

search articles cited. The index is quite thorough, and there is an extensive list of references. There are some surprising typos (if anyone has been to the "Navada dessert" recently, let me know how it tasted), which points perhaps to increased use of spell check in the editing department rather than the intervention of human quality control.—*Gillian M. McCombs, Southern Methodist University.*

**Currie, Dawn H.** *Girl Talk: Adolescent Magazines and Their Readers.* Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Pr., 1999. 362p. \$60 cloth (ISBN 0-8020-4415-8); \$24.95 paper (ISBN 0-8020-8217-3). LC 98-932362.

In *Girl Talk*, Dawn Currie examines "the current tension between an analysis of magazines as 'the purveyor of pernicious ideology to be condemned' and their analysis as a venue of woman-centered pleasure to be embraced." Arguing that scholars of women's studies generally have neglected adolescents, she investigates "the ways in which fashion and beauty magazines, as a popular reading medium for young women, present messages of feminism and femininity." Currie focuses on the four leading Canadian teenage magazines ("teenzines")—*Teen*, *Seventeen*, *Young and Modern*, and *Sassy*—as she "explore[s] the popular pleasures of consumption as a serious arena of feminist analysis."

As the first of two overlapping stages of the study, content and thematic analysis of the four magazines discloses that three themes dominate teenzine texts: beauty and fashion, heterosexual romance, and stardom. The other stage consists of individual interviews, supplemented by group discussions to test working hypotheses, with ninety-one girls aged thirteen to seventeen. Previous analyses of magazines have been conducted by scholars who are removed from intended readers in terms of age and education. What sets this research apart is that it emphasizes the views of teenzines' intended audience. Contradicting prior assumptions, Currie re-

veals, for example, that readers prefer text to glossy pictures. Other findings include the discovery that readers do not mimic the fashion and makeup styles they encounter in teenzines; rather, they apply the images and advice to their own efforts to "belong" among their classmates, thus constructing "a social Self that fits into school culture." The author concludes, in part, that "given the absence of positive definitions of adolescents and other signifiers of belonging, teenzines can take on more significance in readers' lives than seems possible to many adults."

Currie, who chairs the Women's Studies Programme and is associate professor of sociology at the University of British Columbia, grounds this complex study firmly in feminist ethnology. As such, it is expert research that approaches its topic from diverse perspectives, including the textual organization of knowledge and the disjuncture between girls' reading of teenzines and adults' reading of women's magazines. The liberal inclusion of excerpts from interviews and discussions empowers teens to speak for themselves about their reading habits and preferences. U.S. readers should note that the book's author and publisher, and the teens being studied, are Canadian; American teens may have different opinions and preferences. Also, British conventions of punctuation (reversed roles of single and double quotation marks) and spelling (e.g., "centre") are used throughout.

The fact that Currie apparently assumes that her readers share her viewpoint (e.g., "How can we, as feminists, take responsibility for reformulating ourselves through new meanings of gender ...") may deter those who expect a less partisan interpretation. No history of the book (or the teenzine) will be found here; it is identified as an area for further research. The sociological aspects of the narrative constitute demanding reading, but *Girl Talk* will be worth the effort for librarians, publishers, and parents who wish to understand the interests and

needs of teenage girls, and it holds the potential to inform decisions regarding serials subscriptions for collections that serve adolescents. A copy should be in all women's studies collections.—*Florence M. Jumonville, University of New Orleans.*

**Goldman, Alvin I.** *Knowledge in a Social World.* New York: Oxford Univ. Pr., 1999. 407p. \$70, alk. paper, cloth (ISBN 0-1982-3777-4); \$19.95 paper (ISBN 0-1982-3820-7). LC 98-43283.

Alvin Goldman, professor of philosophy at the University of Arizona, seeks to evaluate social institutions and practices on the basis of how well they increase human knowledge, as opposed to ignorance and error. His conception of knowledge involves a strong commitment to truth, which he calls "veritism." For Goldman, knowledge is defined as *true* belief, not merely accepted belief or opinion. What makes a belief true is its having the right kind of relationship to the world or reality; putting it baldly, if a belief matches reality, it is true. What we seek when we seek knowledge is true belief. Institutions and practices that foster true belief are good and should be promoted; institutions and practices that result in false belief (error) or the absence of true belief (ignorance) are bad and should be avoided or corrected. Science is, for Goldman, an example of a social practice that has good prospects for leading us to knowledge, whereas the news programming of commercially oriented media companies has less of a chance for leading us to true belief and is, therefore, a candidate for correction or regulation.

The author seeks to distance himself from contemporary thinkers who profess various forms of skepticism about truth in the form of social constructivism, postmodernism, cultural relativism, or the sociology of knowledge. Claiming that these thinkers suffer from "veriphobia," Goldman devotes a chapter to exposing the flaws in their arguments. He proceeds to explain in detail the theory of truth that he advocates, and

he outlines a framework for employing it in the evaluation of social practices. He then applies the theory to social practices in general, including testimony (the transmission of observed information from one person to others), the technology and economics of communication, and speech regulation. Special attention is devoted to four special domains: science, law, democracy, and education. Goldman's ambitious work is both theoretical and practical, descriptive and normative: he develops a truth-linked social epistemology in rich philosophical detail, he then evaluates social practices on the basis of how well they produce true beliefs.

Goldman's epistemology may arouse surprise and suspicion in librarians, many of whom would be classified as "constructivist veriphobes" in his terminology. When any theory of knowledge is articulated by librarians at all, it is usually a form of constructivism in which knowledge is distinguished from information by a cognitive operation of the user, sometimes referred to as constructing meaning. According to this view, the library user takes information (raw data) and does something to it (processes it, interprets it, manipulates it, forms an understanding of it) and thus transforms information into knowledge. When this process is performed collectively by credentialed individuals organized into disciplines, librarians refer to it as scholarly communication. The purpose of the research library is to aid scholarly communication and the production of new knowledge so defined. The notion that knowledge is connected to any normative concept such as truth is usually left out of the equation. When librarians of the constructivist bent do speak of truth, they are likely to understand it in terms of social consensus or agreement rather than a belief's having the right relationship to the world. A truth-linked epistemology such as Goldman's would therefore arouse the suspicion that it would result in the privileging of one group's truth over another's.