

**” I'm telling you, if I was a single man, none of this would be happening.”**

Representation of Miranda Hobbes in the television series

*Sex and the City*

Bachelor's thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Medialla ja etenkin televisiosarjoilla on merkittävä rooli naisten representaatioiden luomisessa. Sarjojen ja elokuvien katselu on moninaistunut uusien teknologisten laitteiden ja katselupalveluiden avulla avaten uusia katselumahdollisuuksia, jotka eivät ole riippuvaisia ajasta ja paikasta. Median tuottamien representaatioiden tarkoitus on luoda tiettyjä naiskuvia, joihin naiskatsojat voisivat ja haluaisivat samaistua.</p> <p>Tämä tutkielma käsittelee <i>Sex and the City</i> –sarjan Miranda Hobbesin representaatiota postfeministisen sankarittaren näkökulmasta. Valitsin Mirandan hahmon tutkimukseni kohteeksi, sillä hänen hahmoaan ei ollut juurikaan tutkittu aikaisemmin postfeminismin näkökulmasta. Halusin selvittää Mirandan kielenkäytön kautta onko hänen hahmonsä Kaufer Buschin määritelmän mukainen postfeministinen sankaritar, jonka ei tarvitse valita joko feminiinistä tai feminististä ideologiaa, vaan voi omilla elämänvalinnoillaan löytää tien aitoon naisen vapautumiseen.</p> <p>Käytin tutkimusmetodinä kriittistä diskurssianalyysia, jolla pyrin selvittämään Mirandan käyttämiä feminiinisiä ja feministisiä diskursseja sarjasta esiin nousseiden teemojen avulla. Aineistoni koostui neljästä jaksosta sarjan kausilta 1, 2, 3 ja 6 sekä niiden litteraateista, joista käytin vain Mirandan kannalta olennaisia dialogeja. Valitsin aineistosta käsittelyyn kaksi teemaa, jotka olivat <i>sinkkuna(isena) oleminen</i> ja <i>miehet ja seurustelu</i>.</p> <p>Tutkimustulokseni osoittavat Mirandan olevan postfeministinen sankaritar elämänvalintojensa kautta. Hänen kielenkäyttönsä ei kuitenkaan tue tätä näkemystä täysin, sillä siitä löytyy sekä feminiinisiä että feministisiä piirteitä vielä kuudennen kauden jaksossakin. Hämmennystä aiheuttaa itse postfeminismin käsite, joka ilman tutkijoiden yhtenäistä määrittelyä vaikuttaa tutkittavaan aiheeseen. Mielestäni Miranda onkin postfeministinen sankaritar feministisellä vivahteella.</p>	
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## 1. Introduction

Media, and especially television, is a powerful tool for creating desirable female representations for today's women and girls. Female viewers are able to identify with characters' situations and life events when they are similar to their own e.g. issues in relationships and within family life (Kim: 2001, 323). Although television in its traditional use has gained rivals for screen time from the innovations of social media as well as from new technological devices and their applications, television series are still alive and well amongst our daily lives. Perhaps even more than ever, due to these new technologies, watching television is not limited to certain space or time. Instead, these new media devices and applications enable people to watch their favourite television series or films whenever and where ever and as many times as they choose. Many of these services provide a wide range of television series and films from the latest hits to old favourites from even decades past. They are more accessible to larger audiences than ever and, therefore, still hold their ground as an important part of today's media.

In addition to advertising on the Internet and in the wide realms of social media, television series provide us with their carefully designed representations of certain types of female attributes women should consider desirable and aim for. In this thesis, I will be looking at the representation of the character Miranda Hobbes in the television series *Sex and the City* from the perspective of post-feminist heroines. I chose Miranda's character as the focus of this study because she has not been the object of previous research very frequently. The focus has mainly been on the series' relation to female language use, fashion, popular and consumer cultures, feminism and post-feminism in general. In my opinion, this intelligent, career-oriented corporate lawyer with somewhat sarcastic and poignant comments on female and dating life deserves a closer look. I have focused on the character's representation through her use of language in four episodes throughout the series using Critical Discourse Analysis as my tool for the analysis. I examined the feminine and feminist features of her language use in order to search for clues of her postfeminist heroine status.

Next, I will look at postfeminism, postfeminist media studies and the concept of the postfeminist heroine. Chapter 3 introduces the series and in chapter 4 I will deal with the methodology, the data and the method of Critical Discourse Analysis. Chapter 5 presents the results of my analysis and chapter 6 deals with the conclusions of this study.

