

Delineation of Female Characters in Selected Cartoons

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Abstract

Cartoons like any other form of art are propagators. The present research paper analyses the delineation of female characters in this imaginary world of cartoons, which has influenced the unripe minds of children. The researcher will analyze all the aspects of delineation of women in terms of intelligence, body shape, language, color etc. The research paper first analyses the female characters like Snow White in Snow White and the seven dwarfs, Princess Jasmine in Aladdin, Rapunzel in Tangled, Olive Oye in Popoye the Sailor, Misae Nohara in Shinchan, who have been objectified in the "Shiva's world" followed by analysis of female characters like Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup from Power puff Girls, Misty in Pokemon, FaMulan in Mulan, Moana in and as Moana and Velma Dinkley in Scooby Dooby Doo, who have been empowered and shown breaking the cocoons of stereotypical feminine codes of conduct.

KEYWORDS-Cartoons, Gynocriticism, ideal body image, beauty.

INTRODUCTION

Time immemorial it has been proven, what one sees stays and is practiced by and large. In today's scenario, media has become an indispensable part of our lives. Cartoons being one of these examples have been able to create impact on all flesh and bloods from varied age groups. Cartoons have been one of the harbingers of societal norms and to study them through varied lenses will help in analyzing projection of female characters. The research carried out will help in understanding the varied aspects of women's' personality traits. It will showcase that gender discrimination is evident not just in one country but all over the world. There have been paradoxical situations when women were at times projected as strong and irreplaceable whereas on the other hand they have been projected as mercy seekers and feeble.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Aims

1. The focal aim of this study is to analyse female protagonists on the basis of various parameters like ideal body image, gender power structure, education, decision making and so on.
2. The study also aims at understanding the newer bold projection of females.

Objectives

1. To study reactions of characters under certain circumstances.
2. To analyse all the aspects of delineation of women in terms of intelligence, body shape, language, colour etc

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since the focus of research is on analyzing the feminist aspects of prominent female characters in the cartoons, the researcher plans for minute viewing of each of the cartoons and understand the issue of delineation of female protagonists in particular. Various aspects of each female character will be analyzed depending on various pre-determined parameters. The researcher will use relevant secondary data for developing clarity and gaining insights and understanding the construction of such female characters. Relevant journals, articles, research papers, doctoral dissertations, internet sources etc by reputed scholars in the respective field will constitute the secondary sources. The choice of the cartoons was based on the fact that these cartoons have more than 1 million view on youtube and also are on the tip of the tongues of every child of varied age group. Also, each of the cartoons are comparable to each other having some similar issues to study. They have some really celebrated female protagonists who share a huge screen space and the entire plot develops around them. Thus, the research methodology adopted is a mix of library work as well as collection, classification and analysis of data from books and cartoons

Snow White in Snow White and the seven dwarfs

Snow White's tasks are very feminine which is evident when she enters the house and finds it unclean she immediately picks up the broom and cleans the entire house. The scene then shifts where the male dwarfs are working in the mines using their masculine energy to dig and extract precious jewels. Thus the cartoon chalks down the type of works chalked for respective gender. Snow White is shown a typical woman chalked by the male comedians as weak, gullible, weak hearted and one who is afraid of owls, alligators, bats. Further, she has beautiful mellifluous voice, lacking any strong vibrant notes. There is no use of any strong or vulgar words in her language rather her voice is mesmerizing that attracts the Prince along with all the animals of the jungle. Her idiosyncrasy and deportment is typified as she walks in all her feminine glory pushing her bosom ahead and holding both the corners of her skirt. She has an ideal body image which is certainly unattainable and unhealthy as well sending a message that a perfect body and beauty can only help a woman in holding up her husband to herself lifelong otherwise he might leave on a hunt for other beautiful object of flesh with a perfect body and beauty.

Princess Jasmine in Aladdin

Jasmine's character shows how the cartoons project an educated, smart and skilled woman, suffocating in the golden walls of her father's kingdom. Jasmine lives a lavish life in the castles of glass but the reality is much ignorant and swept inside the carpet that these castles are of masculine glasses which when broken will lead her flesh to bleed profusely. When shegraces the audacity to hit back against her father while he was faltering and fumbling, by eloping, the character is again framed stereotypical, depicting pitiable condition of women in the society. Jasmine is shown being protected by Alladin from the outside world in the market.

Inspite of her intelligence, knowledge and her interest to contribute to the welfare of Kingdom she is merely treated as an object of exquisiteness.

