Postmodernism, equality and feminism: current contemporary issues

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ABSTRACT: Feminist media scholars have argued how media representations have changed significantly since the decade of the 1990's and become much more complex and ambiguous within a context of predominance of post-feminists discourses in media texts and ambiguities around what constitutes "sexism" (Gill, 2007: McRobbie, 2009). In the last years gender equality has become a key concern within development thinking and has also gained in relevance as a topic of concern for governments as much as it has become for many women and feminists, from the UK to Brazil. Notably, there have been some achievements in gender equality throughout the world, with Latin America and the Caribbean as regions which have made some improvements. These have occurred though at an extremely slow pace, with attitudes and beliefs persisting in the midst of legislations on women's rights and improvement in gender representations.

This research looks at the correlation between gender inequality in society with media representations, situating the case of Brazil and Latin America within the global quest for gender justice. Questions that are asked here include: Why do media representations matter, and to whom ? How can the media assist in gender development and contribute to wider democratization? This chapter is part of the book called *Globalization, gender politics and the media*, to be published by Rowman and Littlefield/Lexington Books in December 2016, and examines critically feminist social theory, particularly post-feminism and post-colonialisms, before starting the analyse of gender representations by focusing on the symbolic image of the *Afghan girl.*

Key words: feminism theory, post-feminism, post-colonialism, the Third World, Brazil

Palavras-chave: teoria feminista, pos-feminismo, pos-colonialismo, Terceiro Mundo, Brasil

Theme: *Social intervention, social and gender inequalities*

a) *What is feminism? gender equality and why it matters*

The ideas on the "inferiority" of women thus contributed to their exclusion from citizenship and from obtaining equal rights with men within the structures of the state. These ideas went largely unchallenged until the late 18th century in the wake of the French Revolution which advocated egalitarian citizenship status to all (Einhorn, in Evans and Williams, 2013, 29). Since the 1980s and 1990s feminist political theorists has looked at the problems with the notion of citizenship within Western thinking, criticising its association with "the man" to the detriment of the exclusion of women. As Jackson ad Jones (1998) note, feminist theory as we know it can be traced the Second Wave feminism of the 1960s and 1970s, with the Marxist and radical feminist versions becoming the two major tendencies within the women's movement until the "cultural turn" in the late 1970s towards issues of representation and discourse.

There have been a myriad of different forms of feminism, all of which have provided knowledge and understanding on the nature of gender inequality, and what the strategies should be to overcome them. As Ramanzanoglu (1989) states, feminism does not have an agreed meaning around the world, and can either be defined in terms of radical American feminism of the 1970s or be more associated with 19th century movements. The different perspectives nonetheless have been grouped together as part of the three core feminist movements, notably the first wave, second and third wave feminisms. The goal of universal suffrage for instance, and the right to own property and capital, to be educated and to go to work, where struggles associated with the first wave of feminists of the 19th and early 20th century. In the UK, the feminist movement known as the *suffragettes,* headed by the famous Emmeline Pankhurst, her daughters and other smaller feminists organizations, went to great lengths, including being marginalised, imprisoned, going on hunger strikes and losing their jobs, in order to secure voting and other civil rights.

Walby (1997, 149) has argued that first wave feminism has been misjudged in its importance within feminism and that core political, sociological and historical texts are wrong in seeing these early women's movements as narrow in their focus. She argues that these movements included both liberal and radical versions of feminism, among others, and embraced a rich range of demands, attempting to represent the interests of women beyond the upper classes. "First wave feminism was a large, multi-faceted, ling-lived and highly effective political phenomenon", she argues. As she (1997, 149-151) notes, was thus responsible for campaigns which included not only included the suffrage movement, but also the control of predatory male sexual behaviour, access to employment, training and education, reform of the legal status of married women so that they could claim property. They were also active in labour and union movements and paid attention to women's domestic labour, identifying even the exploitation of women's labour in the home as a major source of the problems facing women. These rights were granted by the end of the 19th century, and some as late as the mid-20th century (Lorber, 2012).

Walby (1997) has emphasises that there has been a tendency within feminist thought to consider only second wave feminism as radical which are explained due to the different conditions under which second-wave feminism was rooted, where women performed both unpaid house work and pad work. Quoting the studies of a series of authors, Walby (1997, 144-145) argues that first wave feminists contained significant radical elements, including their use of militant tactics such as going on hunger strikes and destroying private property, and that developments of capitalism are not sufficient to explain the radical or liberal nature of feminism. These early feminist movements campaigned for public provision for education and healthcare, and managed to pave the way for the very formation of the welfare state (Walby, 1997). Access of women to higher education is one of the major conquests of first wave feminists alongside suffrage, although the latter is the only one universally acknowledged (Walby, 1997, 151). The author states that it is still seen though as a battle fought by liberal middle-class feminists for a narrow range of human rights.

Thus it is possible to say that first wave feminism, as well as liberal feminism movements as such, mainly in Europe and the US, have been closely connected to the very cornerstone of the democratic project in their requests for the political and social equality of women to men. Although Ramazanoglu (1989) does recognise the importance of liberal feminism, claiming that the 19th century European and American movements did already present splits between socialist and liberal positions, there is a tendency to underestimate their contributions. A more thorough critique is the one that points to other more conservative tendencies within these movements, and mainly the ways in which women of colour, from the South or others from the developing world have felt then, as they do now, that these movements excluded them, and that during the time there was a lack of thorough questioning by many of colonialism, issues further developed in the next section.[i]

Despite the divisions and different schools of thought, Ramanzanoglu (1989) made in the late 1980s a powerful argument in favour of the strength of feminist social theory. She correctly claimed at the time - which I believe is valid even for our current standards and particularly in a context of increasing uncertainty and disillusionment with all "grand theories" and policies that can enact change - that feminist social theory was among the few that retained some optimism for the future, although she admitted that the 1980s was seeing a decline (Lorber, 2012). Thus in spite of the problems posed by post-feminism – I will be discussing the concept more in the next section -, it is possible to argue that a *renewed* enthusiasm and energy has emerged in the last years with achieving gender equality throughout the world and expressed in various spheres of social, economic and political life, from the inclusion of at least four goals related to women in the Millennium Development goals, the growing interest in the topic in universities and conferences worldwide to increasing (albeit slow) action taken by governments throughout the world to tackle the equal pay gap among others, which is possible to see from countries in Latin America, as we shall see in Parts III and IV of this book, to the UK.[ii]

As Ramanzanoglu (1989) has further underlined, the various approaches, which include radical feminist perspectives, which have focused on gender and sexuality, as well as psychoanalysis and feminism perspectives, and post-modernism, have common features, which include an understanding of an unsatisfactory relation between men and women which needs changing. Marxist feminism has been strong in Europe, whereas radical feminism has been more influential in the US, with the former recognising class divisions between women and borrowing from Marxism to analyse women's oppression, whereas the latter has also questioned power relations but have identified *all* women as suffering from a common form of oppression (Ramanzanoglu, 1989). Radical feminists of the 1960s and 70s eventually would inspire international movements, emphasising sexuality and reproduction as part of women's politics (Ramanzanoglu, 1989, 12-13).

