Uneasy Transvestism? Fashioning a Space for the Single Woman in *Sex and the City*

Nicola Rodie

Abstract

‘Uneasy Transvestism? Fashioning a Space for the Single Woman in *Sex and the City*’ is essentially an exploration of the ways in which fashion is used within the programme to explore the parameters of the female body, and in particular, to define a sexually fluid space for the single woman. I approach the material from a cultural studies methodology, trying to especially decipher the meanings inherent in the visual language of the programme, and its use of clothing to costume its four female protagonists. Intrigued and influenced by theorists such as Butler, Hollander and Garber, but largely relying on my own interpretation of the material, I consider the ways in which *Sex and the City*’s clothing/fashion helps to rewrite and blur conventional gender constructions, and how its often parodic interpretations of femininity and masculinity help to redefine womanhood (and singledom in particular) as a mutable and liberated space. Concentrating on the character of Carrie Bradshaw, I discuss how fashion functions within the narrative to question compulsory notions of femininity. At the core of my essay remains a nagging uneasiness that even within the supposedly liberating narrative of the programme, it remains the woman’s body that must validate itself through clothing. However, I do conclude that instead of being depoliticising, the chameleon-like fluidity of the clothed female body in *Sex and the City* is ultimately empowering – allowing a rare opportunity for the female to represent, and narrate, herself.

Note on the Author

This essay evolved from Nicola Rodie’s interest in gender theory, explored on various literature modules at Exeter University, and from her somewhat less academic love for fashion. It unintentionally acts as a parallel piece to her dissertation investigating Jewish masculinity, entitled ‘New York, Neuroticism and the Nebbish.’ Since graduating in 2005, she has combined work experience in the arts with administrative employment at a local authority, and next year aims to pursue postgraduate work within the American Studies field.

Recommended Citation