## 2. Postfeminism and Media Studies

My research is based on the field of feminist media studies in which studies of representations of women in media have been extensive. In this section I will deal with the concept of postfeminism, postfeminist media studies and the postfeminist heroine and previous research on them.

### 2.1. Postfeminism

In order to understand the origins of postfeminism, it is important to determine the term “feminism” first. In general, feminism calls for women’s right to equality with men in all areas of life. It is usually divided into first-wave, second-wave and third-wave feminism, which can be further categorized into several subdivisions. The late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries’ organized women’s movements are considered as first-wave feminism. It was based on the assumption that women everywhere share the same experiences under the rule of patriarchy and they are worthy of equal rights with men in every aspect of their lives (LeGates: 2012, 3). The premise of second-wave feminism is that “normative features or socially prescribed requirements of femininity are the embodiment of patriarchal domination and oppression”. In other words, female beauty ideals are created and exist only for the pleasure of the male gaze and desire. Third-wave feminism professes that the society is created by the superiority of male dominance where feminine is overrun by masculine. Thus, femininity is seen “not as a bodily expression of subjugation, but instead as a corporeal performance of a discursively produced and contested set of criteria for being a woman within the structural conditions of gender inequality”.(Schipper et al: 2012, 28-30)

Postfeminism stems from third-wave feminism but determining it precisely can be somewhat challenging. The term postfeminism is used in a variety of concepts and in different meanings from academic texts to popular culture lacking a shared meaning. In the academic concept it has been used to demarcate changes in representations of women and feminist discourses (Lotz : 2001, 106). Kim (2001, 320-321) divides postfeminism into three approaches. Firstly, it depicts the era after second-wave feminism, the 1980s and especially the 1990s. Secondly, for some scholars (e.g. Susan Faludi) it is seen as a backlash against feminism, as anti-feminism, where feminism is no longer needed because its needs have been fulfilled and equality between sexes has been gained. Representations of the independent new

woman challenged by her own independence have been replaced by the independent woman whose misery is caused by this freedom of independence, e.g. in *Sex and the City* and *Ally McBeal*. Thirdly, postfeminism can be seen in more positive terms not replacing feminism or being the end of it but, instead, use it as a frame of reference that links feminism to other anti-foundationalist movements such as postmodernism, post-structuralism and post-colonialism (Brooks 1997: 2). In this sense, postfeminism is being used as a tool in the fight against hierarchy and challenges the supposition that women, class and race are the objects of omnipresent oppression.

Lotz (2001:106) also approaches postfeminism in a positive sense, seeing it as an aid to describe recent evolution in the field of feminist theories and representations. Stillion Southard (2008:151) raises young women of modern consumer culture to the centre of postfeminism. It provides them with a novel, “empowering” and easily accessible version of feminism that has been stripped down from second-wave feminism’s political agenda.

## 2.2 Postfeminist media studies

Next, I will look at postfeminism from the point of view of the media. Dow (1996) has divided postfeminist prime-time television of the 1980s and early 1990s in the USA into three different categories. First category is "professional serial drama" in which female characters struggle with professional and family life as for example in *L.A.Law* and *Murphy Brown*. "Postfeminist family drama" is the second of Dow's categories. It depicts the lives of women who have been able to "have it all", combining both family and working motherhood successfully and being able to achieve feminist goals, as in *thirtysomething*. Thirdly, the "sisterhood" show presents an image of women having the best of working and family life but with a setting of feminist goals.

The postfeminist ideal also emphasizes individualism over collective, which stems from second-wave feminism and shows the conflict between women as individuals and as a member of their sex (Stillion Southard 2008, 153). This can also be seen in television series of which *Sex and the City* is an example of showing female representations with which the viewers are able to identify both as individuals as well as members of a collective unity. Criticism towards postfeminist television entertainment has also risen for its biased representations of women having to choose between either feminist or feminine and not being able to be both. However, Stillion Southard points out that the representations of postfeminist

television do not usually correlate to the whole female audience in terms of ethnic background, sexuality and economic status but rather views the life of the economically privileged, white, straight woman, which is true also in *Sex and the City*.