Third wave feminists on other hand have underscored that there are many forms of sexualities and genders and regard race, class, transgender rights and sexual liberation as core issues. Feminists have thus offered many contributions through their analyses on the types of oppressions that women suffer and by proposing political and legal solutions to tackle the problem (Lorber, 2012). Further developing from liberal and radical feminists, and acknowledging the criticisms made by non-Western feminists and others of colour, third wave feminists in the early 1990s endorsed diversity and multiple forms of identity, paying attention to age and generational differences, including girls' culture, and concentrating particularly on sexuality and popular culture (Kearney, 2012). Their critical thinking towards sexuality has contributed to discussions on women's sexual agency as well as sex work, gender violence and reproductive rights. They have been particularly attracted to the Internet and new technologies, which has become another an important research inquiry within gender studies, particularly the ways in which women use ICTs for development and/or for articulating alternative discourses and representations to the rigid gender roles and positions which are seen as predominating still in the media.

Besides feminist theories, there are also many contemporary theories in the Social Science, Economics and Psychology fields on social and structural inequalities, including Marxism, functionalism and conflict theories, with functional theory for instance seeing inequality as inevitable. The discussion of inequality has also taken place in different ways and approaches within sociology,

political theory and philosophy, from the first examinations of democracy in Plato and Aristotle to Hobbes, Rousseau and Weber. The latter saw societies as heading towards a path of increasing bureaucratization, producing more inequality. Drawing from a range of theories, including the authoritarian personality, Marxism and neoclassical elitism theories, Sidanius and Pratto (2001) have developed an influential theory within Social Psychology which is designed to explain the origins of social hierarchies, arguing that intergroup oppression, discrimination and prejudice are the means by which human societies organise themselves as group-based hierarchies. According to their theory, members of dominant groups obtain a disproportionate share of the resources in life (i.e. jobs, good housing and health) whereas members of less privileged groups are stuck with the bad things in life (i.e. poor housing and health, insecure jobs).

Making reference to Akrami and Ekehammer (2006) in their discussion of the relationship between personality and prejudice, Sidanius and Pratto (2001, 419) state:

"the roles, prejudices, social beliefs that contribute to discrimination are coordinated… so that thousands of….individual acts or cruelty, oppression and discrimination help sustain group=based hierarchy. Certain values…political ideologies, and temperaments, including openness, conservatism, authoritarianism and empathy make certain people more or less likely to be prejudiced or to discriminate against subordinates."

The authors (2001, 420) further argue that various forms of group-based oppression (i.e. sexism, racism, nationalism, ethnocentrism, classism) are to be seen as group-based social hierarchies. Such theories presuppose that societies are complex systems built in with particular hierarchies that differ according to locality, regional and countries, as well as time and history. They are relevant to highlight how social control and dominance works in complex forms in societies but they also imply a fatalism regarding the capacity for social change, as if group hierarchies are an inevitable feature of human nature. What is worth retaining here is the link of everyday individual attitudes to a wider societal system. This means that the change of attitudes (the micro level) can have an impact on the societal structure (the macro level). This also opens up an important role for the media, in helping shape individual attitudes, in providing role models, complex characters and representations, confronting stereotypes that can be harmful to women.

Despite the promises of mass democracies at the turn of the 20th century of wider inclusion of less privileged groups in the political and mediated public sphere, the fact of the matter is that new forms of exclusion have emerged, prejudice persists and biases have now largely left the conscious level to reach the unconscious (i.e. Young, 1990, 2011). In her discussion over the definition of "oppression", Young (1990) has underlined that it is possible to evaluate if a group is oppressed or not by looking at what she terms the "five faces of oppression" that various minorities and women suffer from, which include *exploitation*, *marginalization*, *powerlessness*, *cultural imperialism* and *violence*. Judging by these criteria, it is possible to argue that women are oppressed, as in most parts of the world they are overrepresented in lower-ranking jobs.

This leads us back to the question asked by feminist theorists in the 1970s and 1980s: how can we account for women's subordination? (Jackson, 1998, 12). As Lobrer (2012) reminds us, the second wave feminism of the post-World War II argued that women's subordination was not *biologically determined* but *socially constructed*. Considered a key influential feminist text of the 20th century, Simone de Beavoir's *The Second Sex* published in 1949 advanced the idea that woman was constructed as man's lesser "Other", stating that "one is not born but rather becomes a woman" and thus introducing a new understanding of gender as an identity that is socially produced rather than biologically determined (Kearney, 2012, 1-2). This helped women to see that gender is used to regulate human behaviour and social relations and thus is part of a wider power structure of society, called *patriarchy*.

The concept of patriarchy is a widely debated term within feminist thought, with many feminist social scientists continuing to affirm that material issues have an important impact on women's lives (i.e. Ramazanoglu, 1989; Jackson and Jones, 1998). Many theorists sought to seek explanations for the

reasons why males exercised domination through a focus on the exploitation of labour, with Marxists feminists seeing capitalism as the cause of women's oppression whereas radical feminists argued that the productive process of society included both capitalist and patriarchal relations (Jackson, 1998, 14). Influenced by Marxist theory of economic oppression, radical feminists in the 1960s and 1970s in the US thus argued that society was divided not by class but through sex and in accordance with a patriarchal ideology that valued males and oppressed females. Thus in accordance with the materialist feminist position, the relations between women and men are similar to a class-like relationship, with patriarchy not being based on sex differences but rather gender existing as a social division because of domination (Jackson, 1998, 135). As Delphy and Leonard (1992: 58) put it, "for us "men" and "women" are not two naturally given groups….rather the reason the two groups are distinguished socially is because one dominates the other" (in Jackson, 1998, 135).[iii]

The reality is that attitudes and beliefs regarding the role of women in society, their difference in terms of personality and traits, and the ways in which women were seen as having been constructed as "the Other" in opposition to men during the history of mankind was based on notions of their "inferiority" to men, have persisted. Many in societies throughout the world still cultivate notions of what "the ideal woman" should be and what her place in society should be. These are at the very root of all sorts of discriminatory behaviour. As Anthias (in Evans and Williams, 2013, 36041) notes, society constructs men and women differently, not necessarily "culturally different" but in terms of behaviour and attributes, with women been seen as passive and caring and capable of multi-tasking. The ideal male on the other hand is seen as assertive, competitive and rational, values grounded in the public versus private distinction which has guided the history of Western thinking and the construction of the notion of (the male) citizen.

Thus sex is the biological differentiation between male and female, whilst masculinity and femininity where viewed as constructed within society through the process of socialization and education (Parpart et al, 2000). As Jackson (1998, 133) notes, masculinity and femininity in this sense are seen as historically and culturally variable and not fixed by nature. Such perspectives would eventually influence researchers studying gender, particularly also the postructuralism work of Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Julia Kristeva (Kearney, 2012, 10), leading to a focus on language and mainly questioning the category of "woman". The latter is seen by post-modernists as *fluid,* whilst third wave feminists and post-colonial theorists have also criticised the universalism of the previous discussions of the term, emphasising the *diversity* of identities and the impossibility of speaking for *all* women and homogenizing their experiences of oppression. Various theories of gender have been written since Beavouir's text, with Butler's work within post-modern feminism for instance being particularly influential. Butler argues that gender is materialised in society through repetitive performances that are transformed into patterns of identity which human beings are then encouraged to see as normal and reproduce daily in their behaviour. It is only in refusing to repeat these patterns that gender can become "troubled" and new identities and possibilities can emerge (in Kearney, 2012, 12).

