

ABSTRACT

Looking at Women: Representations of Women in Selected Examples of Popular Culture in the Caribbean

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A feminist reading of Caribbean popular culture, the thesis examines the intertextual construction of gender in film and fiction in selected texts: the “Caribbean Caresses” romance series and the films The Harder They Come, Children of Babylon, Dancehall Queen and Babymother. The study acknowledges the traditional relationship between film and fiction and understands both as constituting a shared territory in which codes and signs are used to represent and construct gender, making them available for analysis by methods that utilize binary and cultural studies theories. The thesis relies on a critical approach and textual analysis and draws on, and from, a range of critical schools of thought including postmodernism, gender/feminist studies, communication studies, post-colonial studies and semiotics.

The thesis suggests that the awareness and consciousness created by the feminist movement has fostered attempts within Caribbean popular culture to create more diverse representations that seek to uncover, reveal and more accurately reflect the truth of women’s lives and their experiences as well as elevate the feminine and endow it with significance and authority. This awareness is reflected in the movement of the female as subject from the margins and periphery to positions of increasing centrality in certain genres and texts. The thesis concludes however, that these expressions of resistance to patriarchal hegemony have also been shaped and informed by a post-colonial dynamic in which gender becomes a variable that is inseparable from concerns of race and class.

Keywords: Rachel Moseley-Wood; Caribbean romance fiction; Caribbean film