Typical feminine emotions like love, selfless charity inspite of her opulent upbringing is again chalked in Jasmine. Further the act of Jasmine to seduce the traitor and keep him engaged while Alladin reaches to help her, signifies as to how when women can not defend themselves use their body to tempt men. Although unlike other Disney princesses she is shown independent and challenges the institution of marriage set up in her Kingdom by not merely surrendering to the situations when the masculine forces around her were trying to make her subservient. Even her demeanor is a bit varied as she is a non-white princess but with amazing curves has an ideal figure and beautiful long black hair.

Rapunzel in Tangled

Rapunzel who is forced to stay in a tower by Mother Gothel, is kept away from liberty. The desire of her feminine lungs to breathe the air of freedom is all snatched away until a young handsome stranger gives her contextual freedom. Mother Gothel represents the evil forces of the society who restricts every women like Rapunzel to breathe independently. Rapunzel's magical hair represent the different magical potential that a woman has within her, apart from her womb. Although the story is about Rapunzel but who protects her and take her home is a man. She is shown less knowledgeable who fails to sense ways of the world as she agrees to go away with Mother Gothel by trusting on her lies and failing to join the pieces of her puzzled life. Portrayal of Rapunzel is stereotypical just like any Barbie Princess who falls in love with a man of adventure, she is rescued and having an ideal body image. Rapunzel's role, her decision making, thought process, strength, body and many other aspects are all stereotypical inspite of the cartoon being titular. The cartoon also sends a message about the beautification as an important aspect of female body. This Disney princess's character prominently serves the idea of Balzac that Women's destiny and her glory is to make hearts of men beat. Rapunzel is painted with a picture perfect body, delicate long fingers, beautiful yellow hair like ripe corn, tight long gowns which almost sticked to her fair curvy and impeccable young body and has typical feminine qualities of love, warm and patience. After all the adventure, Rapunzel returns to the palace where she chooses to live an ostentatious but passive life under the care of her father who safeguards not only the young girl Rapunzel but also his wife. Rapunzel's body creates an impression on the young minds that the ultimate every day purpose of a women's life is to look charming.

Olive Oye in Popoye the Sailorman

The episode one portrays Olive Oye folding clothes and keeping things for the picnic and she asks the boys to cut wood for fire. This shows the demarcations on the basis of job that muscular tasks like rowing boat, cutting wood, taking decisions should be performed by men and not by the women. Olive does not promote ideal image body since she is very thin and tall but certainly celebrates 'Thin is in and Stout is out' which is why Bluto, the tough guy like Johnny Bravo and Popoye, the fragile man woo her. Her body is delineated perfectly to carry the trending Flapper style of woman clothing of the time. Often Bluto's mischief land her up in trouble but then certainly she is shown weak and incapable of using her brain and thus it is Popoye who rushes to her rescue and wins her heart. She is delineated lacking technical intelligence and is shown short tempered and selfish at times. Her treatment of animals with love and care, her dream of getting

married and having many babies make her typical feminine character. The line of Popoye which is 'Female, she is fickle' speaks as to how this female cartoon has been drawn with the ink of tentativeness and satire.

Misae Nohara in Shinchan

Misae is painted as someone who is extremely fond of shopping and her only aim is to save every penny by not missing any sale in the market which is a very typical habit of women which has been a topic of comedy shows often. She is a woman with a normal body, conscious of her looks and weight and fond of dressing and make up. What is more surprising is that Misae's little daughter Himawari copies her and is very fond of lipstick. While she complains about the habits of Shinchan her husband complains about being tired of all such altercations every morning and is reluctant to explain his son where he is faltering and fumbling. In the movie Shinchan and the Bora Bora island, Misae is projected as a subject of laugh when she is stuck in a problem, she is concerned about her spoiled hair which she had set in a costly parlour. When they are stuck on the island and Shinchan gets abducted, her husband easily lifts up finger on Misae. Misae knew it was futile to argue with him in such circumstances and ultimately she stays mum. Her husband is shown doing more responsible job and indulging in more intelligence driven activities like reading newspaper while she is projected domestic, troublesome, careless, affectionate and complaining.

Powerpuff Girls

Unlike all other fathers who raise their daughters to be married off to some good guy, Professor Utonium raised three girls to save the world. It is one such cartoon which is strictly about the girls for the girls, the title which has two words power and girls never before were these two words spoken in one breathe but in this cartoon desirable obligation to the power of girls is given. The girls are different from the typical cute kindergarten girls being romanticized so far, they have large eyes and oval shaped heads. No matter how powerful they are their heart knows to give love and respect. But in spite of all of these what is worth noticing is these girls are created by a man who believes in empowering girls and believed that girls have strength to save the world. Each of them have unique characteristics like Blossom is strong, determine which makes her a true representation of a Gama girl, Bubbles is soft sweet and Buttercup is the toughest fighter. Craig Mc Cracker through these characters placed girls who fought with criminals and monsters on a different pedestal in the world of cartoons. Buttercup amongst the three has a tough voice and often uses harsh words.