Following from the historical assessment developed in Part I where I discussed the perspectives within Western thought and the Enlightenment tradition of women's position in society, it is perhaps more correct to state that women's subordination is above all a question of *ideology* and of how group structures and dominant groups function within society. This is not to dismiss the allegations that women have traditionally in history, both in the Western societies and in developing countries, been victims of injustice and been exploited, benefitting capitalism in many ways. But the roots of their subordination I believe are quite complex, linked also to the vulnerability of other groups, and are thus part of deeper structures than a merely Marxist analysis or radical feminists perspectives would suggest. For if women's subordination and capitalism were to be so intrinsically linked, there would be no explanation to the reasons why women are occupying higher positions in businesses, as they have been since the last decades, and the constraints that are placed on their path and the ways in which many are still victims of discrimination has more to do with the reinforcement of attitudes and beliefs

about their role in society, and the tendencies of certain groups (and males) in society of exercising *social domination* over less powerful ones (i.e. Sidanius and Pratto, 2001).

This contestation perhaps can help explain the shift towards issues of representation and language in feminist studies as well as the big impact of post-modern thinking on feminist thought, which is discussed in the next section, but this again does not exclude the fact that development reports, statistics and other data from international organisations point to the underlining fact that many women in the world are still stuck in low paid jobs, struggle to make a living, are highly susceptible to unemployment and to be poor (and remain poor) throughout their lives (the *feminization of poverty* is thus a reality). Despite the assumptions made by intellectual frameworks guided by "post-feminist" thought, the reality is that equality continues to matters, and perhaps more than ever. Scholar Nancy Fraser in an interview given to the *New York Times* Opinion Pages (15/10/15) made a powerful critique towards the limits of what she has called "mainstream feminism", stating that it has focused mostly on "encouraging educated middle-class women to "lean in" and "crack the glass ceiling"". Thus the main concern has been with climbing the corporate ladder. According to her, "the mainstream feminism of our time has adopted an approach that cannot achieve justice for women, let alone for anyone else…….By definition, its beneficiaries can only be women of the professional-managerial class. And absent structural changes in capitalist society, those women can only benefit by leaning on others – by offloading their own care work and housework…..".[iv]

Many groups of women are also still relatively marginalised from mainstream society, including working-class women and others from various ethnicities. Women also still struggle to have their voices heard, and constantly find themselves excluded from politics and decision-making positions in their societies. Some find themselves victims of cultural imperialism practices and other forms of labelling, such as is the case of certain groups of women from the developing countries, as we shall see, whereas other women are victims of domestic violence and other forms of physical violence, such as rape. As Young (1990) concludes, all people that can be classified as "oppressed" thus suffer some sort of constraint in their ability to develop their capacities and express their thoughts, and in that sense can be united in the *oppression* that they suffer and the need to correct the injustices of their situation.[v]

The discussion of equality, and the reasons for the unequal treatment of others, has also led to the examination of the notion of *difference* in relation to the concept of equality. Feminists have pondered on how is it possible, in an increasingly multicultural and complex world, to speak of equality without running the risk of undermining difference and homogenising and generalising, thus attempting to impose universal values on people which should be seen as the norm to which everyone should aspire to (i.e. Mohanty, 1984, 2000; Ramazanoglu, 1989; Philips, 1999). In her comparison between cultural difference and sexual difference, Philips (2010, 21) underlines that one of the key means employed to assess the difference between "worse" or "better" cultures, more "backward" or "advanced", is down to their treatment of women.

Feminists are also concerned still with the dilemma between gender equality and *gender equity*, with the former stating that women and men are interchangeable and thus equal and should be treated the same, whereas the latter focuses on the physiological differences between the sexes, recognising women's historical disadvantages and argues for fairness in their treatment and the need to level the playing field and empower women. Lorber (2012) states that both equality and equity are essential for feminist politics, and that people need to be treated as equals, whilst "the advantages and disadvantages that come from the different social positions of groups and individuals" need to be taken into account as well. Some have seen this as contradictory goals, and there still is a lot of debate and even confusion in the discussions on "equality", with many asking how can we pursue such an aim if we are all so (individually) different. I do not believe that this dichotomy actually exists and seems also self-evident, and that the risk of emphasising difference too much can undermine important claims to equality, fairness and citizenship for all.

Central to the persistence of discriminatory practices against certain groups, from minorities to women, is the notion of equality and of equal worth. The acknowledgement however that not *all*

women are oppressed, and that some upper and middle class women from the more developed Western nations are in a position equal to men, and in a situation to "oppress" other groups of women (and men) from a working class background and/or other ethnicities, is evidence that oppression is complex and operates at various layers and is dependent on other factors such as race, social status and nationality. This was an accusation that was made by feminists from the former colonies, or the "Third World", in regards to the privileged position of some women from the North, who after having conquered their own freedom from the male "oppressors" of their country continued to establish hierarchies between themselves and less powerful women both in their nations and elsewhere, frustrating the creation of bonds of *sisterhood* between all women (i.e. Mohanty, 1984, 2000), issues discussed in the next sections.

Before examining these perspectives, it is important to look more closely at the post-modernist and post-colonial theoretical frameworks, as well as the nature of international gender media representations and the role of the "Other" in them at a moment when we are discussing the ways in which to improve global gender justice in the 21st century.

b)Post-modernism and post-feminism: contemporary gender representations

The criticisms towards the "grand theories" associated with modernity, from Marxism and feminism to the questioning of the modernization and dependency theories, as we have seen, lead to a growth from mainly the 1990's onwards of what many have termed as the end-of-millennium consciousness. This can be better identified by the application of the term "post" in front of key systems of thought, from "post-industrialism" to "post-modernism" and "post-feminism" (Waugh, 1998, 177). Post-modernism has also been closely associated with the Internet age and is a term that is applied to characterise many works of art as well as artists and prominent intellectuals across the Social Science, from Lyotard's (1984) *The Postmodern Condition* to post-feminists such as Judith Butler and Donna Haraway. As Waugh (1998, 177) notes, post-modernism has rejected universal and ethical principles, and the possibility of an "objective" science.

Both poststructuralism and postmodernism perspectives have confronted the idea that "men" and "women" were natural categories, with the deconstruction of women being a central theme in many ground-breaking studies of postmodern feminism (i.e. Butler, 1990 in Jackson, 1998, 23). The critique in the 1980s made it clear that "women" could not be seen as a unitary category, and that it could not capture the complexities of the forms of oppression suffered by different women throughout the world. As Jackson (1998, 23) contends, by the end of the 1970s, a group identified as "Third World women" had denounced angrily Western feminists who had excluded them from feminists movements, or unconsciously included them under the universal banner of "sisterhood". Thus the emergence of post-modernism paralleled in many ways the development of post-colonial thought, with post-modernism's emphasis on fragmentation, play and rejection of universal truths opening a door to diversity and the focus on multiple identities and subject positions. Butler here is perhaps the best exponent of the need to acknowledge new possibilities of gender.

