

Popular media is  
producing different  
types of femininity  
media essay



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The media provides information and entertainment; it is a producer of cultural meanings in the production of dominant images of women. The emergence of female characters as protagonists, central rather than marginal to the action e. g. Buffy the Vampire Slayer. The media doesn't present innocent, neutral pictures of the world; rather its views are selective and constructed. The women's movement understands the extent to which our consciousness is shaped by powerful, simplified images and has pressured media in order to combat cultural stereotyping. Women have reacted against the traditional representation which is based on women's domestic and sexual roles because they are limited and limiting, dutiful. The way women think of them. Alternative images have been created which develop and expand women's consciousness of themselves instead of limiting it.

Femininity is a female quality attributed specifically to women and girls. Feminism is also an intellectual activity and a political strategy ( Spender, 1983). The question that is been looked at in this essay is if the popular media is producing different types of femininity. The answer to this question has different angles from many people's point of views and opinions. Liberal feminism criticizes the unequal and exploitative employment and representation of women in the motives and popular culture, and they argue for remedial equal opportunities legislation to rectify this situation. Radical feminism sees the interests of men and women being fundamentally and inevitably divergent, regards patriarchy or the control of women by men as the most crucial historical forms of social division of oppression and argues for strategy of female separation. Social feminism accepts this stress on

patriarchy , but tries to incorporate it into analyse of capitalism and argues for radical transformation of the relations between the genders as an integral part of the emergence of a socialist society. Amazon feminism focuses on the images of female hero's but fictional and real, in literature and art, and is particularly concerned with physical equality. Opposes gender role stereotypes and discrimination against women, particularly images of women as passive, weak, and physically helpless (<http://sparkcharts.sparknotes.com/womens/womens/section4.php> ) . with Amazon feminism audience which are adult, youth and even children see women as hero's through the popular media and they get so see that they is another side of a women they get to see how tough a woman can be . Nowadays feminism seems to consist of the argument that the inequalities in gender power relations are socially and culturally constructed. Feminist have been critical of a number of things in these areas, but a few in particular stands out. Popular cultural representations which marginalise or stereotype women (limit to domestic and sexual roles). The relative absence of women involved in cultural production. Relative neglect of women as audiences for popular culture (when male programmes were taken for granted, female programs have been altered to fail. Tuchmann 1981 ' reflection hypothesis' mass media reflect the dominant social values in a society. If something is not represented in this affirmative manner it implies symbolic annihilation ' which means that women lives and their interests are not being accurately reflected by the mass media. However, most women are not those images. In Western economies women not only make more than 50% of the workforce, but they also dominate in the industries previously dominated by men

The popular media has shown us women in very different ways either as heroes, fashion icons and tough woman for the new century . they have not just become sex symbols and house wives even when they are seen as sex symbols through popular media the are still tough and deliver messages to the audience that women are sexy and they make changes in hero roles.

Xena was an example, she calls into questions that the idea that the chick in a brass bra is created mainly for voyeuristic pleasure for men(Inness 1999)

Suitably described by Sheila Rowbotham, women were hidden from history.

One of the first aims of feminist scholarship, that has gained such drive in the past decades, has been to render women's situation and their experience visible to the public. Back in the days everything was always about men, women where just seen at those who should be home and take care of the entire domestic sphere . As a consequence of the drive to render feminist experience visible many issues affecting women's lives has come to emphasize the distinctive nature of women's roles in both the ' public' and ' private' spheres of life. And how women are represented in media, also form one important aspect of such studies. (<http://www.ias.nl/iasn/iasn6/iasnews/media.htm>)

the popular media has made us see women in different ways and examples of these women are Madonna Louise Ciccone, Hero's like xena; warrior princess, Jodie foster and Gillian Anderson TV shows like sex and the city, ugly Betty, movies like kill bill more of some of this names and series listed will be elaborated on below. I have chosen to use these women as examples because they provide intriguing examples of what happens when a tough woman is featured in the mainstream or popular media. Women issues have arrived on the media agenda documentaries,

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discussion programs and dramas on female topics such as infertility, cervical , breast cancer and rape. Is not about fashion, celebrities and cookery anymore. The 1980's have seen a number of such series with heroic women supplanting heroic men and this indicates that media have corporate certain aspects for the women question into the dominant culture. There was a gradual increase in the number of women as central characters in the police and crime genre. The series Juliet Bravo.

Media has led to recognise the criticism and demands of women. They have accommodated women's perspective and women's issues they have seen commercial and ideological potential of creating a new cultural stereotype ' the new women'. ' female sexuality confused with female liberation, has become big business ( Baehr 1980) Liberated women us strongly marked by signs of her femininity and sexuality- she well made up her clothes are up to date, she works outside the home , but more often appears in the context of consumption rather than production. She is active, lively and sexy. Her liberation is equated with material consumption for example sex and the city niche market address to women. The postmodernist drama is about the single women wanting to get married but in the sex and the city treatment of sexuality can be understood as an update version of the drives consumption Dow 1996, Whelehen 2000) Bailey's ice cream corporate sponser of sex and the city exemplifies how in consumer culture the body as a bearer of sensation replaces the ethical self as an ideal it presents a senscous image of swirling, creamy liquid with he slogan ' let your sense guide you' Bowlby refers to the ideal modern consumer as ' a receptacle and bearer of sensations, poser and posed, with no consistent identity, no moral self'. The

questions have become its good book or feel good, rather than is this a good thing to do?

