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19th-century Zulus and 20th century Zuni, who distinguish ‘westerners’ according to their characteristic approaches to the indigenous owners of the land, and rarely if ever appear as a single, uniform bloc.

In his concluding chapters, Morley summarizes and argues for research into domestic technologies both old and new, in addition to the analysis of media content. Television, which with John Hartley he argues is unthinkable without the refrigerator, needs to be understood as domestic furniture and as symbolic object, an analysis supported with cultural examples from Africa, China and the Korean-American artist Nam June Paik, whose *Family of Robot* adorns the book’s cover, and which leads him to his concluding observation that in the many modernities of the globalizing world, by no means all of them secular or western, magic and science, technology and tradition, in other words culture, continue to function in unexpected ways. In short, although the book at first appears as a collection of essays, it is in fact a very coherent argument for, and exemplification of, the significance of cultural studies in the understanding of human activity, and for a cultural studies which is unafraid to tackle assumptions and presumptions, including its own, in the light of actual practices.

References

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Mary Celeste Kearney, *Girls Make Media*, New York: Routledge, 2006. xiii + 384 pp. ISBN 9780415972772 (hbk) \$85.00; ISBN 9780415972789 (pbk) \$24.95.

‘Revolution Girl Style Now!’ was the 1990s rallying cry of the ‘Riot Grrrl’ movement, the heterogeneous but self-consciously feminist network of young women who challenged dominant images of passive, conformist femininity through their battery of rebellious songs, fanzines and websites. But the slogan could also serve as a neat epithet for *Girls Make Media*, Mary Celeste Kearney’s compelling account of the proliferating universe of young women’s media production. Drawing on a profusion of original source material, Kearney surveys the practices of creative expression and identity exploration enacted through girls’ production of zines, films and websites. This plethora of cultural activity is, Kearney argues, not simply a context where girls ‘express themselves, explore their identities, and connect with others’ (p. 3), but a realm of powerful self-representation which has the capacity to diversify and democratize the wider world of contemporary popular culture. For Kearney, young women’s practices



of cultural creativity expand and transform popular culture through their frequent subversion of the commercial media's representations of girlhood and, in so doing, 'contribute to the formation of the democratic media system that is intrinsic to a progressive society' (p. 304).

Since the 1980s, many cultural theorists have highlighted the elements of agency and meaningful creativity within young people's acts of commodity consumption. Kearney acknowledges the dimensions of creativity to consumer practice, but charts new territory by focusing on 'girl media-makers', the artifacts they produce and the ways in which these often represent a site of cultural and political action. Her scope is wide-ranging. From a comprehensive history of girls' cultural production before the mid-20th century, Kearney's study goes on to explore the impact of the 1990s Riot Grrrl movement on 'girl-made media', the introduction of girls-only media education and media literacy curricula and the recent upsurge in young women's independently-produced zines, movies and websites.

Kearney's preface reveals that an element of biography underpins the agenda of *Girls Make Media*. Discussing her early encounters with Riot Grrrl culture, she describes how the movement's zines and music not only influenced the course of her PhD research, but spurred her to reclaim a 'boisterous, girlish-self' (p. ix) that was an inspiring alternative to older, hegemonic brands of feminism. Indeed, Kearney's account of the Riot Grrrl phenomenon represents one of the book's most engaging sections. Charting the development of the movement since its inception amid Washington DC's punk scene of the early 1990s, Kearney shows how Riot Grrrl music, zines and events functioned as a community based on female solidarity – a cultural space where young women could 'explore their experiences of sexism, misogyny, and homosexuality' and 'connect personal experience to larger systemic problems such as patriarchy and heterocentricism' (p. 60). Kearney emphasizes, moreover, that a punk-inspired do-it-yourself ethos has always been central to the Riot Grrrl phenomenon. Citing bands such as Bikini Kill, Bratmobile and Heavens to Betsy; filmmakers such as Sadie Benning and Lucy Thane; and independent zine distributors such as Grrrl Style! and Pander Zine Distro, Kearney argues that the Riot Grrrl movement has been a font of amateur authorship, with girls crafting a wealth of self-produced media. Moreover, these texts have allowed young women to exist outside the institutions of commercial youth culture, signalling 'a rebellion against not only girls' subordinated position, but also their complicated economic position as one of the primary target groups for the fashion, beauty, and culture industries' (p. 68).