### 2.3 The Postfeminist Heroine

In this thesis, I will apply Kaufer Busch's (2008) definition of the postfeminist heroine. Although she criticizes postfeminism in general, she offers a refreshing and an intelligible outlook on postfeminism instead of a blatant either/or juxtaposition between feminism and postfeminism. She presupposes that the 21<sup>st</sup> century women are unhappy due to suffering from the freedom and independence induced by feminism, which is portrayed in such television series as *Sex and the City*, *Ally McBeal* and *Desperate Housewives*. Kaufer Busch claims that "feminine mystique", a concept established by Betty Friedan, has been replaced by what she calls the "feminist mystique". The "feminine mystique" unraveled the illusion of the 1950s housewives gaining fulfillment solely from being a mother, a wife and a domestic goddess. Housewives' unhappiness and discontent, "the problem that has no name", rose from being prohibited to educate oneself or gain full independence. In contrast, the "feminist mystique" urges women to pursue empowerment by refusing to correspond to gender norms and condemning them artificial and unfair. Thus, women should embrace "the masculine mystique" by adopting stereotypical and presumably liberated male behavior in all areas of their lives. (2008:87-89)

Nevertheless, abandoning one's own female nature and desires and replacing them with male ones is not the solution for women's liberation (Kaufer Busch 2008:96). It is the very essence causing women's distress and discontent which resemble the anguish of the 1950s housewives. The path to true liberation is twofold. Firstly, it begins with acknowledging the differences between sexes but not make one superior to the other. The woman of the postfeminist era utilizes this difference to her own benefit in the patriarchal world in the form of "the masquerade" (Kim 2001:235). Postfeminism remoulds the feminist woman into a sexually confident and comfortable new woman in terms of awareness and acceptance of sexual difference. This confidence arises from the belief of having reclaimed her power over the heterosexual man by using her sexuality. However, Kim states that the idea of women getting what they want by using their feminine devices is more of an old-fashioned idea than a new revelation. The difference in the postfeminist masquerade is that it seems to be blind to

its own performance. Secondly, it requires the realization that, at least in the western world, women are able to make their own choices in life (Kaufer Busch 2008:96). They are able to make their own lifestyle choices, educate themselves to whichever profession they choose and, therefore, they feel having achieved many of the goals set by feminism. True freedom is not being forced to choose between either “mystiques” introduced earlier in the text but it might be something in between or even something totally different, depending on one’s situation in life.

In the next part, I will introduce the series itself.

### 3. Sex and the City

In this part of the thesis, I will give an overall introduction of the series. *Sex and the City* is based on the book of the same name by Candace Bushnell which was first published in 1996. Darren Starr created it into a television series for the cable network HBO in 1998 spawning six seasons altogether, of which the final season was made in 2004. In addition to this, two full-length films were made as sequels to the series in 2008 and 2010.

The main character of the series is Carrie Bradshaw (played by Sarah-Jessica Parker), a New York-based writer who explores and experiences the unique world of Manhattan's dating scene with single New Yorkers as her target group. She writes about her experiences in her weekly column in *The New York Star*. The series evolves around Carrie and her three friends and their various experiences in dating and relationships. Samantha Jones (Kim Cattrall) is a PR executive and most openly sexual of all of the four women. Strong self-confidence is seen in all areas of her life and she prefers casual sexual encounters over monogamy. Miranda Hobbes (Cynthia Nixon) is an ambitious corporate lawyer who has focused mainly on her career even at the expense of her love life. She is very frank in her opinions and seems very tough but also possesses a softer side which is not shown often. Charlotte York (Kristin Davis) works in an art gallery and her life-long dream has been a wealthy, upper-class husband and many children. Her belief in true love and traditional female and male roles are put to the test in the modern dating world of New York. (<http://www.hbo.com/sex-and-the-city>)

The series has gained much attention for its rather audacious and explicit approach to the issues women in their 30s (and 40s) are faced with in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century. As



the name of the series might implicate, the topics of the episodes are mostly related to sex, dating and women's love life. The series has been almost a pioneer in making viewers casually aware of several sex- or dating- related issues and unraveling sexual taboos such as homo- and bisexuality, Brazilian waxes, sex toys, "golden showers", impotence, depressed vagina, anal sex, sexually transmitted diseases etc. In addition to this, it has also grasped topics such as aging, feminism, infertility, cancer, single motherhood, infidelity and divorce.

