BOLD GIRLS
ACADEMIC RESOURCE PACK
Editor and reviewer/Eagarthóir agus léirmheastóir
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INTRODUCTION/RÉAMHRÁ

The BOLD GIRLS project aims to break down societal barriers and to instil confidence in girls and young women by showing them female characters in children’s books with agency, power and opinions, addressing at a young age some of the issues that stand in the way of women achieving their ambitions, whether that be in leadership, in government or in the arts.

For the centenary of women’s suffrage in Ireland in 2018, Children’s Books Ireland’s BOLD GIRLS project celebrates strong, confident, intelligent, brave women and girls in children’s books, giving them much-needed visibility alongside their male counterparts.

As part of the BOLD GIRLS project, we commissioned Dr Patricia Kennon, lecturer in English Literature at the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education, Maynooth University, to take an in-depth look from an academic perspective.

Girlhood studies arose from the intersection of the emerging field of children’s history and the well-established fields of feminist scholarship and women’s history. Redressing the historical marginalisation of girls and girls’ lack of visibility and presence until the late twentieth century, girlhood studies challenges the idea that girlhood is merely a transitional or preliminary phase preceding womanhood and instead argues for the importance of girls, girlhood and girls’ voices in culture and across history. Since the 1990s, girlhood studies has become an academic field in its own right, as evidenced by the launch in 2008 of the first academic journal on girlhood, Girlhood Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal, and the increasing momentum of publications and conferences devoted to scholarly work and research on girls, girls’ experiences, girls’ cultures and discourses of girlhood. Drawing upon an interdisciplinary range of areas, including education, health, psychology, media studies and the humanities, girlhood studies challenges normative, homogenous stereotypes about girlhood and emphasises the diverse historical and cultural contexts that shape girls’ experiences and inform cultural representations and discourses of girlhood.

The ten scholarly works on girlhood studies reviewed in this digital pack have all been published since 2010 and they illustrate the rich range of perspectives, research modes and conceptual frameworks involved in girlhood studies. These collections of essays and monographs have been chosen to represent girlhood studies’ commitment to exploring girls’ experiences within local, national and global contexts and to demonstrate how the figure of the girl is constructed and represented across a diversity of texts, genres, formats and media. These books and the ever-growing field of girlhood studies have much to offer educators, academics, researchers and practitioners across many disciplines. May this bold feminist scholarship and girlhood studies’ recognition of the importance of boldness in stories about girls and representations of girls long continue!

Dr Patricia Kennon

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At the outset of *Girls, Texts, Cultures*, Clare Bradford and Mavis Reimer emphasise the shared concerns of girlhood studies and children’s literature studies, and present an exciting range of insights into this intersection from a diversity of conceptual frameworks and disciplines. The editors’ excellent introduction charts the respective trajectories of the emerging field of girlhood studies and traditions of children’s literature, and maps the connections and parallels that these two fields have in common regarding their marginalisation from hegemonic academia and how this scholarly marginalisation links with the cultural and literary diminishment of girls, girls’ experiences and girls’ voices in textual ideologies and everyday cultural contexts. The book originates from a 2010 University of Winnipeg symposium that aimed to ‘generate and sustain dialogue between two groups of scholars: those focusing on texts for and about girls [children’s literature scholars] and those who investigate contemporary girlhoods [scholars from the field of girls’ studies]’ (1). The title of this subsequent volume was carefully and effectively chosen in order to ‘resist the idea that girlhood is merely a preliminary or transitional phase antecedent to womanhood’ (8). Whereas the term ‘girlhood’ suggests ‘a unitary state of being a girl’, the plural term ‘girls’ emphasises ‘the diversity of girls’ locations and ways in which familial, cultural, and national discourses shape subjectivities’ (8). Likewise, the deliberately plural term ‘texts’ reflects the collection’s adoption of ‘an expansive view of texts, and their genres, forms, styles, and functions’ (9) and the plural term ‘cultures’ conveys ‘the diversity of cultural contexts in which girls are located and ... the fact that girls are active in producing texts and engaging with others to create cultural forms’ (9).