Subsequent chapters develop the theme. Kearney's extended analysis of girls' self-published zines, for example, offers a spirited account of young 'zinesters' who subvert dominant media discourse through deft acts of textual appropriation and Dada-esque strategies of *détournement*. Kearney describes, for example, how the grrrl zine *Hey There, Barbie Girl* pilfers from commercial children's culture, with covers that feature



mischievous photographs of Barbie dolls dangling from a hangman's noose. For Kearney, texts such as these represent a stage for the elaboration of rebellious, counter-hegemonic forms of femininity, and allow their authors 'to explore unruly identities that they may not be able to perform publicly in their everyday lives' (p. 187). Similarly, in her account of the burgeoning field of 'girl-made movies' – a diverse canon including films such as Mieko Krell's documentary-style *Body Image* and Candice Yoo's anime-influenced *Tomboygirl* – Kearney champions a new wave of young, female filmmakers who are developing a distinctive 'girl's gaze' by 'challenging the ideologies of gender, generation, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and disability prevalent in US society and commercial film culture' (p. 237). The ether of cyberspace, meanwhile, has seen the rise of a new legion of self-taught, technologically-savvy 'webgurls' whose innovative uses of digital technology, Kearney suggests, stems not from their educational or work experiences but from their 'commitment to progressive politics and counterhegemonic media' (p. 290).

At times, *Girls Make Media* may seem somewhat celebratory, even a tad romantic, in its account of clued-up, creative riot grrrls who are seizing control of the contemporary mediascape. But Kearney readily acknowledges that 'girl power' has its limits. 'Most girl media producers', she observes, 'are from upper-middle-class families' (p. 14), with access to computers, camcorders and musical instruments, and who possess the disposable leisure time needed to master their associated skills. Predictably, 'Revolution Girl Style' is also shot through with inequalities of 'race' and ethnicity. Kearney concedes that the number of poor, black girls with access to the tools and expertise of media production is severely limited, while the inclusion of black radicals in zines' pantheons of feminist role models may be well intentioned, but amounts to 'safe gestures of racial healing ... [that] do not require white female youth to interact directly with people of color' (p. 176). As Kearney ruefully observes, then, despite the best efforts of media educators and community activists, 'contemporary girls' media is being shaped primarily by those with considerable social privilege and power' (p. 293).

There is room, perhaps, to question a few of Kearney's value judgements. Texts that adopt a 'punk' aesthetic or elaborate 'alternative' identities and sexualities, for example, tend to be valorized more emphatically than those focusing on more 'prosaic' styles and experiences. Kearney, for example, laments the fact that 'very few films made by heterosexual girls focus on female friendships without the involvement of males in the narrative' (p. 229). But surely the inclusion of males and heterosexual relationships does not of itself make a film any less meaningful than one dealing exclusively with female friendships and relationships?

Overall, however, *Girls Make Media* represents a valuable and highly readable contribution to youth studies scholarship, and will appeal to a diverse audience. Kearney delivers a fascinating account of young women's



cultures of media production and the texts they create – many of which represent a powerful challenge to prevailing discourses of gender, sexuality and identity. As Kearney observes, through their insistence to be both seen and heard, ‘girl media producers are a disruptive force, and we do well to consider the changes to popular culture and dominant society their presence is provoking’ (p. 13).

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Meaghan Morris, *Identity Anecdotes: Translation and Media Culture*.
London: Sage, 2006. 250 pp. ISBN 9780761961154 (hbk) £70.00;
ISBN 9780761961161 (pbk) £21.99.

This latest collection of essays from Meaghan Morris brings together a body of work written between 1988 and 1999, dealing with what Morris calls in her introduction ‘nationality, translation and “speech institutions”’ in order to sketch out a ‘pragmatics of identity’ and a ‘*rhetoric* of critical practice’, first provoked by the invitation to write a piece about her relation to national identity and feminism for *Camera Obscura* in 1984. All the essays, with the exception of the substantial introductory essay, have been published before in a range of locations both popular and academic, but most appear to have been revised and updated for this volume.

Meaghan Morris has remained one of the leading figures in the international field of cultural studies for many years; she is among its most formidable scholars of positions and yet one of its most accessible, engaging and personal voices. The ‘identity anecdote’, indeed, is echoed in her own performance practice: the personal story or confession elaborated in elegant and surprising ways as a means of mediating between her view of an issue and that held by those with whom she has chosen to engage. These essays are among the most impressive examples of that practice. They were written over a period when Morris was what is often euphemistically called ‘an independent scholar’. Over this period, she literally lived off the quality of her published or presented work – usually performed as public lectures or seminars before her peers rather than her students. This must have been a financially precarious existence, but it also lacked the distractions of the full-time academic position that Morris later took up. As a consequence, these essays have the finely-crafted and highly-nuanced finish of the very best work in cultural studies.

Many readers will be familiar with individual pieces in this collection. The bicentenary piece ‘Panorama: The Live, the Dead and the Living’ has been anthologized before, and ‘White Panic, or Mad Max and the Sublime’, has also appeared in various forms: it formed the basis for a series of memorable public lectures that Morris presented in Australia and