girls Projansky writes about. In this chapter, Projansky offers some criticism of mainstream media which treat some girls as background figures. The final chapter is based on fieldwork conducted in 2009 with third-graders from a public elementary school, who acted as media critics. Its aim is to identify children’s analytical perspectives on media and the representation of girls. The author concludes that they are quite analytical at various media levels. This gives hope that alternative girlhoods are being more prominently covered in the U.S. media. It would be interesting to examine children’s attitudes towards media in Europe and Croatia, and compare the results.

Projansky says that contemporary spectacularised girls are presented as idealised citizens and in this way they are useful to media industries such as television, mass-market magazines and the internet. Many young girls want to look like them and consequently buy products advertised by spectacular girls. There are numerous examples of magazine covers

in the book, with girls in the centre and many other photographs related to scenes from girl movies. Many viewpoints are brought together and the whole book draws on numerous sources listed in a long bibliography in the end. The author manages to show as many different girlhoods as possible, thus enabling the study to fully accomplish its set goals.

Finally, the book provides useful material to help girls understand their lives better and to broaden people's horizons. It provides a critical approach to the dominant media that give us only certain, selected images of girls. The dominance of white heteronormative girls is documented through empirical methods which eventually help the author highlight the existence of alternative girlhoods in media. The goal of the book is to turn the public eye and researchers' perspectives away from the dominant representation of girls by investigating alternative types of media and representations of actual girls. Girls can be expected to achieve success, but are sometimes obliged to stay within certain boundaries. This book manages to show that a girl can succeed by crossing them. *Spectacular Girls* is a well-written scholarly book which delves into the mass-mediated representations of girls. The author recommends the book to educators, parents, legislators and social workers in order for them to think about how they want girls to be represented in the future, and this reviewer wishes to extend the readership to include students in all these fields, thus supporting the goal of the book itself.

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Human or Posthuman?

Victoria Flanagan. 2014. *Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction: The Posthuman Subject*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. viii + 205 pp. ISBN 978-0-230-22786-6

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Published in 2014, in the era of radical changes in children's literature, *Technology and Identity in Young Adult Fiction* focuses on two general critical approaches: humanism, which "rejects notions of the divine or supernatural, and instead perceives the human being as central" (12), and posthumanism, which, in contrast, "seeks to deprivilege the status of the human subject" (14).

Victoria Flanagan introduces us to posthumanism to show the unique relationship between youth subjectivity and technology. In order to do so, the author organises the book into eight chapters, together with an introduction and conclusion, and every chapter deals with a different subject of interest connected to the main theme. From its title, it is possible to guess what each chapter studies: "Posthumanism in Young Adult Fiction", "Narrating Posthuman Subjectivity", "Digital Citizenship in the Posthuman Era", "Reworking the Female Subject: Technology and the Body", "Surveillance Societies: Privacy and Power in YA Fiction" and "Subjectivity in Cyberspace: Technorealism and the Merging of Virtual and Material Selves". The titles provide enough to arouse the reader's curiosity without being too revealing. What serves as a great point of reference are the subchapters which also have their own titles and bring their own conclusions; this enables the reader to return to an earlier theme without having to read the whole chapter from the start.