### 3.1 Sex and the City by numbers

Sex and the City has been enormously popular nearly worldwide and in this part I will illustrate the magnitude of it. In the US, it was nominated for more than 50 Emmy Awards and 24 Golden Globe Awards, all in all, and it was the first cable show to take top honors in the comedy series category ([www.hbo.com](http://www.hbo.com)). The 45-minute series finale on February 22<sup>nd</sup> 2004 attracted 10,6 million viewers in the US, which was the second largest audience for a cable television programme since the Sopranos' 4<sup>th</sup> season premiere (The Guardian, 2004). The finale was most watched by 18-49 year-old viewers (USA Today, 2004).

The series is still very popular as it reruns on many television channels and is available on HBO's pay TV service which is sold to 150 countries. The series still has its own home page on HBO.com where episode guides, quizzes and additional information of the series can be found. Numerous Sex and the City related items from coffee mugs to clothing and jewelry are available on e.g. Amazon.com. In addition to this, there are also Sex and the City Facebook pages and e.g. Twitter and Instagram accounts. In Finland, the show has been on many different channels during the years, e.g. Liv, Ava, MTV3, and apparently continues its reruns also in the future.

## 4. Methods

### 4.1 Research aim and questions

In this study, I wanted to discover how the representation of Miranda's character correlates to the definition of the postfeminist heroine, the liberated woman who has the opportunity to make her own life choices without the obligations of being either feminist or feminine.

This study determines to provide an answer to the following questions:

- 1) Is Miranda's character a representation of the postfeminist heroine?
- 2) If so, how is it portrayed in the series through Miranda's use of language?

Postfeminism and postfeminist representations in the media are very intriguing and controversial subjects with reference to their relationship with feminism and its achievements. Postfeminism can be seen as the "death" of feminism or as a continuum for it and the offset itself creates challenges and controversy to the field of this study. Since media holds tremendous power in creating and delivering certain images and representations of women, it is of great importance to analyze them further and not solely accept them without criticism. Next I will introduce the data and methods used in the study.

#### 4.2. Data

I chose *Sex and the City* as the data for my research because it was almost a revolutionary television series which depicted single women's lives unlike no other series before. Although it was made in 1998-2004, it is still relevant and up-to-date along with two sequel full-length films made from it in 2008 and 2010.

The data consists of four 27 - 30 -minute episodes from the seasons 1, 2, 3 and 6. The episodes chosen are: 1.01 "*Sex and the City*", 2.05 "*Four Women and a Funeral*", 3.16 "*Frenemie's*", and 6.18 "*Splat!*" (see Appendix 1). I chose these episodes as a random sample to achieve an objective point of view of how Miranda's character evolves through the entire series from the perspective of the postfeminist heroine. All these seasons create a large amount of data, and, at first, I intended to use 10 episodes to gain an extensive sample of the series. I watched the episodes and found transcriptions of them online (<http://www.satctranscripts.com>). However, when I started to go through the data, I realized that 10 episodes would provide an overwhelming amount of data for a bachelor's thesis and narrowed it down to 4 episodes. I analyzed them through Miranda's characters' use of

language in terms of Critical Discourse Analysis.

### 4.3. Critical Discourse Analysis

Next, I will introduce the concept of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). For this thesis, I have used CDA to examine how the language use of Miranda represents her as the post-feminist heroine.

Discourse is an instrument of power which reveals the social structures that create inequality and CDA plays a crucial part in that process (Blommaert: 2005, 25). CDA is used to "analyze opaque, as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (Wodak & Meyer: 2001, 2).

Discourse analysis is part of qualitative research and its focus lies on the data. Usually, the data consists of language use in order to construct social interaction but it can also include visual and other notations. The data determines the premise of a particular study from the applied concepts and methodological choices to research questions and data acquisition. Discourse is seen as interaction and, therefore, any study can capture only a particular discourse event of a particular time frame. (Pietikäinen et al.: 2009, 157)

Fairclough (cited in Blommaert: 2005, 29-30) approaches the analysis of discourse from three different perspectives. First, discourse can be considered as *discourse-as-text* in which the focus is on the different elements of discourse e.g. grammar, text structure and vocabulary. Furthermore, the second approach is from the perspective of *discourse-as-discursive-practice* which focuses on the different processes discourse is used in the society. Third approach is *discourse-as-social-practice* in which different discourses that are related to control, power and normativity are analyzed from the viewpoint of intertextuality, the way discourse is re-written and represented.

