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'Girls': Sex returns to the city (Sundays, 10:30 p.m. EST)

Sr. Rose Pacatte | May. 1, 2012 NCR Today

In this new series, five young 20-something women struggle to find meaning in their well-healed lives. The biggest problem in what could have been a meaningful and entertaining exploration of modern *ennui* is that in HBO's world view, the search begins and ends with the ladies' genitalia and that of the young men with whom they cavort.

True, one girl, Shoshanna (Zosia Mamet), seems ashamed because she has never had sex. Others are into experimentation and, though concerned about STDs and HIV/AIDS, what's the problem? asks Hannah (Lena Dunham). They have medication now. Her doctor is shocked at her attitude and tries to inform her, but the spoiled Hannah is somewhere else.

The premiere opens with Hannah being cut off from parental support. It's been two years since she's finished college. She's working as an unpaid intern and writing her memoirs. Her father is sympathetic, but her mother insists she support herself. Hannah is inappropriate at a job interview and seems to lead the pack in promiscuity. Promiscuity is an art form, but there's no art in this series.

"Girls" wants to teach viewers about why condoms should be used: to avoid disease and prevent pregnancy.

One girl is pregnant. She makes an appointment for an abortion and her friends gather at the clinic to support her. It's as if they are planning a party. While Hannah announces that "an abortion is the most serious decision a woman will make in her life" among all the choices before her, it is clear that the idea of an abortion is disturbing to the others on some level. After three episodes, there has been no mention of faith, religion, parents or even health motives for deciding to choose life rather than death. These girls are clearly well educated but are so recreationally inclined and clueless about their bodies and health that it stretches credibility.

Judd Apatow, the very successful writer/director for "The 40 Year Old Virgin," "Knocked Up," "Forgetting Sarah Marshall" and other films of the bait-and-switch genre, is one of the executive producers of "Girls." This means that he baits the audience by over-the-top sex and grunge, then switches to teaching the characters and audiences about growing up and taking responsibility for their actions and lives. The problem here is that Apatow is lending his considerable clout to a show that reflects the fact that he seems to have only one note to sing.

"Girls" is porn. You might make the distinction between soft- and hardcore porn, but why bother? Nothing is left to the imagination. Dignity and self-respect are unknown to the women and men in "Girls."

I expect that at some point, lessons will be learned, and the girls, or most of them, will grow up. But it's not enough to justify the extremes of the show.

One reviewer called "Girls" a wasteland. Another commented on the lack of racial and cultural diversity among the young women. I usually complain about this deficiency on television and in films, but not this time. Ladies, if you don't find yourself on this show, be grateful. Maybe the writers are saying that other cultures have values,

it's the white middle- and upper-class females that are in search of their souls.

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