Contributors from education, gender studies, literature and sociology are brought together with activists and scholars in postcolonial studies, game studies and international studies in this substantial volume. The twelve essays explore the plurality of girlhoods, the politics of girlhood, texts for and about girls and, perhaps most importantly, photographs, videos and commentary created by girls themselves. The first section, ‘Contemporary Girlhoods and Subjectivities’, addresses how texts (academic and literary alike) reinforce or challenge ideas about girlhood, while the second section, ‘The Politics of Girlhood’, studies global and transnational concerns through a variety of lenses. This section notably considers girls from a welcome diversity of cultures and emphasises the importance of participatory research that understands girls as researchers who are themselves able to analyse their own and others’ words, images, and other media. Dawn H. Currie’s essay ‘From Girlhood, Girls, to Girls’ Studies: The Power of the Text’ is particularly compelling in considering how academic texts reify some versions of girlhood while neglecting and even erasing others. Currie reflects on her own critical orientation and proactively challenges researchers and scholars to examine ‘[H]ow do our own [academic] texts operate as a venue of power? ... which girlhoods (and girls) have been rendered visible through academic study of texts and cultures?’ (27). Other essays similarly demonstrate a strong sensitivity to how research on representations of girls, girlhood and girls’ experiences is currently conducted. A highlight in the book’s final section, ‘Settling and Unsettling Girlhoods’, is Stephanie Fisher, Jennifer Jenson and Suzanne de Castell’s revolutionary essay, ‘Dynamic (Con)Texts: Close Readings of Girls’ Video Gameplay’, which asserts the need for research methods that ‘focus not on how things “are” but how they can and do change’ (282).

This impressive collection offers much inspiration for the ongoing expansion of girlhood studies and many interdisciplinary connections, innovative research methodologies and conceptual frameworks for researchers and scholars in children’s literature studies, education and media studies.
The twenty chapters in Gender(ed) Identities: Critical Rereadings of Gender in Children's and YA Literature offer a range of interdisciplinary discussions of discourses and constructions of gender in popular and classic literature for young people. The editors, Tricia Clasen and Holly Hassel, have created a stimulating volume that operates at the intersection of girls' studies, cultural studies, queer studies and children's literature studies. Interacting with feminist scholarship, trauma studies and multicultural frameworks, this collection provides a noteworthy and valuable investigation of gender and sexuality. Although the volume does not specifically focus on the figure of the girl and representations of girls in children's and young adult literature, the essays offer interesting insights into children's literature's representations of femininity and girlhood and these texts' potential for feminist reconfigurations of gendered norms and stereotypes. The first part of the collection examines 'Gender(ing) Communities' and the ways in which children's and young adult literature constructs physical and virtual communities informed by gender, ethnicity and sexuality. Notable essays in this section include Terry Suico's investigation of the function of communities of girls in popular works for young adult readers, and Victoria Flanagan's challenging of traditional assumptions about digital spaces as dangerous or hostile and her argument that they can act as potential sites of feminist collaboration. Essays in the second section, 'Developing Gender(ed) Identities', include Nancy Jennings's application of the feminist lens of Kay Vandergrift's Model of Female Voices in Youth Literature to the lead character in Veronica Roth's Divergent series, and Megan E. Friddle's study of historical representations of tomboys, lesbians and transgender children. In the third section, Valerie Murrenus Pilmaier argues that Anne's path to healing in L.M. Montgomery's Anne of Green Gables ultimately results from her embracing her vulnerability, comprising a positive reframing of what has been traditionally devalued as a feminine characteristic. Meanwhile Eric B. Tribunella's 'Pedophobia and the Orphan Girl in Pollyanna and A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Bad Beginning' poses the unsettling argument that children's fiction employs the child and especially the girl as 'one of the few remaining subjects of acceptable domination' (140). Section four focuses on sexuality and romance in fiction and non-fiction targeted towards young girls and examines the heteronormative pressures and the progressive and transgressive potential of these texts. For example, Elizabeth Zanichkowsky analyses the transgressive agency of Lyra and themes of sexuality and female sacrifice in Philip Pullman's Dark Materials series, and Lauren De La Cruz scrutinises the problematic ideological dimensions of the American Girl's self-help non-fiction resources designed to help girls navigate puberty. The three essays in the final section explore paratextual and generic conventions and the ways in which text and context inform gender(ed) identities. Susan M. Wildermuth and Linda A. Robinson present a historical survey of discourses of female beauty and ugliness in picturebook illustrations of Cinderella retellings over two centuries, Valerie Bherer provides a meta-textual inspection of strategies for navigating feminism, femininity and adolescence in young adult epistolary and diary-format fiction, and Rebecca Long considers the subversive potential of fantasy fiction and the genre's multiple contexts for enabling a freedom and transcendence from traditional gender(ed) identities.