I do not believe however that post-modernism is sufficiently concerned with global gender inequalities and with issues such as racism and in many ways it seems to imply that oppression is just another form of (permitted) discourse. Criticisms have been made actually to postmodernists and their Foucauldian vision of power as disperse and diffused, and which many see as a failure to recognise that systematic oppressions of gender, class and race continue. Others have argued also that the postmodernism turn ended up endorsing an elitist theory which was incapable of confronting fully the realities of racism (Modleski, 1991 in Jackson, 1998, 23). In her discussion of the differences between the "weaker" and "stronger" version of post-modernism, sympathising with the former, Waugh (in Jackson and Jones, 1998, 183) affirms that stronger versions of

postmodernism would make it impossible even for one to make an unconditional claim that it is wrong to oppress women.

Waugh (1998, 177) also makes a distinction between feminism and postmodernism, stating that the former can be defined as a political movement whereas postmodernism cannot be described in a similar way. Jackson and Jones (1998, 7-8) have also stated that, "postmodernism shares with feminism a scepticism about universal truth claims". They are critical about whether postmodernism is the only means of coping with gender complexities in a post-colonial world, pointing out that this is still a matter of debate. The authors (Jackson and Jones, 1998, 7-8) further underscore the tensions between both perspectives, stating that they can never be fully matched, for social scientific perspectives assume a "real" world which exists prior to discourse. Such statements have led feminists to retreat away from these perspectives and back to the concern with structural inequalities, or adopting what Waugh (1998) has called a "weaker" form of post-modernism, as mentioned earlier.

Since the 1980s also, Marxism variants of feminism and other perspective which emphasised material inequalities gave room to a wider focus on language, discourse and representation in discussions of gender inequality. These have been known as the "cultural turn" in feminist studies. The decade of the 1990s has been seen as a turning point for feminism, and of critique within feminist theory, including the rise of the work of scholars such as Butler, as well as post-colonial feminists, such as Spivak and Mohanty (McRobbie, 2009, 13), discussed in the next section. The influence of Foucault has been important here, moving representing a shift away from the focus on power and the state for instance towards more dispersed sites, and power seen as flows and present through talk and discourse (McRobbie, 2009). An important component of this late phase of the feminist movement has undoubtedly been the articulation of "post-feminist" discourses which have mainly rested on notions of *girl power*, individualism, choice and play inserted within a predominantly capitalism worldview, negating in many ways the conquests of previous feminist movements which have rejected the need to continue to fight for gender equality (i.e. Gill, 2007, 2012: McRobbie, 2009; Van Zoonen, 1994, 2000).

Gill (2012, 145) has argued that one of the things that makes the media today more different from what it was in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s is precisely the presence of feminist discourses. These are identified by her as being part of a *sensibility* that seems to pay lip service to postmodernism as well as to neoliberalism. Gill (2012, 136) states that similarly to post-modernism, the term "post-feminism" has become overloaded with different meanings and the word has become very much contested. It is usually used to refer to a type of feminism that followed after the second wave. Moreover, one of the difficulties lies in precisely underlining what makes a text post-feminist.

Gill (2012, 137) defines post-feminism as a type of *sensibility* that has characterised an increasing number of films, TV shows, ads and other media products, with media texts such as *Sex and the City* and *Ally McBeal* having received significant attention. Gill (2012, 137-138) goes on to list certain features that constitute a *post-feminist discourse*, such as, among others, the notion that femininity is a bodily property, a shift from objectification to subjectification, the emphasis on self-surveillance and discipline, individualism, choice and empowerment, a resurgence in ideas of natural sexual difference, a strong sexualisation of culture and wider focus on consumerism. A key component of post-feminist media culture, according to Gill (2012), is the obsession with the body, and the author points out to the pictures of female athlete bodies published by the magazine *Heat* as an example.

McRobbie (2009, 11) on the other hand sees post-feminism as a process by which feminist gains of the 1970s and 1980s are undermined. She claims that there is an "undoing of feminism" in the cultural field (as well as in the sociological) and a sense that feminism is aged and made to seem redundant. The author makes reference to Faludi to state that there has been a conservative response to the achievements of feminism, including the rise of anti-feminism. McRobbie (2009) uses *Bridget Jones* in her analysis of an example of a typical post-feminist popular culture text. According to her, Bridget is a character who is reassuringly feminine, is desperate to find a suitable husband, is not particularly career-minded and is actually shown to not be intelligent and more clumsy and comic than anything else.

Kearney (2012) has also pointed out that other researchers have problematized post-feminism by claiming that the media is a *site of contradiction*, and that it can simultaneously incorporate discourses that *empower* within texts that at first would be considered post-feminist. McRobbie (2009, 12) does imply that she acknowledges this tension within these texts, stating that they encompass the existence of feminism, which she deems as "feminism having been taken into account", which is transformed into a form of *Gramscian* common sense, but this is afterwards fiercely repudiated and even hated (McRobbie, 2003 in 2009). By feminism being taken into account, McRobbie (2009) means the acknowledgement of the achievements of women and their participation within the institutions of society, including education, law and employment.

Third wave feminists for one have turned their attention to popular culture and also to new technologies, and have reclaimed derogatory and sexist terms such as *bitch* as a means to empower complex, sophisticated and strong women. Following from the influence of cultural studies and the notion of the *negotiated reading* (Hall, 1973, 1980), the ambiguity of media texts are important perspectives to take into account in our analysis of gender media representations, especially when the media has become a dominant site of gender performance and presence (i.e. Kearney, 2012; Gill, 2012). In sum, this type of post-feminist discourse implies that women are seeing themselves as equal to men, and thus that there is no need for feminism anymore. Such an understanding wrongly assumes that equality has been achieved and is a thing of the past, and we are thus invited to pay a shy tribute to the struggles of past feminists but in the end we should see them as a bit of angry trouble-making, man-hating and bra-burning women and, at worst, as *deviant* and marginal from society itself.

This leads us to the discussion of gender representations in the media, and why the images that we see today have changed since the 1950's and why also feminist media scholars talk about the presence of feminism within media texts, and how it is being repudiated by these same texts or whether it is taken on by women at all as a means for empowerment. Notably, feminist analyses of the media have been interested in understanding how images and cultural constructions are linked to patterns of inequality and oppression in wider society (Gill, 2007). Similarly to the variations of perspectives within feminist thought, the study of gender and the media is also quite heterogeneous: there are a plurality of different approaches, methodologies and theoretical perspectives as well as different understandings of power and conceptualisations of the relationship between representations and "reality", and of how individuals make sense of their own image through the media (Gill, 2007).

