HBO's Girls: Questions of Gender, Politics, and Millennial Angst

Betty Kaklamanidou

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Young women today have achieved and in many cases, far exceeded, males in both educational and occupational terms. While this presents many opportunities, it also creates confusion in terms of renegotiating traditional gender roles. The fictional representation of young women in recent film and television shows demonstrates how these tensions, created by the specific sociopolitical climate of the postrecession era, are being worked out. One specific television show focused on intelligent young women caught up in these contradictions is Girls. The show explores the lives of four female friends living in Brooklyn, two years after their college graduation, as they try to support themselves with low-paying jobs, and deal with various struggles around relationships, careers, and friendships. The HBO half-hour sitcom, created, written and starring Lena Dunham, premiered on April 15th 2012 after receiving a flood of initial buzz and criticism, both positive and negative. This collection is the first to discuss the cultural, political and social implications of this innovative series. The contributors examine Girls through a variety of lenses: sexual, racial, gender, relationships between the male and female characters, as well as friendships between the young women. This variety of perspectives endeavors to explain why Girls has had the profound cultural impact it has made, in the short time it has been on the air.

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