While there are differences in approach and the level of theoretical density in the various essays, each contributor presents a thoughtful consideration of gendered expectations, codes and themes such as power, agency, voice and trauma. Overall, the interdisciplinary and methodologically diverse critical readings of contemporary, popular and classic texts in this collection make a welcome contribution to scholarship on gender in children's and young adult literature, gender and women's studies, and cognate disciplines.
Edited by LUella D'AMICO, MARLOWE DALY-GALEANO and EVA LUPOLD
SERIES FICTION AND AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE
LEXINGTON BOOKS 2016 (PBK) 352pp $49.99 ISBN 9781498517638

Part of the Children and Youth in Popular Culture series, this accessible and insightful collection studies the evolution of American series fiction over the last 150 years and the changes that have reflected and shaped concepts of girlhood for American tweens and teenage girls. The editors, Luella D'Amico, Marlowe Daly-Galeano and Eva Lupold, persuasively argue that ‘For young American women, the act of reading series books has, for generations, helped them to understand the cultural demands pressing on them and to see models of how others in their same social positions have navigated the complicated waters of adolescence’ (vii). Series fiction focusing on girls’ lives and perspectives and these books’ ongoing popularity have often been dismissed in scholarship and even rejected as worthy candidates for scholarly investigation and analysis due to their perceived genre limitations, trifling subject matter and alleged imaginative and aesthetic shallowness. The fourteen chapters in this volume make a significant contribution in redressing these stereotypes in their confident advocacy of the importance and impact of these books regarding mediations of identities and ideologies about race, class, gender, education, romance, friendship and family. The collection is organised chronologically according to time period and associated themes, which allows for a combination of analytical readings about the creation, production and reception of various girls’ series within their particular historical contexts as well as their political, cultural and literary trajectories over time. Series such as Margaret Sidney’s Five Little Peppers, Susan Coolidge’s Katy books, the Trixie Belden and Nancy Drew ‘girl detective’ series, Sara Shepard’s Pretty Little Liars young adult novels, Richelle Mead’s Vampire Academy paranormal romances, the Cherry Ames mystery series and Ann M. Martin’s Baby-Sitters Club books are examined. While there is an inevitable proportion of attention paid to well-known series and a corresponding amount of repetition regarding the novels being considered, the essays also bring welcome critical attention to less-well-known and under-researched series. Many of the essays address how traditional concepts of femininity are challenged, resisted and reaffirmed by characters in series associated with and targeted at girl readers. The capacity of girls’ series to create an affirmative and powerful sense of community among its young readers and the influence of series on the development of adolescent identity are ongoing themes of the collection. For example, Nichole Bogarosh’s ‘Nancy Drew and Trixie Belden: Girl Detectives, Role Models, and Feminist Icons’ and Megan Friddle’s ‘From Betsy-Tacy to the Blog: Diary-Keeping, Self-Narrative and Adolescent Identity in American Girls’ Books’ consider the role and significance of girls’ series fiction in its readers’ real-world identities, experiences and negotiations of gender conventions. The radical potential of established and more recent girls’ series fiction to present queer spaces and intersections of disability, heteronormativity, age and gender is investigated. Essays also note the extensive role and processes of marketing, consumerism and commodification involved in the multimedia franchising of contemporary girls’ series fiction such as the American Girl various series.