For past few decades Madonna Louise Ciccone has been a very influential pop cultures icon and has been the most discussed female singer in popular music Madonna images highlights the social contractedness of identity fashion and sexuality (Kellner 1995) Madonna is an attractive woman to discuss about how popular media is producing different types of femininity because of her works, popularity fashion and the fashion offers models for constructing identity . in a traditional society identity is usually fixed by birth , marriage and what has been accomplished but now it is not that way again `Modern societies eliminated rigid codes of dress and fashion and beginning around 1700 changing fashions of apparel and appearance began proliferating(Wilson 1985)in modernity fashion has become an important part of one's identity which helps to decide how one is seen and accepted in the society. Fashion offers us different choice of clothes and style through which one can produce their own individual identity and it is through this popular media that we now see women in different kind of ways . according to Kellner, Madonna cited in Lewis 1993; 142 that she expressed herself through fashion from the time she was a young girl indicating she and her girlfriend dressed extravagantly . if not for the media we would not see all these qualities that different women possess . during this period the media culture became a particularly source of cultural fashions providing models behaviour and style and female models are also icons and role model for women in style and fashion which helps people to also create identity. Madonna is been used as a woman which popular media has helped to

create different kinds of femininity because she has made us see women in different types of ways since she arrived in 1985 her records sold 16million singles and albums, she had pop hits like `like a virgin` and crazy for you even if she was 26 by that time she was 26 and she had already made a name for herself was also a successful film debut in desperately seeking Susan and her virgin tour also established her as one of the hottest figure in pop music . audience especially female have started seeing women in a different way and not as people who take care of domestic sphere and not just as sex object for men . Madonna present herself as a feminist who is in control of her life and career, she provides herself as a female body to titillate men and also provide fashion models for women . in 1990s Madonna also became political, making statement on behalf of AIDS victim , the homeless she also supported bill Clinton for president(kellner1995)in those days women were never portrayed in this ways it was always the men. Madonna is one woman that has created a different type of femininity through the popular media , she promote feminism yet some of her images undercut feminist critiques of femininity beauty and objectification of women

Xena; warrior princess this is also series which shows femininity in different types of ways, break through traditional patterns of heroic toughness that prioritize individualism, isolationism, and emotional withdrawal; these shows offer new visions of women coming together in harmony and community rather than in envy and competition.’.(Inness, 2004: 249) the show is able to focus on female friendship and how they are working together because in the normal world were the popular media is not involved, women are seen to be jealous of each other’s especially when it comes to fashion and all those

things that interest females a lots . she breaks many of the rules of feminine decorum, but her shoes still remain successful. The show is also very successful because it actually calls into question exactly what is required of a tough hero. xena in 1990s suggested that her depiction represent an important shift from earlier images of tough women, it explores the way in which tough women including xena helps to perpetuate stereotypical notions about what it means to be a hero, especially a tough female one (Inness1999) as television is such an integral part of our lives we often see get to see how women are seen as warriors. The way women were portrayed in the popular media before were as house wives and other kind of feminine e roles never like heroes. she is not just seen as a sex symbol for men but also a warrior and a better fighter than most men the fact that she does not rely on men to save her when they is any trouble makes her tougher than virtually every woman and this makes us as individuals see that they are so many things women can do and they can also influence the way of thinking in so many ways. A feminist fan of Xena could easily come to the realization that Xena, although a great show for fantasy and the promotion of a strong, take-no-prisoners woman, could go further to promote the feminist perspective. Given that American television broadcasting is predominantly controlled by men and has a history of such, television has always had difficulty in portraying a feminist perspective. (<http://whoosh.org/issue13/nelson.html>) but that has not been so in recent times anymore because most females of recent times are now portrayed in the popular media especially in the American television which found it difficult to promote feminist in the past . the television program have created a female super hero that attracts wide range of audience ” xena appeal cut across all <https://assignbuster.com/popular-media-is-producing-different-types-of-femininity-media-essay/>



age, gender and sexual preference lines”(Dickson 55) her appeal which is particularly interesting because her show and also television in general actually possesses the power to change how we construct and understand gender in real life . the power for television has really altered how we perceive the world. For instance what Xena conveys about desirable roles for female has the ability to change how women understand their gendered identities, she can change how viewers perceive genders in ways that a real woman rarely can. “ She (Xena) inhabits a prelapsarian world in which it is possible for woman in high -high boots to win every battle, all the time, and always fighting fair.”(Stacey D Erasmo 47) women look sexy and very beautiful and are also able to fight wars and win . it is not only xena who makes us see women that way. According to Inness another way the program (warriors princess) emphasizes Xena sexual appeal without reducing her toughness is by employing masquerade. She is not the first warrior to appear in popular media but she is one of the sexiest and toughness women that has helped in producing different types of femininity through the popular media.

In conclusion, men own and control the media, and it is their ideas, view point and values which dominate the system of production and representation in broadcasting. Women are still only allowed to be violent in certain parameters largely prescribed by what men are willing to tolerant. Most men don't want women who are too tough or too masculine in films. Women can be sexy and also be tough at the same time . friendship between females and women as hero s are important element in the popular culture. Media industry have encouraged the viability of films and television shows

focused on female friendship . films such as fatal attraction(1987) and working girl(1988)pitted women against each other . lot of shows on television have gained much attention but according to Sharon Ross, Buffy the vampire slayer and xena ; warriors princess because of the characters in theses series portray the idea of toughness and flexibility with the help of their friends . this two female, Buffy and xena demonstrate how women can be tough and that has made other women see themselves in different ways and men also see women in different ways