

The foxy feminist

Sociology, Feminism



The Foxy Feminist During the thick of the second wave feminism movement many films did not have an accurate depiction of what life was like for a woman America. With a feminist centered narrative, Jack Hill's *Foxy Brown* (1974), is more of a melodrama than Blaxploitation. Reversed gender role and characterization of women, and a female empowered plot and story that challenged the status-quo role of women. An ambiguous genre to define in film with many variations of characteristics that define it Jane Gaines says, "[melodramas] translate ideological dilemmas into private predicaments" (10), as the story of *Foxy Brown* is centered around a woman avenging the death of her murdered boyfriend in United States 1970's. An example of a reversed gender role in the movie is signified by the occupation of Katherine Wall, Foxy's white counterpart. Her character is the founder of an escort service masked as a modeling agency where Foxy goes undercover as a prostitute. Katherine was the solicitor of sex. Later, the narration revealed that Katherine was indeed the person who ordered the death of Foxy's boyfriend, as the two men report to her when he is dead. Not focusing on the race but the gender of Katherine. In the decade of classic movies in which women were rarely portrayed as bosses, her character signified progression and ability. Not only was she the solicitor of sex, she had the power to have people killed. Foxy's prostitute friend also engages in a gender reversal. Her husband comes to the brothel with their son and pleads for her to leave with him. Embracing her independence she rejects her role as a mother leaving him to care for their son as a single father, as she decides to stay at the brothel. The rejection of the American life-style norm was challenged in this scene and a light was shed on the issue of the increase of broken homes in

the 1970's(support). The last example of reversed gender role occurred at the end of the movie, Foxy is put in the position of authority. Her accomplices turn to her for the final verdict and the man's genitals are chopped off before he is murdered. This symbolized the coherence and wrath women, showing the world, yes, we are fully capable of making life or death decisions with out a single feeling of remorse, if necessary. In Foxy Brown the woman characters embodied masculine traits, and engaged in acts of sexual liberations. Masculinity in women, to this day, is taboo. The roles of women [in film] were of virgins, " madonnas" or good girls that occupy the traditional of domains traditional femininity (Eschholz 661). This taboo was broken, there was no turning the other cheek, Foxy Brown makes her debut in the movie coming to the rescue of her brother after he calls her in the middle of the night. With in the first ten minuets of the movie the swift heroine, saves her brother, disposes of two men who were coming after him and brings him back to her place, safe and sound. Playing the nurturer to her brother as sisters are taught to do in the absence of a mother. Sexual liberation is explicitly highlighted when her friend decides to get a drink in a lesbian bar. Striking up a conversation with the butch she is fondled by the woman, before Foxy comes and addresses the situation. This scene played on the curiosity women had about homosexuality at the time. Single woman in America by choice, as Foxy Brown was not married to the man she was avenging. This was very taboo, the idea of fornication was frowned upon by society. As the feminist movement intensified sexual freedom became a major desire of women of all social classes and race. Katherine was an unmarried older white woman, operating the well-established brothel with

her younger ' man-friend' who does not hesitate to interact with her ' high-class' prostitutes. Katherine is a symbol of women at the time rejecting the social norms of marriage and monogamy. Women were rejecting the submissiveness that was expected of them. When Foxy went to the hotel to escort the judge she did not have sex with him, eluding to but never following up with action, she used the judge as a pawn in her plan, embarrassing the poor man by throwing him out of the hotel room with no pants on. As a prostitute paying customers are always to get what they want, especially a white man in a position of power who is soliciting sex from a black woman. Once again Foxy flexed her masculinity and unwillingness. The subject matter in Foxy Brown centralized around a black woman posing as a prostitute to avenge the death of her boyfriend; the plot describes the desires and drives of Foxy's character(quote book). The sequences of events converged to reference the social ideologies and issues women were dealing with at the time of the Second Wave Feminist Movement. Particularly within the African American community, in her article Laura Harris asserts " media in the 1970's offered a veritable void when it came to powerful, sexy black female images" (12), this aids in the argument of Foxy Brown as melodrama, leading women to consciously identify with the narrative of the movie. " Some of us black women managed to imagine living as large as Pam Grier in Foxy Brown. " (12) The rape scene is one that is very interesting. She was sent to ' the ranch where two men drugged her with heroine, as they raped her. When she retaliated against them, she was tied up and drugged again. Forced submission of her body, not by choice, as they had to drug and tie her up. The drug possibly represented the notions and ideologies of anti-

feminism, supporting the inferiority and control of women. During the feminist movement there was a lot of opposition to the movement particularly from men who felt that women should have no rights and are put here to cook, clean, reproduce and nurture. The ropes, signified the history, oppression women have experienced since the beginning of time, as roping was one of the oldest methods of restraint. Using her mouth as she cuts herself out of the rope signified the voice of the movement and finally liberation. As a side note, another interesting point is the choice of heroine as the drug and Foxy Brown being the heroine at the end of the movie. In conclusion, Foxy Brown is one of the most critically acclaimed Blaxploitation movies of all time, however with careful observation, the movie is also a melodrama with, "[serious] social and feministic implications" (Bourget, 192). A "Blaxplodrama" is the term I coined after writing this paper. Jean-Loup Bourget also writes, "we find many movies belonging to genres which are often dismissed as escapist and alienating" (193). As learned earlier in the semester a movie can transcend a genre if sufficient evidence is presented. As this movie was released in the midst of the Second Wave Feminist Movement, as the term "melodrama" in its traditional sense was born of a time that reflected a troubled historical period and social unrest during the French Revolution (Bourget 192). It was no coincidence the narrative was exaggerated to reflect the issues and ideologies of the Feminist movement. The social, sexual, and political conflicts Foxy endured are much like the same conflicts and issues; I as a woman endure to this day