Writing about the representation of women in the American media, the US scholar Gaye Tuchman (1978, 4-5) saw what she termed the *symbolic annihilation of women*. Making use of a term defined by Gerbner (1972) to describe the absence of representation, or underrepresentation of a group in the media, Tuchman's (1978) classic study argued that *symbolic annihilation* was a process in which the media omit, trivialize or condemn certain groups that are not valued. Tuchman (1978) talked about the role of sex role stereotypes in portraying rigid gender roles which women and men need to adopt, with suggestions that if they do not conform to specific ways of appearing and behaving they will be seen as inadequate to society (i.e. a boy who cries is not masculine).

Researchers analysed television's content from 1954 through 1975 and found that males dominated the television screen. Tuchman's study concluded that American women had no value in the US. According to her, women were portrayed as child-like adornments in need of protection from children's shows to commercials to prime-time and situation comedies, with soap operas showing more favourable images. Gauntlett (2008, 47) points out that there were only 20 to 35% of female characters in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, with the rise of female roles in the mid-1980s although there were twice as many men on screen. Worried about the role of women in American society and in the workplace, Tuchman (1978, 7) argued for treating stereotypes seriously, pointing out that stereotypes of women as housewife worked to impede the employment of women by limiting their horizons. Stereotypes, she argued, presented individuals with a limited range of human possibilities within already limited sex roles (Tuchman, 1978).

Orgad (134 in Waisbord, 2014) states that media representations are images, narratives and accounts that circulate in the media and which construct meanings, being symbolic sites were issues and dilemmas are negotiated and contested. As she (2014, 141) further states, media representations can be involved in subtle ways in reproducing domination, inequality and injustice concerning issues of class, race, sexuality and ethnicities. Through a range of discursive techniques, media representations can help to neutralise certain ideologies, making them appear as "truth" and the "normal" and right way of thinking about an issue (Orgad, 2014) and I would add, group of people. As Orgad (2014, 143) underlined, numerous studies conducted by Hall and Said underscored how certain groups and places are stereotyped, victimised and demonised and invested through discourse with negative meanings, with studies also having shown how the representation of various groups have changed over time, permitting greater inclusion and fairness. We could argue that this has been the case with women and black Americans for instance although, as we have already started to discuss, the extent to which there has been wider significant change is also contested (Gill, 2007).

Inserted within a different context where stereotypes have already been a concern for mass communications, Pickering (2001, 4) pointed out how stereotypes are usually considered inaccurate because they portray a certain group as *homogenous*. Pickering (2001) examined the relationship between stereotypes and power, stating that they create an illusion of order and is convenient to those who are in power. This occurs nonetheless at a cost for those who are stereotyped, for they take on a subordinated status and are judged accordingly (Pickering, 2001, 5). Thus the negative portrayals in the media of minorities are said to deny their very existence within society. The mass media thus sends a symbolic message to viewers about the societal values of the persons who are the members of a particular group. The ones that are more valued within a particular culture will be shown more frequently in the media, and those who are not will remain peripheral and this will have a consequence in how society sees them and in how they will be treated.

Commercials and advertising have had a long tradition in stereotyping women, with many encouraging rigid sex roles and supporting the reflection hypothesis, of reflecting society's rigidly stereotypical gender roles (Tuchman, 1978, 16). Feminists have also been extremely critical of the role of magazines like *Playboy* in reinforcing sexism and the subordination of women because of their publication of women's naked bodies, with the decision in 2015 made by the magazine of ending this practice having been met with caution and rather an indication that the publication was adapting itself to the new forms of contemporary sexism.[vi]Nevertheless, the 1980s were seen as having started to assimilate the changes in the role that women were beginning to experience in Western societies, in education, the labour force and family life. Women thus began to be taken more seriously, with television programmes beginning to feature women better and also dealing with women's issues, such as infertility, breast cancer and rape (Gauntlett, 2008). Discussing also films, Gauntlett (2008) underlined also how movies from the 1950s until the 1980s gave men all the clever and better parts, whilst women frequently appeared as the love interest and helpers.

As various media and feminist media scholars have pointed out, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) was the major work that questioned the images of the "happy housewife" (Gauntlett, 2008, 51; Kearney, 2012). Friedan was the first to examine the representation of women in magazines, surveying women's magazines from the early to mid-20[th]century   (Kearney, 2012). She pointed to the figure of the "happy housewife" who subjugated her own ambitions in order to take care of her children and husband, further arguing that the idealization of the feminine suburban middle-class white women was responsible for deep unhappiness among women who saw their lives constrained by such limitations (Richardson and Wearing, 2014). Kearney (2012) underlines how Friedman highlighted the importance of media texts as sites of gender representation, although it is possible to say that Tuchman's study was similarly important here for the same reason. Kearney (2012) argues that this study set the tone for future work, with various others which followed contributing to the expansion of scholarship on gender and the media as well as shaping the development of the wider media field. Kearney (2012) also notes that the analyses of women's representation in the media, news and Hollywood, if at first confined to American and British

scholars, has now turned into a global field which has included examinations of gender alongside components of race, class, ethnicity and sexuality.

The decade of the 1990's arguably saw better representations of female characters in popular culture, from advertising, television to Hollywood films, particularly in texts such as the ones mentioned above, such as *Sex and the City* and *Bridget Jones' Diary* (i.e. Gauntlett, 2008, Richardson and Wearing, 2014).[vii]Gauntlett (2008) argues that the more obvious stereotypes from the past are not present in the media as before, stating nonetheless that sexism has become much more subtle. Some argue that feminists discourses have been co-opted by the media, such as advertising, in what we can claim is now the current context of "post-feminist" discourses and texts in the media (Gill, 2007). This is far from straightforward, as we have began to see. Moreover, the idealization of femininity as being that of a passive, pretty and dependent woman still maintains its relevance (Richardson and Wearing, 2014), and I would argue that within the current context of the predominance of post-feminist texts in the media, it has been repackaged, reshaped, redefined and sold to audiences as modern images which in fact carry within them traditional, and sometimes reactionary, undertones.

As Richardson and Wearing (2014) further state, for many feminist media scholars the media is gendered, with gender being present in production, institutional contexts, representations and symbolic practices. As the authors (2014, 19) further note, sociological analysis here is above all considered with the political implications of the images of women in the media, especially in relation to how women are seen and treated in society. Questions that have been asked by feminist media scholars have been the role that the media play in regulating prescriptive gender roles (Richardson and Wearing, 2014). Following from what was discussed in the Introduction of this book, it is not sufficient in itself to conduct textual analyses of gender representations based solely on the examination of stereotypes, and that an integrated research framework which aims to investigate gender equality and development needs to adopt a series of strategies and perspectives in order to have a more detailed and sophisticated look, capable of establishing intersections between the media and the wider social and political world.

The extent though to which there has actually been significant changes in the media from the 1990's onwards still remains contested (i.e. Gill, 2007, McRobbie, 2009). The sexualisation of young girls in the media and popular culture, as noted by Gill (2012) above, has been a topic of growing interest of sociologists as well as feminist media scholars working with popular culture and consumerism. According to her (2012), the intense focus on women's bodies is closely tied to the growing sexualisation of contemporary culture, and to what she claims McNair (2002) has identified as being the "strip tease culture". This is evident in the increasing eroticisation of the images of girls and women, as well as men, and their bodies in popular culture. Men nonetheless are presented as complex, whereas women are seen as focusing on their underwear and on sexual fantasies. In such a context, as Gill (2012) notes, women are not simply objectified as they were in the past, but appear as *active sexual subjects* who choose to present themselves in this manner because it attends to their liberated interests. Here the notion that women are exercising their choice and pleasing themselves is seem as striking a chord with capitalism values of consumption, choice and liberty.