This book offers a thoughtful and engaging contribution to scholarship regarding children’s literature, adolescent literature and gender studies in popular culture. A strength of the collection lies in its lucid writing style and its accessibility for a wide range of undergraduate and graduate studies in English, education, media studies and sociology as well as for fans of girls’ series books who would like to revisit them using a scholarly perspective and to investigate their political and historical settings.
In *Girls and Their Comics: Finding a Female Voice in Comic Book Narratives*, Jacqueline Danziger-Russell fulfils her stated intention to ‘explore and explode the myths surrounding the field of comic books, their implied readership, and the gendering of the field’ (2). A celebration of comics-loving girls and women, this book examines the unique combination of visual and textual narratives in various international and underground comics traditions and their capacity to give voice to and empower marginalised female voices and experiences, particularly those of adolescent girls. While there is little sustained attention paid to the digital age of comics or to contemporary crossovers between television, film, printed books and online media, the author makes a significant contribution to the relatively under-researched fields of feminist scholarship of comics and to the study of feminist comic books. The strength of this book lies in its focus on and promotion of female readerships of comics and female narratives in comics. Throughout the book, Danziger-Russell combines close readings and analyses of examples of US and Japanese comics with existing and original interviews undertaken with readers, writers and librarians. Organised into five chapters, the book initially presents a historical and scholarly overview of the evolution of the comic book in the United States of America from a female perspective. In the second chapter, she differentiates comics from picturebooks and engages with reader-response theory in considering the word–image relationship and the comics reader’s interpretative experience. In chapter three, she focuses on the importance and underappreciation of visual literacy and discusses some strategies involved in reading comics. She also demonstrates how comics are uniquely able to confront patriarchal representations of girls and women and to give voice to subaltern females due to their visual nature in contrast to ‘the stereotypes typically found in mainstream comics, which often continue to objectify the female body and neglect [a girl’s] power as a human being’ (93). The fourth chapter, ‘The Appeal of Manga’, surveys the current status of manga publishing in the US, especially for girl readers. This chapter supplies a lucid and valuable overview of how translated Japanese manga has transformed comics readership in the US and how the contemporary movements in online publishing, the decline of chain bookstores and the spread of amateur and pirated translations of manga have influenced US-based female readers of manga. The final chapter, ‘Girls’ Comics Today’, is dedicated to the recognition and promotion of independent comics and their transformative potential for enabling a girl-centred ‘revolution’ to take place: ‘the clear voices of young women are shining through this medium with more personal and imaginative forms of storytelling’ (31). The author contextualises and discusses four graphic novels with young female protagonists – *Persepolis*, *The Tale of One Bad Rat*, *Salamander Dream* and *Anya’s Ghost* – as rich examples of the female experience across different genres and aesthetic styles.

At the end of this book, Danziger-Russell writes the intriguing assertion that ‘This new surge of female narratives in comics, especially those of girlhood and adolescence, suggests that there may be something afoot in the way comics are viewed – and in turn the way girls are viewed. It is a provocative notion that the two may be related’ (220). Danziger-Russell does not fully explore the implications of this argument and the coherence and depth of her analysis are at times underdeveloped. However, this is an extremely readable and accessible book that would appeal to a wide range of teachers, librarians, researchers, practitioners and comics readers who will find it interesting, useful and affirmatory. Despite some inconsistencies in criticality, Danziger-Russell’s book is a passionate, vivid and energetic addition to the field of comics studies, girlhood studies and the study of contemporary children’s literature.
While there have been other scholarly works and collections that have investigated the recent popularity of young adult dystopian fiction, this book focuses specifically on adolescent female protagonists, their journeys towards self-definition and these characters' rebellious potential to resist, subvert and transform hegemonic institutions and power structures. In their introduction, the editors, Sara K. Day, Miranda A. Green-Barteet and Amy L. Montz, present a valuable historical context for the dystopian novel and its recent explosive momentum within young adult literature.

Arguing that dystopian novels intersect with and speak to contemporary adolescence, and particularly adolescent female adolescence, the editors and contributors collectively propose a new critical paradigm for interpreting such texts: liminality and girlhood. Analysing a range of popular young adult dystopian works such as Suzanne Collins's Hunger Games novels, Moira Young's Dust Lands fiction, Scott Westerfeld's Uglies series and Veronica Roth's Divergent novels, the eleven essays in the collection effectively demonstrate how 'young women in late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century dystopian fiction embody liminality, straddling the lines of childhood and adulthood, of individuality and conformity, of empowerment and passivity' (4). The book is organised into three parts. 'Part 1: Reflections and Reconsiderations of Rebellious Girlhood' considers subjectivity, gender, the sociopolitical relevance of representations of adolescent young women and the significance of young adult dystopian texts in relation to self-fashioning for contemporary teenage girls. For example, in her essay, 'Docile Bodies, Dangerous Bodies: Sexual Awakening and Social Resistance in Young Adult Dystopian Novels', Sara K. Day traces how these novels maintain heteronormative assumptions that undermine the potential for diverse female identities and argues that speculative dystopian futures 'perpetuate gendered expectations about the adolescent woman's body that continue to render it both docile and dangerous' (91). The second section, 'Forms and Signs of Rebellion', considers the extent to which these young female protagonists enact their resistance, rebellion and agency, particularly regarding gendered expectations of the female body, the performance of gender and embodiment. Essays in this section address diverse topics such as the recurring image and semiotics of bread as a sign of rebellion against conventional gender norms, the panoptic role of beauty and fashion, and the disruptive, antinormative power of humour and satire in dystopian fiction. Finally, 'Part 3: Contexts and Communities of Rebellion' addresses constructions of place and space and the interplay of landscape with female rebellion and agency. This section includes an examination of the troubling incompatibility of female friendship with the heterosexual relationships that are usually privileged in young adult dystopian fiction, and an ecofeminist reading of the role of nature in young adult dystopian female protagonists’ trajectories towards agency and self-determination.