Misty in Pokemon

Misty is an aspiring Pokemon Trainer who sets on an adventure leaving her family with her two male friends Ash and Brock. She is one of the strongest female characters of the cartoon world who left no stone unturned in becoming equally competitive to Ash and other Male Pokemon Trainers. She has pushed her limits and even with her feminine qualities like taking care, being soft hearted, she has won many battles and always protected her Pokemons like Starmie, Corsola etc from Team Rocket. She even defeated Ash with her intelligence, strength and self-confidence in the Whirl cup. In Pokemon Sun

and Moon episode she fights and chooses the right Pokemon Gyarados with perfect strategy against Ash's Pokemons. She is ambitious always in high spirits and one who wants to "follow knowledge like a sinking star beyond the utmost bound of human thought". She is not projected as the typical nurturing and caring young girl rather a decision maker and a goal oriented young girl who is a globetrotter. She is broad minded girl wearing shorts with her adventurous bag on her back. The cartoon gives her all the opportunities to explore her talent by showing her competing in various battles and the males Ash and Brock find her equally competitive, never do they misjudge her.

Fa Mulan in Mulan

Mulan is a very challenging girl who lives disguised as boy amidst the herd of unexceptional people who are part of patriarchal society. Even her mother is nowhere different who is of the view that girls are destined to learn knitting, spinning and other domestic chores. Mulan challenges all of it by excelling in archery, horse riding, sword fighting. At the marriageable age she leaves camouflaged on war leaving behind her bereaved family. She fights local goons, wins her own position in the army, uses her inner eyes and strength to combat, utilizes. She with her own strategy and leadership quality attacks enemy by keeping them in illusion and proves that women have and use brain. She with her bravery, skill in fighting and boldness emerges a gamma girl.

Moana in and as Moana

Moana, right when she is a little girl of around 5 years is shown intelligent, social, resourceful and self giving. Her character is an amalgamation of agility, bravery, determination, love, sacrifice and authoritative. She as a kid was very brave who never shed tears listening to adventurous or ghost stories. She had a brave heart and became a savior of her cluster. The cartoon in a true sense is a cartoon without a man. She has no love interest and no male shield periphering her rather she is the driver of her own story. She rejects the comfort and sets on a voyage to search Te Fiti's heart and save Motunui. She discovers her inner self, repairs boat, fights lava monster. In the denouement part she proves how supreme is her existence and how sometimes the wisdom of heart outfoxes the wisdom of brain. Her physical delineation is far fetched from the typical icons of beauty since she has black skin, curly black hair like wires, black dark eyebrows which as a whole grants her unique rustic beauty. Her voice is firm and she uses concrete words and tone is colloquial.

Velma Dinkley in Scooby Dooby Doo,

Velma's portrayal outfoxes all the Barbies. She sees the world and analyses every situation through her round intelligent glasses which certainly decrease her beauty but compliments to her detective mind. She knows physics, chemistry, mathematics and has ample technical knowledge more than Shaggy. Well it would be no wrong to say that she is the only one who carries her head thus makes her unchallenged gamma queen of brains department. Her choices and aims are very impressive. She has tremendous love for ice hockey. Her personality, her fashion sense is far way from the stereotypical teenagers. Although she is smallest but smartest. She is a library herself and an independent practical thinker. She is a decision maker who is not dreaming of having babies or is

ready to be wooed by anyone. She is considered a non-marriage material. She has amazing detective skills and she is a decision maker. Unlike Rapunzel she has short brown hair and the thick orange sweater cover her entire upper body . Her character persistently fed us that women are not an object of beauty to be flaunting at the parties or funerals.

Conclusion

Cartoons are unreal, illusionary but they appeal real people who are one amongst us. In spite of having limited viewer spectrum, this form of art's impact on children is pervasive and ubiquitous. Some cartoons have been propagators of need of an ideal body. Girls and women are persistently fed with false facts of being thin

Portrayal of such characters triggers the urge of many overweight imperfect women to rush to beauty shops and stress and struggle for the perfect body not from inside rather from outside. Girls and women are persistently fed with the false facts of being thin because thin has positivity and fat has all the evilness. What worse effect it all creates is , women themselves start degrading themselves to a building which must be decked up every time when it's a big festival .

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