This has been particularly evident, as Gill (2012) finalises, in advertising, which has responded to feminist critiques by constructing the figure of the sexually autonomous heterosexual young woman who is in control of her sexual power, and which will be discussed more in the media analyses of Part III. This represents a shift in the way power operates, mainly a move away from the male judging gaze to a self-policing narcissistic one, and which can be seen as more exploitative as the mal gaze is internalised and women are thus invited to construct a subject that resembles the heterosexual male fantasy found in pornography (Gill, 2012, 139). Psychoanalysis for instance has offered perspectives on how representations work on the level of structuring sentiments, such as pleasure and desire, in alliance with patriarchy (Richardson and Wearing, 2014). Combining originally psychoanalysis, feminism and film theory, Laura Mulvey (1975) in *Visual and Other Pleasures* argued that classic Hollywood cinema put the spectator in a masculine position whilst the woman was placed as the figure of desire of what she called the *male gaze*. Influenced by Mulvey, Shohat (2012) has talked about

the *colonial gaze* in her analysis of early Hollywood films and what she calls the nostalgia for empire liberal films such as *A Passage to India,* discussed in the next section.

Popular "post-feminist" media culture thus emphasises the monitoring and surveillance of women over their own bodies in order to reach a particular successful performance of femininity, one which would also emulate and take inspiration from the upper-class white female ideal (Gill, 2012). In such a culture, women from a very young age are constantly pressured to have perfect bodies, leading to all sorts of eating disorders and other problems of low self-esteem and anxiety. Moreover, statistics as late as 2010 show that there is still less roles for women in film and television, there are a few female directors and the gender pay gap exists in Hollywood as much as anywhere else and are evidence that little has changed. As Richardson and Wearing (2014, 21) state, "in 2011 only 33% of characters in the 100 highest grossing US films were female.

These representations of women within popular post-feminist culture have thus made the discussion of what exactly constitutes sexism, and of what can be deemed a "sexist image" on television and film, become more problematic to define and pin down (i.e. is the image actually sexist or are we being purist?). Criticisms are done made to some feminists on the assumption that they are not letting younger women have pleasure in these images. Women are thus seen as being empowered, and are choosing to present themselves in this manner, pleasing themselves, all of which are aspects of this post-modern sensibility (Gill, 2012, 140). Similarly to identities and subject positions, sex has also thus become much more fluid. Parallels can also be made with *racism*, and mainly with the new forms of racism that have emerged (Young, 1990, 2011), such as subtle discrimination in the workplace, aversive attitudes and behaviours of dominant groups towards those who are less privileged and the proliferation still of sexist and racist talk disguised as play and in the name of free speech. There is thus ambiguity over classifying an act, speech or bevahiour as *racist*, with accusations made towards a discourse being racist which is then met with claims that "political correctness is drowning free speech."

If to one extent today the discussions over sexism and oppressive discourses towards women have become more common, with second wave feminists having paved the way for such discourses within the public sphere, through transnational feminist networks and online platforms, the fact of the matter is that forms of oppression towards certain groups, and the persistence of sexism and racism, is very much part of contemporary reality and the everyday life experiences of millions of people throughout the world. For if we are pressuring for global gender justice, we need to think globally. Following from the criticisms made towards the earlier narrower focus of feminism on mostly the realities of white, upper middle class women, it can be seen as still a form of neo-colonialism to restrict discussions to a narrow range of representations of women in US and UK films, television and popular culture, showing that the criticisms made by feminists from the South and elsewhere have not been fully taken into account. It is no wonder that Third Wave feminists have decided to pay more attention to diversity and to the ways in which new technologies can be a source for change.

Thus it is not possible thus to limit discussions of gender and the media to mere representations of *Bridget Jones* and *Sex and the City* characters. At a moment when we are daily bombarded through 24 hour news channels by images of immigration crises and war and suffering in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq, among others, not to mention the growing importance of the debates on gender and development worldwide, we need to address wider representations of women in the media and strive for greater inclusion and theorising on gender and the media in a global context.

Similarly to post-modernism and post-feminism, post-colonial theoretical perspectives have been enormously influential since the 1990's. Mills (1998) has argued that post-colonial feminist theory has been important in moving feminist theory from what she claims was a parochial concern with white, middle-class English speaking women to a focus on women in diverse national contexts, forcing feminists to re-think who they are speaking for when they talk about "women". Post-colonialism thinking has highlighted how traditionally for European powers it was vital to know "the Other" for political and economic control (i.e. Gill, 2007), and less due to genuine interest. Mohanty (1988) has also argued that post-colonial theory has managed to generate a renewed interest in the 'politics of location' (in Gill, 2007).

Post-colonial theory has also had impact on Media Studies, with the emergence of studies on *Latinos* in Cultural Studies for instance within the context of wider concerns placed by third wave feminists on issues such as race and ethnicity. However, it has not had the transformative appeal that it should have had (Gill, 2007). Rhodes (in Creedon, 2003, 25) has pointed out how women of colour continue to be largely ignored in mass communication research, despite the growing interest in gender perspectives and the intersection of inequalities. As she notes, feminist scholars have acknowledged that the application of feminist theory to communication research has focused primarily on the experiences of middle-class white women. Progress has been slow in developing a more inclusive theoretical framework, which however is more intellectually demanding, requiring broader knowledge and research on the experiences of various other categories of women and a wider commitment to understand the world *globally* with greater empathy and compassion towards others and in more participatory practices that are sensitive to power relations and which seek to purposely undermine hierarchies between people and groups, instead of reinforcing them.

Shohat and Stam (1994, 2014) argue that Eurocentrism is a form of thinking which has permeated structures of contemporary practices and representations even after the end of colonialism. Eurocentric norms make the statement that certain races, mainly Europeans, hold a monopoly on technology and intelligence and have a natural, inherent "superiority" over others, which ends up ignoring or undermining Europe's historically oppressive relationship to its former colonies and to others from the developing world (Shohat and Stam, 1994, 2014). They criticised the West's view of the "Third World", a term which was also contested, as homogenous and static and, similarly to the criticisms made to modernization theory, Western scholars studying the developing world were also accused of Eurocentrism and intolerance towards the people they studies (i.e. Said, 1993; Spivak, 1988; McMillin, 2007).