Despite the coherent organisation of these sections, some unavoidable repetition occurs due to the same novels being considered across multiple essays. However, the editors succeed in bringing together and juxtaposing a valuable range of critical perspectives, diverse insights and theoretical frameworks. This collection makes a persuasive argument for the significance of the rebellious female adolescent protagonist in young adult dystopian fiction in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century cultural imagination and it constitutes a noteworthy contribution to girlhood studies and scholarship in young adult fiction and dystopian narratives.
The Girls’ History and Culture Reader: The Twentieth Century addresses girls’ historical experiences of work and play, their negotiation of their sexual identities and bodies, and their practices of consumption and production during the last century. The second in a two-volume girls’ history and culture reader (both edited by Miriam Forman-Brunell and Leslie Paris), this pioneering anthology brings together classic early girlhood studies scholarship and more recent research about twentieth-century girlhood and patterns of socialisation, participation and education. Beginning with an introduction that orients the reader to arena of girlhood studies, the editors then present a series of recent significant contributions to girlhood studies as well as groundbreaking scholarship on representations and concepts of girlhood in the twentieth century such as Kathy Peiss’s ‘Putting on Style’, Mary Odem’s ‘Single Mothers, Delinquent Daughters’, Judy Yung’s ‘First Steps: The Second Generation, 1920s’ and Vicki Ruiz’s ‘Star Struck: Acculturation, Adolescence, and Mexican American Women, 1920–1950’. The editors emphasise the traditional marginalisation of girls during the last century and state in their introduction that ‘girls were at once protected and exploited, restrained and adventurous, relatively unseen and highly exposed’ (2). Presenting incisive studies of girls’ roles as workers, their friendships, their bodies and their negotiation with embodiment, their communities of feeling and their engagement with education, music, leisure and fashion across the decades, the various essays trace these contradictory situations and the complex ways in which girls negotiated agency, self-expression and power across the decades. While there is a tendency to disproportionately represent middle-class heterosexual white Anglophone girls, the volume does seek to convey the diversity of concepts and experiences of girlhood in relation to religion, sexualities, ethnicity, race and nationality.