The power of discourses are in their ability to form representations, certain images of the world, events and people and portray them as "real" or "true". They are presented from a specific viewpoint that includes only certain kind of information, usually beneficial to its own cause, and ignores other types of discourses. Therefore, representation is also action that has terms and consequences that are related to power and status, e.g. who decides what kind of information is given and to whom and on which terms. (Pietikäinen et al.: 2009, 53, 56)

The focus of this study is on the contents of the expressions Miranda uses, and therefore, non-verbal cues or conversational issues such as turn-takings, pauses, intonation or word stress are irrelevant here. I found the transcriptions of the episodes online from [www.satctranscripts.com](http://www.satctranscripts.com). However, I could not use them as such since most of the episodes lacked the names of the speakers in the dialogues and the dialogues were also incomplete. I watched the four episodes on HBO Nordic and concentrated only on the scenes Miranda participated in; I added speakers and missing words and corrected spelling mistakes to the relevant transcripts. Then I went through the transcripts and highlighted all Miranda's lines and copied the dialogues of those scenes to another file for further examination. After that, I went through the scenes and searched for recurring themes and constructed another file for them including Miranda's lines relevant to the particular theme. The themes that emerged from the data were *being (a) single (woman)*, *men and dating*, and *friendship*. The first two themes had clearly feminist and feminine discourses and there were differences in Miranda's talk in certain situations. There was also present the theme of talking about *sex* which is constantly present in the series, and, therefore, it is included in the analysis of the themes.

## 5. Post-feminist heroine named Miranda

This section will present the analysis and results of my study. I processed the themes in terms of feminist discourse and feminine discourse on the basis of Miranda's lines. The themes that emerged from the data were *being (a) single (woman)*, *talking about sex*, *men and dating* and *friendship*. All of the themes overlap at some points and I divided Miranda's lines into themes on the basis of what they dealt with the most. The division to feminist and feminine discourse is based on the theory of the postfeminist heroine. Feminist discourse consists of issues promoted by feminism e.g. gender equality and being independent without men in all areas of life, career-orientation over family life, being open about sexually related issues. Feminine discourse emphasizes traditional gender roles, housewifery, family, feminine traits. I have focused on the themes of *being (a) single (woman)* and *men and dating* since they are most relevant when examining the traits of the postfeminist heroine. The theme of *talking about sex* is present throughout the series and, therefore, it is included in both themes. First, I will look at the theme of *being (a) single (woman)* and, after that, *men and dating*.

### 5.1. Being (a) single (woman)

In general, Miranda's character is represented as an intelligent career woman who is not afraid to speak her mind and whose talk is filled with witty and sarcastic puns and observations. The essence of being a single woman is crystallized in episode 2.05 *Four Women and A Funeral* in which Miranda buys her first own apartment.

REAL ESTATE AGENT: So, it's just you?  
 MIRANDA: Yep. Just me.  
 R: Such a big apartment to buy for just you.  
 MIRANDA: I have a lot of shoes.  
 R: Maybe the boyfriend will move in?  
 MIRANDA: No, no boyfriend. Just me.  
 REALTOR: I have a son who owns his own business.  
 MIRANDA: No, thanks. I'll take it.

The scene shows how Miranda is faced with prejudices when she wants to buy an apartment alone, though she is merely doing something that she considers to be completely normal. This normal act in her life turns into a clear feminist statement when she is questioned by the real estate agent and has to justify her decision to buy an apartment this size by having "a lot of shoes". Her comment is clearly meant to be sarcastic but it is also an indication of her wealth and the freedom to use her own money how she chooses. She also has to assure the real estate agent that she is truly serious about buying the apartment alone by repeating the phrase "just me". She could choose to lie to the agent and say something in the lines of "my boyfriend couldn't make it here tonight but we'll buy this together" if she were embarrassed about her single status. But she is not. She is completely honest about her situation because she can afford to do this and buying an apartment alone is not something to be ashamed of.

In addition to this, she is treated in the same manner at her mortgage office:

CLERK: So, it's just you.  
 MIRANDA: Yeah, just me.  
 CLERK: Check the "single woman" box. Initial.  
 And the down payment's coming from your father?  
 MIRANDA: No. Just me.  
 CLERK: Check the "single woman" box.

The clerk's phrase "just you" links it to being "just" a single woman when Miranda has to check the "single woman box". His presupposition that at least the down payment must come from her father suggests that women could still not be economically independent enough to

make this kind of purchase on their own. As if being a single woman is something humiliating or pitiable. It is a lifestyle choice for Miranda because today, due to feminism's efforts, being single and being successful on your own without having to get married is acceptable (Kaufer Busch: 2009, 88) Nevertheless, it is not shown in the scene if there is a "single man" box as well or merely one for single women.