At a moment when emerging economies, from India, China to Brazil, are defining and influencing more geopolitics, whilst increasing globalization has resulted in the expansion of cultural goods between the North and the South as well as rising immigration, it is crucial to move beyond Eurocentric narratives that many say still explain the experiences of the "peoples" (and women) from the "Third World". This is why scholars like Shohat and Stam (1994, 2014) have argued for the need to elaborate a more complex view of the world that is suited to the reality of our times. As Shohat and Stam (1994, 2014) claim and others who defend the idea of cultures as being inherently *hybrid* (i.e. Nederveen Pieterse, 2010), *Eurocentric* thinking does not represent a world which has been largely multicultural since its very formation, for all countries can be considered multi-cultural. Neo-colonial forms of domination are still seen as significantly shaping the world today, with economic domination expressed through institutions such as the G7, IMF, World Bank and GATT and political through organisms such as the UN Security Council, military (NATO) and techno-informational and cultural through Hollywood and international news agencies (i.e. Reuters and CNN) (i.e. Shohat and Stam,

1994, 2014; Desai, 2009; Nederveen Pieterse, 2010). Contemporary forms of neo-colonialism are thus seen as responsible for the continuation of widespread poverty through the application of austerity and structural adjustment programmes, as we have seen in Part I, and the difficulties that less powerful countries encounter in their requests for debt relief.

The gender dynamics at play within the British imperialism project included, according to Mills (1998), a juxtaposition of the British female represented as innocent whilst the indigenous females were the object of sexual fantasies. Mills (1998, 100) has underlined how the colonial context was one which was sexually charged and full of gender dynamics, with the "exotic" being impregnated with sexual fantasy. She (1998, 102) also argued that the figure of the "white woman" had an important symbolic function in the maintenance of colonial rule. Authors such as Edward Said and others have critically looked at some of the classic works of art and literature of the Enlightenment and others produced during the 19th century, with paintings and novels carrying a series of sexualised bodies, semi-naked women and images from India, Africa and the Orient (Mills, 1998). The threat of rape of British women by the native male was also constantly invoked and had the effect of creating an image of the native as barbaric.

In her discussion of both classic Hollywood films as well as what she terms the "nostalgia for empire liberal films", Shohat (2012, 95) goes on to argue that Western imaginary rendered the colonised land as a female in need of saving from her environment, with women in need of saving from African, Asian or Arab men reinforcing the myth of the Western liberator. This myth has not gone away, and was again revoked in the context of the US war on terror and particularly in discourses in favour of military intervention against the Taliban forces in Afghanistan in order to liberate women[viii]. As the interview with the grown up "Afghan girl" from the *National Geographic* magazine has shown, and which was first published in 1985, life has not necessarily improved for them with the fall of the Taliban.[ix]

Since its start in the 15th century, European colonialism is seen as having heavily shaped the relations of the West to the rest of the world (i.e. Shohat and Stam, 1994, 2014; Hall, 1992, 2002; Weadon, 1999), as well as stimulating the development of a lack of respect for difference. Even the expression "the West and the rest" is a discursive practice and carries within it ideological overtones, myths and fantasies about what it means to belong to the "West" as opposed to "the rest" (Hall, 1992 in Schech and Haggis, 2002). As Hall (1992, 2002) states, the terms "West" and "Western" are not primarily ideas about geography, and in fact represent complex ideas. Hall (1992) further affirms that Eastern Europe is not seen as belonging to the West, whereas the US, which is not in Europe, definitely is. Japan is seen as "Western" only in the map it is as far East as one could image. The region of Latin America, which has been colonised by various groups of Europeans, from the Portuguese and Spanish, but also has had the influence of the Italians, Dutch, French and British, having one of the biggest Catholic populations in the world, is not perceived also as being "Western", as it is seen as belonging to the "Third World", but in most ways it clearly is.

In the book *Feminist Media Studies*, Van Zoonen (1994, 2000) analysed some of the myths of femininity of "Third World" women, underlining the exotic quality attached to visions of African femininity and the modest and deferential nature of Asian women. Van Zoonen's (1992) studied the role of the media in constructing a public identity for women's movements in the Netherlands in the late 1960's and early 1970's based largely on specific storylines, such as how feminism was seen as 'deviant' (in Creedon, 2003, 6). Van Zoonen, (1994, 2000) was critical towards the myths surrounding Asian and black femininity in advertising and in popular culture. Williamson (1986) also stressed how exoticism served an *ideological function*, having had its roots in European colonialism and in their double fascination with black female sexuality as well as repulsion of *colonial* bodies and peoples (in Van Zoonen, 2000). Imagining the peoples from the colonies as *sexually voracious* largely functioned to legitimise Europe's colonial project and moral "civilizing" mission, as opposed to the harsh reality of pure economic exploitation that characterised colonialism (i.e. Van Zoonen, 1994, 2000; Williamson, 1986).

Negative representations in the media of black femininity, such as the figure of the *nanny* or the *black matriarch* in American films, have largely contributed to justify their oppressed position (Rhodes in Creedon et al, 1990, 28). Williamson (1986) further underlined how "exoticism" actually served an *ideological function*, having had its roots in European colonialism and in their double fascination with black female sexuality as well as repulsion of *colonial* bodies and peoples (in Van Zoonen, 1994, 2000). Imagining the peoples from the colonies as *sexually voracious* largely functioned to legitimise Europe's colonial project and moral "civilizing" mission, as opposed to the harsh reality of pure economic exploitation that characterised colonialism (Van Zoonen, 1994, 2000; Nederveen Pieterse, 2010; Williamson, 1978). Moreover, negative representations in the media of black femininity, such as the figure of the *nanny* or the *black matriarch* in American films, have largely contributed to justify their oppressed position (Rhodes in Creedon et al, 1990, 28).

Some of the myths on the femininity of "Third World" women have been constructed in the collective European psyche due to the circulation of images which have stressed their "exotic quality", reinforcing certain visions of African femininity as sexually voracious for example, against the "modest" and "deferential nature" of Asian women (Van Zoonen, 1994, 2000). Many of these representations still are inserted within a colonial gaze that still portrays women and children as victims and lacking in self-agency. It is possible to say that many images are still very much the same as the ones that Mohanty (1984, 2000) and other scholars from the South pointed out in the 1970s, and which for them characterised the representations of peoples of the developing countries.

The famous *National Geographic* photo of the Afghan girl is simple and beautiful in its own right, invoking comparison's do da Vinci's famous *Mona Lisa* painting. What can we say about the image? Why was it seen as so powerful and why did it touch so many people? The young girl here is shown as a victim of her own circumstances and is totally helpless in changing her own fate or that of her country. What we do get from this image, from her penetrating and deep green eyes which are wide open and staring far out, is that she is both shocked, perplexed by what she sees around her as well as strangely indicating an emptiness and a fatalism regarding her own existence and with what she sees. Children and young women have always strongly invoked the image of innocence, helplessness, naivety and even sentiments of utopia and idealism regarding a better and purer world. She appears here in this image totally covered except for her face. We cannot see the background and, if we had not been told by the caption, we would automatically assume that she is a girl from one of the countries of the Middle East or the Arab world, thus stimulating in us a reading of this image as being representative of all other young girls in developing and "backward" countries, and in not being able to distinguish which country and culture she is from, we automatically engage in a process of homogenizing her experience in relation to other countries of the "Third World".

The clothes that she is wearing are also seen by us as symbols for her oppression, although we only get a slightly glimpse of them but that is enough for us to get a sense of the position in society that she has been placed in and from a very young age. Thus the adjectives that come to our mind after looking at this picture are submissiveness, helplessness, victimhood and of a young human being lacking in total agency as well as a sense of utter hopelessness towards her future. From her staring eyes though we think that perhaps she is trying to rise above her circumstances as much as she can in order to have a bearable existence. This image was published in 1985, before the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and after the former colonies gained their independence in the 1960's.