The collection begins powerfully with Joan Jacobs Brumberg’s essay, “Something Happens to Girls”: Menarche and the Emergence of the Modern American Hygienic Imperative, comprising an accomplished analysis of the pubescent body and the medicalisation and commodification of information around menstruation. Other essays analyse possibilities for financial empowerment and subversion of femininity involved in the gendered work of babysitting, and the history of girls’ summer camps in North America and how these sex-segregated experiences afforded girls in the early twentieth century a unique space for self-expression and developing peer networks. While the coherence and focus of the volume is occasionally diluted due to the essays having been originally published elsewhere and having been collated later into this collection, there are some rich linkages and symmetries. For example, Susan Douglas’s thoughtful and astute essay ‘Why the Shirelles Mattered’, in which she reflects about the profound impact of the girl groups of the early 1960s on teenagers like her, resonates with Mary Celeste Kearney’s ‘Riot Grrrl: It’s Not Just Music, It’s Not Just Punk’. This essay, which closes the volume, compellingly analyses the Riot Grrrl movement and its interplay of feminism, gender, age and political agency. Demonstrating the centrality of girls to twentieth-century matrices of labour, immigration, consumerism, feminism and immigration, this book is an indispensable resource for advanced students familiar with girlhood studies, the history of children and youth, and gender studies, and for scholars and researchers new to the historical study of girls.
Girlhood: A Global History examines an impressive range of historical experiences of girlhood within a rich multiplicity of national settings. In its emphasis on girlhood as a cultural and historical construct and the importance of transnational and global perspectives, this collection compellingly demonstrates the multifaceted and dynamic nature of girlhood in different times and different places. Charting how concepts of girlhood change within societies and across time, the twenty sociological and anthropological essays in the collection astutely address girls’ cultural, religious, ethnic and class backgrounds and the diverse political and economic contexts in which these girls live. In the introduction, the editors, Jennifer Helgren and Colleen A. Vasconcellos, present three unifying threads to the anthology: girls’ agency; ‘cultures’ struggles to make meaning out of girls’ biology and development at different times and in different places’; and ‘the correlation of girls’ well-being with national and international choices regarding girls’ education, health and welfare’ (7). These concerns recur throughout the four thematic sections of the book: ‘Girls’ Cultures and Identities’; ‘The Politics of Girlhood’; ‘The Education of Girls’; and ‘Girls to Women: Work, Marriage and Sexuality’. The first two chapters provide an introduction to the book and map global discourses of girlhood around the world from 1750 to the present, including Argentina, the Netherlands, the Soviet Union, the United States of America, Australia, Iraq and Malaysia. The first section considers intersections of gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality and youth through a variety of female subcultures that have operated in relation to, but also separate from, dominant societal and adult values. For example, essays explore the politics of identity for American Jewish girls during 1860–1920, immigrant girls’ experiences of ambivalence and hybridity in contemporary Amsterdam and the feminist and queer potential of performing girlhood in Taiwanese pop music. The second section focuses on analysing how girls operate as global actors and agents within the context of the nation state and international politics. Essays in this section offer interesting insights into neglected histories of girlhood such as the British Ministry of Food’s unjust and racist treatment of ‘negro girl’ egg candlers during World War I amidst food shortages and challenges to conservative racial and gendered power systems, and the US media’s ideological manipulation of images of American and Eastern-bloc girl gymnasts from the 1960s to the 1990s in order to promote the superiority of all-American girlhood. The third section presents intriguing studies of the complicity of educational institutions in discourses of imperialism and racism across the last two hundred years while recognising the potential for girls’ tenacity, resistance and agency. This section analyses Australia’s assimilation policies and the exploitation and attempted erasure of indigenous girlhoods during the twentieth century, discourses of femininity and the British Missionary Enterprise’s imperial disciplining of Palestinian girls during 1847–1948, and South African productions of White girlhood in the Cape Colony from 1895–1910. The final section investigates girls’ experiences of rape, marriage, sexual coercion and sexual activity around the world, for example, girls’ labour and sex in precolonial nineteenth-century Egypt, intersections between girlhood and slavery during the British colonisation of Jamaica and the ideological complexities involved in the cultural value and associations with modernity placed on girlhood by middle-class Malay Muslim society in the second half of the twentieth century.

While the eclectic nature of these wide-ranging essays and the contributors’ different styles and modes of research sometimes dilute the coherence of the anthology, this collection’s vivid case studies of girls around the world, its promotion of global perspectives and its persuasive demonstration of the dynamism of concepts of girlhood offer many valuable insights into girls’ historical and contemporary lives and experiences.
Girlhood and the Politics of Place

Edited by CLAUDIA MITCHELL and CARRIE RENTSCHLER

GIRLHOOD AND THE POLITICS OF PLACE
BERGHAHN BOOKS 2016 (PBK) 354pp $34.95 ISBN 9781785330179

Girlhood and the Politics of Place approaches girlhood as an active, material production of power and sociocultural relationships. Alongside arguing that there is no single norm or identity for girlhood, this book amply demonstrates that there ‘is also no single place for studies of girlhood either’ (2). This impressive anthology explores how girlhood is positioned in relation to geographic locations, media environments, histories and social spaces. As the editors, Claudia Mitchell and Carrie Rentschler, assert, place is an ‘an especially productive and enabling concept in the field of girlhood studies, one that provides needed specificity to the very meaning of girl’ (1). The eighteen creative and incisive chapters present valuable investigations and insights into girls’ lived experiences of gender, race, sexuality, age, class, ethnicity, citizenship and a range of social differences, privileges and oppressions. Drawing upon research across cognate fields such as art history, communication and media studies, literary and historical studies, health, sociology and education, the various chapters illuminate interdisciplinary and transnational understandings of place in girls’ everyday lives, activism and identities. The essays are organised into four sections that respectively address particular times, spaces and physical contexts in which girlhood operates, researchers’ own places and place-making practices, the impact of virtual spaces on girlhood experiences and, finally, activism and communication in girls’ engagement with online and social media. Chapters address girlhood across their positioning within history and within particular temporal and spatial contexts and consider the importance of physical and online places and spaces in girls’ voices, lives, self-expression and capacity for agency around the world. For example, Jessalynn Keller explores girls’ blogging as sites for activism, Katie MacEntee investigates HIV prevention discourses, abstinence, tradition and girls’ sexuality in rural South Africa, and Susan Cahill analyses discourses and matrices of girlhood, Irishness and nationality in the works of L.T. Meade at the turn of the twentieth century. A particular strength of the book is its nuanced analysis of structures of oppression, surveillance, monitoring and control of girlhood and how these systems are interpellated with patriarchy, ageism, racism and colonialism. Another strength lies in the anthology’s inclusive recognition of the value and impacts of a diversity of styles and forms of research and research methodologies. While many of the contributors are well-established academics (such as Claudia Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh who are leaders in girlhood scholarship and who co-founded the journal Girlhood Studies), the book brings together policymakers, community-based researchers, activists, practitioners and academics. This provides a showcase of a rich variety of gender analysis, feminist scholarship and research methodologies that offers many opportunities for girlhood scholars, researchers, students, policymakers, teachers, and advocates.