MIRANDA: I'm telling you, if I was a single man, none of this would be happening.

SAMANTHA: If you were a single man, I'd date you.

MIRANDA: I've got the money, I've got a great job, and I still get, "it's just you?"

CARRIE: They're threatened. Buying a place alone means you don't need a man.

MIRANDA: I don't.

Miranda comments on this duality created by gender equality from a feminist viewpoint. The worry behind her comment is whether women will ever be equally treated when it comes to being economically independent. She is a successful lawyer and wealthy enough to buy an apartment on her own but still she faces the prejudices of being the wrong sex, demoting her to being "just a woman". If she were a single man, her status would not be compromised.

However, being single raises Miranda's more feminine traits as well. Although she does not need a man in her life and is happy on her own, buying the apartment triggers contradictory feelings in her. The previous owner was a single woman who died in the apartment Miranda bought and she had been dead for a week before she was found and there was a rumour that her cat had eaten half of her face. First, Miranda almost chokes on ice cream and has to save herself since there is no-one else in the apartment (episode 2.05).

MIRANDA: I was watching Hard Copy, and I kept thinking when they found me...

...I would forever be the dead girl who watched bad TV.

CARRIE: Why didn't you call me?

MIRANDA: I couldn't breathe. I'm gonna die alone, Carrie.

Second, she has a panic attack when she takes a walk in her new neighbourhood and has to call an ambulance to herself.

MIRANDA: Take a good look at my face, because at my funeral, there'll only be half of it. I'll be dead and my cat will be happy and Charlotte will be picking up men at the next grave site over.

CARRIE: Breathe, sweetie, breathe, breathe

MIRANDA: I'm all alone, Carrie. The first people on my "call in case of emergency" list are my parents. And I don't like them. And they live in Pennsylvania.

After these incidents Miranda is hit by the fear of being alone, ending up without anyone else

besides her cat. Even if being independent and successful, there is also the more vulnerable and sensitive Miranda. Although self-ironic even in distress, there is a possibility that she might yearn for something else, a family of her own with a husband and children.

## 5.2. Men and dating

MIRANDA: By the time you reach your mid-thirties you think: 'Why should I settle? You know?

This line from the first episode "*Sex and the City*" gives a good idea of Miranda's character. She is a grown woman who does not have to settle for anything less she is worth. She is not a desperate spinster waiting to get married and freed from her misery. She is strong, independent and able to take care of herself. She can be seen as a true feminist icon for women. Nevertheless, she is not immune to the efforts of feminism (episode 1.01):

SAMANTHA: Sweetheart, this is the first time in the history of Manhattan that women have had as much money and power as men plus the equal luxury of treating men like sex objects  
MIRANDA: Yeah, except men in this city fail on both counts. I mean, they don't wanna be in a relationship with you but as soon as you only want them for sex they don't like it. All of a sudden they can't perform the way they're supposed to!

The dialogue is from Miranda's thirty-something birthday where the four friends ponder the core of being a woman in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. It culminates the postfeminist confusion women are faced with. Now they are able to "have sex like men" but they do not credit feminism for this freedom but, rather, blame feminism for it (Kaufer Busch: 2009, 88). Miranda is baffled by men's behavior: having a relationship is not what men want but having only sex with them is not a good thing either.

MIRANDA: It's like that guy Jeremiah, the poet. I mean the sex was incredible but then he wanted to read me his poetry and go out to dinner and the whole chat bit and I'm like let's not even go there. (episode 1.01)

This line of Miranda's shows that she wants to embrace her freedom of not committing to a relationship. She does not have to or even want to get to know the man she slept with. The poet obviously would have wanted to get to know Miranda better but she was not interested. She has a choice and she chooses herself over men. She is depicted as a woman who does not care about relationships or dating but already in the same episode she is persuaded to go on a blind date with Carrie's friend Skipper. Miranda is not interested in Skipper and treats him

rather harshly:

MIRANDA: That's funny Skippy

SKIPPER: Skipper

MIRANDA: I have this theory that men secretly hate pretty girls because they feel like they're the ones that rejected them in high school

SKIPPER: Right, but if you're not part of the 'Beauty Olympics' you can still become a very interesting person

MIRANDA: Are you saying that I'm not pretty enough?