In her discussion of the post-humanitarian sensibility and the media's role in the representation of suffering, Chouliaraki (2006, 2013) has provided sophisticated, sensitive and provocative analyses of the ways in which compassion for suffering and others has shifted in the media from pity to glitz. She (2013) argues that solidarity has come to mean choice and lifestyle. In short, the constant bombardment of images of war, suffering and of famine in distant lands that reach our television sets through 24 hours news channels has produced less empathy and lead to a "compassion fatigue" among us in the face of the incapacity of intervening in such realities. As much as the analysis is insightful and correct in its depiction of the current state of the more theatrical, and superficial even, engagement with the suffering of others, I believe this state of affairs is very much in tune with post-

modern sensibilities and in line with increasing individualism and approaches to many things through the angle of consumerism and marketization. And here the 2005 UK's campaign *Make Poverty History*, with its wristbands and appeal to British rock stars, is an emblematic example. However, it is wrong to think that human suffering, social and gender inequalities, cease to arouse sympathy and concern anymore. I discuss the myth of the "Brazilian woman" and Brazilian femininity in the next chapter through a focus on gender and advertising, particularly looking at the magazines of the Abril publisher group, *MdeMulher*, as well as through an analysis of a selection of ads, including the famous model Gisele Bundchen and the president, Dilma Rousseff. Gender politics and blogging is further explored in the following chapter after this one.

Thus a diversity of images and representations of young women from developing countries in the media could function to counter-act the growing cynicism and apathy which seems to be predominating, and would also open the door to more engagement and the construction of links of solidarity with people that, after all, ae not that different from ourselves regarding their needs and what they want from life. In this sense, in spite of the limits that representations can have in solving the problems of the world, and the recognition that they can only do so much, it is also crucial not to underestimate their capacity to uphold rigid and outdated patterns of thinking that in the end can function on an individual basis in reinforcing power relations between people and groups that are already at a disadvantage and oppressed. Representations need to be constantly updated and questioned, problematized and disrupted, questioned and subverted and constantly discussed in relation to gender inequality in the world and what is being done to improve these inequalities, as we have began to see in Part I in my discussion of the theoretical frameworks on gender and development. Thus representations need to be diversified and include a range of identities and possibilities, be engaging, challenging and complex and not always emphasising old habits of thinking and outworn stereotypes and rigidity. They need to include more and more images of stronger, successful and powerful women, among others, but this alone is far from enough. These are among many avenues and small steps that can be taken and need to be pursued for further gender equality in the world.

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Endnotes

[i] In 2015, the film *Suffragettes*, directed by Sarah Gavron, was seen by some critics as an opportunity for many to have wider knowledge of the early feminist movement. Some have seen the film as a conservative portrayal of a revolutionary movement ("Suffragette review – a conservative account of a revolutionary moment" in *The Observer*, 11/10/2015). Others remembered some of the conservative and paternalistic tendencies of some members of the movement, who would later join in the war effort and in the British Union of Fascists. However, there was also controversies around the use by the actresses in the film, such as Meryl Streep, of the T-shirt with a sentence which is attributed to Emmeline Pnakhurst, "I would rather be a rebel than a slave", with accusations of insensitivity and proof that "white feminists" had still to come to terms with their racism.

[ii] It does seem that gender equality is again reaching a momentum in important ways. The UK 2015general elections saw a rise in female political representation in Parliament, with 190 women were elected. Over 30% of all MPs are women now, up from 23% (there were 148 out of a total of 650).

[iii] For more on the discussions on the concept of patriarchy within feminist theory, see among others Walby 1986, Hartmann, 1976 and Delphy and Leonard, 1992.

[iv] See the full story in "A Feminism where 'lean in' means leaning on others", by Gary Gutting and Nancy Fraser (accessed on 18/10/15 http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/10/15/a-feminism-where-leaning-in-means-leaning-on-others/?smid=fb-share&_r=1)

[v] Young (1990, 41) further stated in her discussion of the term "oppression" that new left social movements of the 1960s and 1970s changed the concept of the term, which previously was seen as associated to the oppression practices by state regimes (i.e. Communist USRR, right wing dictatorships, etc) and acquired the meaning of the disadvantages and injustices suffered by some people not because of tyrannical state structures, but due to the persistence of everyday practise reinforced and perpetuated by supposedly well meaning people in a more liberal society. Thus oppression here references to systematic forms of constraints which are structural and go as "unquestioned norms, habits and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules….". This includes their representations in the media and cultural stereotypes and other bureaucratic features of everyday life. As the author (1990, 42) concludes, it is also not necessarily about one group actively oppressing towards another, with the actions of many individuals daily contributing "maintaining and reproducing oppression". Many of these people are not aware of it do not see themselves "as agents of oppression." Thus the classification of people in groups contributes to their oppression, and when people are treated as individuals, and not as members of a particular despised group, the stereotyping and other forms of oppressive behaviour is weakened. The acclaimed Brazilian film, *The Second Mother* (Muylaert, 2015) is a social commentary on how ingrained class and hierarchical attitudes in Brazilian society are, and are examined in a context of changing social change of the last decades following the re-democratization period of the 1990s. These have always functioned to "kept certain people in their place", having been reinforced (even unconsciously) by supposedly nice and well meaning liberal people, and in the case of *The Second Mother*, this is made evident in the oppressive behaviour practiced by upper class (even liberal) groups towards members of the working class.

[vi] See for instance "Playboy's big cover-up is anything but a victory for women" in *The Guardian* (19/10/15), accessed at http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/oct/19/playboy-cover-up-women-nude-pornography).

[vii] In the UK, feminists have long campaigned against the so-called "page 3 girls" from the *The Sun* and also against the objectification of women done by the "lad's magazines", with some arguing that these images contribute to form part of the country's collective psyche on what British women are like.

[viii] See "Laura Bush on Taliban Oppression of Women", in *The Washington Post*, (17/11/2001, accessed at http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpsrv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/laurabushtext_111701.html). There is also

research into this in the field of human rights and globalization. See for instance Nancy Jabbra's article Women, Words and war: exploring 9/11 and justifying US military action in Afghanistan and Iraq" in the *Journal of International Women's Studies*, November volume 8, issue 1, article 18, p, 236-255. In this article the author states that a strong narrative which existed was one which claimed that white men were rescuing brown women from brown men. See also Cloud, D. L. (2004). "To veil the threat of terror": Afghan women and the 'Clash of Civilizations' in the imagery of the US war on terrorism" in *Quarterly |Journal of Speech, 90 (3)*, 285-306.

^{ix} See the story "A Life Revealed", by Cathy Newman, (April 2002 – accessed http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2002/04/afghan-girl/index-text). Asked if she ever felt save, she responds that no, and that her life was better under the Taiban. "At least there was peace and order" is the response. The story also revealed that her name was Sharbat Gula and that she was from Pashtun, considered one of the most warlike of the Afghan tribes.