The book is inspiring in its validation of the views and experiences of girls and the ongoing deployment of research frameworks that directly engage girls in the research process. Caroline Caron’s chapter dedicated to exploring the issue of scholars’ and researchers’ ethics of accountability towards forgotten and marginalised research participants is also timely and welcome. Action-research projects such as Lysanne Rivard’s work with Rwandan schoolgirls on using Photovoice, a methodology to study physical activity and sport in secondary schools, supplies valuable evidence for directing policy, while Loren Lerner’s deployment of art in the classroom as a medium for challenging normative images of girlhood and associated power hierarchies invites educators to reflect on their own professional decisions, teaching philosophies and pedagogies. The book powerfully calls for activism and feminist cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary solidarity regarding reflexivity, intersectionality, decolonisation and globalisation and presents accessible and stimulating suggestions for educators, practitioners and researchers to enact their role as agents of change.
Monstrous Bodies: Feminine Power in Young Adult Horror Fiction analyses the intersection of young adult fiction and horror narratives centred on young female protagonists. Pulliam’s study offers astute and welcome insights in these fields, which have often been trivialised, minimised and under-researched. The book considers the potential of young adult horror narratives for subverting patriarchal systems of power in re-drawing boundaries between human and nonhuman, and the abject and the subject, and the cultural implications of the growth and popularity of these texts. Examining various fiction and films featuring teenage girl protagonists who develop supernatural abilities or who undergo supernatural experiences, Pulliam argues that young adult horror ‘uniquely explores the process by which teen girls become gendered subjects ... [and that these works] use the tropes of horror to deconstruct sexist ideas about women’s supposed essential nature, which have been used to justify their subordination’ (11). Pulliam engages with classic and current scholarship regarding young adult literature and the horror genre, as well as scholarship in psychology, in her assertion of the widespread Othering of teenage girls and their bodies and how the monstrous, transgressive Other acts as a double for the female adolescent self.

The book is organised into three chapters, each focused on a popular mode of embodied horror text and associated discourses of patriarchal power relations. In the first chapter, ‘Subversive Spirits’, Pulliam considers the ghost story and the erasure, regulation and repression of female protagonists within systems of normalised femininity. In these ‘modern Gothic ghost stories’ (49), ghosts help teen girls silenced by oppressive fathers and patriarchal social structures to discover denied or repressed knowledge and to develop autonomy in their own lives. In the second chapter, ‘Blood and Bitches’, Pulliam considers the figure of the female teenage werewolf and the links between monstrosity, agency, sexuality and the female gendered body. Female werewolves become even more monstrous than their male counterparts, since the heightened appetites for food and sex, anger and physicality of lycanthropy are stereotypically coded as masculine in contrast to the feminine ideals of hairlessness, meekness and suppression of bodily appetites. Pulliam argues that lycanthropic transformations complicate the already unstable adolescent female body but that they also afford these teen girls opportunities to present radical female bodies and identities and to resist cultural constructions of femininity. The final chapter, ‘An ye harm none, do as ye will’, focuses on the contemporary figure of the witch, the ultimate Other in a patriarchal society. Pulliam demonstrates how constructivist epistemology and the sharing of female power, nurturing and mentorship through sisterhood, as enacted through female teenage witches, can challenge and resist the male gaze and patriarchal subordination. Pulliam regards the witch as the most powerful and the most agentic of the three figures evaluated in the book, and she argues that the teenage witch’s greatest strength ‘is her feminist worldview rather than her magical powers’ (171).