SKIPPER: No no no. Of course you are

MIRANDA: So ipso facto I can't be interesting. Women either fall into one of two categories: beautiful and boring, or homely and interesting? Is that what you're saying to me?

Or does she merely act like men? She thinks Skipper is not her type and does not take him seriously. She acts condescendingly towards him by calling him "Skippy" instead of Skipper. She pours a full load of feminism on him by presenting claims about beauty and how women should look and act deliberately trying to confuse Skipper, which she eventually does. However, Miranda yields from her principles at the end of the episode and they end up in bed together and start dating. Thus, perhaps her hard exterior and feminist views are, at least partially, for her own protection from not getting hurt by love. Instead of only having casual sex encounters she does go on a date with Skipper and dating is also present in Miranda's life in the 3<sup>rd</sup> season as well.

Episode 3.16 *Frenemies* shows the more feminine side of the dating Miranda. She goes on a date with Carrie's ex-boyfriend Jim:

MIRANDA: Well, my last date died. So the fact that you're still breathing makes this a huge success.

JIM: Low standards. I like that. (they kiss) This was really nice.

MIRANDA: Yeah, it was. You know, Carrie wasn't sure that we would get along.

JIM: Uh, she knew me a long time ago. I've changed. I mean, back then, I was in a band called Uncle Ted's Ass. And I could sit on my hair.

MIRANDA: Wow, that's impressive (said with sarcasm)

JIM: You didn't hear us play. (they kiss again) I'd like to see you again.

MIRANDA: I'd like that.

There is a softer tone to Miranda compared to the date she had with Skipper. She makes witty comments but this scene does not have the assertive Miranda who makes feminist comments to confuse her date. If anything, she complies with her date, kisses him twice and is ready to meet him again. The shift to the feminine side in Miranda is also shown in the scene in which she tells Carrie about the date.



MIRANDA: Carrie, it was great. He was fun and romantic. We talked so long we closed the restaurant. I think you're wrong about him. I think this could be good.

CARRIE: Are we talking about the same Jim, Jim, Asshole Jim?

MIRANDA: He's not an asshole.

Carrie is very skeptical about Miranda dating Jim because of her own experiences with him. In Miranda's opinion he is romantic and someone she can talk to and he also has a good sense of humour. She even defends him when Carrie calls him an asshole which is something she probably would not have done in the earlier episodes.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> season Miranda's life has changed dramatically from the earlier years. She has given birth to a baby boy, realized that she loves Steve and marries him. They have also moved to Brooklyn which to Miranda is a huge change, almost a sacrifice because she had never thought of moving away from Manhattan. However, these changes merely are an indication of the changes that have taken place in her. Although she has transformed from the first season's independent, "having sex like men" single girl to a spouse and a mother, there is still an air of feminism in her. This is shown in episode 6.18 when all of the women are having a couples' dinner at Petrovsky's apartment. He reveals the news of Carrie and him moving to Paris together before Carrie has officially agreed to it or told it to her friends (episode 6.18). Charlotte and Samantha are surprised about Carrie leaving to Paris but, unlike Miranda, they try to be supportive. Miranda confronts Carrie about moving to Paris:

MIRANDA: I think you're making a mistake.

CARRIE: Miranda, please.

MIRANDA: Carrie, you can't quit your column. It's who you are.

.....

MIRANDA: What are you gonna do over there without your job? Eat croissants?

CARRIE: Why can't you be happy for me?

MIRANDA: I'm sorry but... I don't understand why you have to move away and give up your life.

Miranda feels that Carrie is "making a mistake" and that quitting her job means giving up her life because her column defines who she is and how it means everything to her. Miranda is upset that Carrie is willing to sacrifice her identity and career for a man and, thus, rendering to feminine mystique's ideal of traditional gender roles and be financially supported by a man. She cannot understand why Carrie would want to exchange her independent and meaningful career to "eating croissants" which to Miranda equals regression, a backlash in the lines of feminism, from what Carrie has achieved. For Carrie, moving to Paris means having a choice, a possibility, to open a new chapter in her life:

CARRIE: No, you moved on, Charlotte's moved on. Even Samantha's moved on. I can stay here and write about my life or I can go with him and live my life.

MIRANDA: You mean his life. Carrie, I love you, come on.