In each chapter, Pulliam selects between five and seven films, novels or short stories ranging in date of publication from 1989 to 2013 and gives detailed close readings of these texts alongside classic works of feminist theory by critics such as Laura Mulvey, Judith Butler, Hélène Cixous and Naomi Wolf. While Pulliam considers diversity regarding class issues in the texts that she chooses, she does acknowledge that the protagonists of these selected texts are all white and heterosexual. The correspondingly limited engagement with intersectionality in the book does circumscribe the scope of her argument and its sensitivity towards more diverse conceptualisations and experiences of girlhood in horror. However, her book is the first full-length scholarly work to explicitly address monstrosity and female adolescence in young adult horror and she makes a significant contribution to feminist horror scholarship and the study of young adult literature and representations of teenage girlhood in horror narratives.
This collection of essays explores the complexities, ambivalences and possibilities around cinematic articulations of the girl in twentieth- and twenty-first-century film. Analysing European, Arabic, Asian, North American and Latin American cinemas and containing work by established and emerging scholars, the book unpacks discourses of nostalgia, intrigue, sexuality, agency and power involved in the cultural imaginary around the figure of the girl and girlhood. The editors amply fulfil their stated intention to ‘displace the reader, offering a variety of perspectives from which to consider girlhood’ rather than supplying merely ‘an illusion of total coverage’ (10). The collection does not provide or attempt to provide a survey of contemporary images of girlhood on screen. Instead the various authors challenge the hegemony of a ‘universal’ girl on screen and present a rich range of different understandings of how discourses and representations of girlhood operate within international cinema. Organised into four sections, the book investigates a diverse range of national cinemas as well as transnational issues, systems and globalisation. The first section, ‘Girlhood and Postfeminism: Global Perspectives’, addresses political, geographical, ethnic and historical accounts of girlhood in the film cultures of France, Italy and Japan. Essays include Danielle Hipkins’s study of adolescent girls, performance and the precarious nature of constructions of sexiness, vulnerability, desire and sexuality in contemporary Italian cinema, and Deborah Martin’s exploration of feminine adolescence, transgressive materiality and queer cinema in the experimental films of Argentinian female auteur Lucrecia Martel. Essays in the second section, ‘Philosophies of Girlhood on Film’, analyse films from Argentina, the United Kingdom, France and the United States of America deploying queer theoretical and feminist phenomenological frameworks. These include Lucy Bolton’s study of existentialist phenomenology in the British 2009 film Fish Tank and the role of the body and embodiment in girlhood experiences. The third section, ‘Sonic Youth: Girlhood, Music, and Identity’, examines the importance of soundtracks and music in girls’ experiences and multimedia engagements with self-expression, representation and commodification. For example, Samantha Colling considers the pleasures, aesthetics and role of spectacle of music videos in films for teenage girls while Tim McNelis investigates musical constructions of Latina identity and agency and how these intersections of language, gender, sexuality, class and ethnicity form spaces for girls to navigate their hybrid identities. The final section, ‘Extraordinary Girlhoods’, considers extreme and transgressive cinematic depictions of girls, such as murderers, soldiers, heroic girls and prisoners, that problematise patriarchal notions of femininity and girlish innocence. The essays in this section, such as Kate Taylor-Jones’s study of girlhood, war and African child soldiers in film and Martin Zeller-Jacques’s analysis of the girl superhero in contemporary cinema, note how girlhood is ‘simultaneously transnational and tied closely to particular national and/or cultural contexts’ (5).

This collection’s strengths lie in its examination of the specificity of girls’ experiences, its conceptual and methodological variety of approaches to analysing girlhood and its sensitivity to situational issues regarding the local, national and transnational. Using a multicultural feminist lens, the various essays challenge and problematise the dominance of Hollywood cinema and the Anglophone, white, heterosexual, middle-class girl. Moreover, the essays offer a welcome interrogation of traditional divisions between popular and art-house, north and south, Western and non-Western cinemas. In its investigation of an impressive international variety of representations of girlhood, this collection has much to offer scholars, researchers and students and makes a significant contribution to feminist film studies and girlhood studies.
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