Miranda does not actually question Carrie's choice to settle down but rather the reasons behind it. She is afraid that Carrie is doing it for the wrong reasons, not because she wants it but because it's what Petrovsky wants and Carrie actually does not have any other choice if she wants to be with him. Miranda calls for Carrie's own choice, and for the postfeminist heroine, it is the key element to her true liberation and freedom without returning to the patriarchal rule of the feminine mystique (Kaufer Busch 2009, 96).

## 6. Conclusion

The conclusion is that Miranda's character is a representation of a postfeminist heroine from the perspective of having the possibility to make her own lifestyle choices. Becoming a mother is more a twist of fate for her rather than a result of persistently trying to achieve because it has not been on her agenda. But when it comes to marriage and moving away from Manhattan, they have been a result of the choices she has made. Although moving to Brooklyn was more of a compromise to her, she did it out love for her family. Kaufer Busch (2009:94) criticizes the show for Miranda and her friends ending up in relationships. She accuses the makers of the series for not believing that women could actually be "happily single" but, instead, forcing them in "marriages and monogamous relationships, the likes of which they had ruthlessly mocked for six years". However, having said this, Kaufer Busch does not wish to see *Sex and the City* as entirely anti-feminist. The key element here is that *Sex and the City* is not a show about women's liberation or empowerment. It shows what the consequences are when traditional gender roles are no longer relevant and women are confused about what their "new" roles are. She considers these postfeminist heroines as more likely of "equity feminists", who embrace the ideas of first-wave feminism in terms of having the right to choose. The goal is not to return to the patriarchal rule and traditional gender roles associated with the feminine mystique but to acknowledge the differences between sexes and find true freedom in terms of self-discovery and self-awareness.

Miranda's character's development in the series indicates that she has become a postfeminist heroine but her language use does not necessarily support this conclusion. The issue that confuses me in this study is postfeminism itself. I do not consider the representation of Miranda as an anti-feminist statement but is it a postfeminist statement? If postfeminism means that women have the choice to be feminist or feminine or both or something totally different, then her language use indicates she is. Nevertheless, still in the final 6<sup>th</sup> season, Miranda's opinions have a very feminist sound to them as was shown in the dialogue with Carrie. For the women of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, "feminine" or "feminist mystiques" are, in my opinion, too narrow definitions or directions to choose from. Instead, feminism should be seen from the postfeminist perspective in which freedom of choice is the central idea of women's liberation. Trying to "act like men" and ignoring the differences of sexes has not been satisfactory for women but it has enabled women the freedom of choice. At least in the western world, women are able to choose their lifestyle and "mystiques" as long as it brings true fulfillment and joy to their lives. In this light, Miranda is a true postfeminist heroine with a feminist twist in a positive sense.

As I was left rather confused about postfeminism itself, it would be interesting to study the subject further and expand studying postfeminist representations to other characters in *Sex and the City* and other television series as well. The current sample was rather limited for studying a subject this wide but, all in all, the results indicated that this is subject worth studying.

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## APPENDIX 1

Sex and the City episodes used in this thesis. Episode synopses are taken from HBO's website [www.hbo.com](http://www.hbo.com) and I have edited them for this thesis.

### **Season 1, episode 1 "Sex and the City"**

At a birthday party for thirtysomething Miranda, Carrie and her friends vow to stop worrying about finding the perfect male and start having sex like men. Carrie experiments with an old flame and meets Mr. Big; Miranda warms up to Skipper; Samantha has a one night stand with a man Charlotte wouldn't sleep with on the first date.

### **Season 2, episode 5 "Four Women and a Funeral"**

Can a relationship bring you back to life? Charlotte falls for a recently widowed man she meets at a fashion designer's funeral. Carrie mends some fences with Mr. Big. Samantha is exiled from Manhattan's social scene after trying to seduce a "celebutante's" husband. Miranda starts having panic attacks after buying her own apartment.

### **Season 3, episode 16 "Frenemies"**

Do we get wiser or just older? Miranda's first date turns into a wake, when her date dies. Carrie's seminar on dating men fails, when one of the participants asks why their expert is still single. Charlotte is frustrated with her sex life with Trey. Samantha becomes friends with her female counterpart.

### **Season 6, episode 18 "Splat!"**

Is it time to stop asking questions? Carrie is considering moving abroad with Aleksandr - and sees her familiar life flying out the window. Miranda admits that she is sceptical about Aleksandr. Samantha discovers that her maids has switched their vibrators. Charlotte's dog turns out to be pregnant.