ABSTRACT

POWER, RESISTANCE, AND SUBVERSION
The boundaries of representing gender benders in popular visual culture

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Both within contemporary academic and societal discourses gender benders are almost always situated at the margins. From this position they subvert and reaffirm the hegemonisation of dichotomous gender roles. In both discourses gender bending is read as set of subversive practices. Largely based on the theories of Judith Butler, some academic discourse perceives the bending of gender as an act of resistance with the aim of re-ordering and re-conceptualising gender as a fluid concept. Gender benders do the play full gender-act and create ambiguity. By using different style characteristics gender benders are described as the bodily hybridisation of masculine and feminine stereotypes. The transgression of gender boundaries has been evaluated in cultural studies academic readings as preferably resistance through pleasure and this resulted in a monolithic discourse. Meanwhile gender benders came out of the margins and are now commodified as mainstream and accepted within mainstream popular culture. Especially on the target group broadcasters MTV and TMF. Through commodification the resistance was absorbed and incorporated into consumer capitalism. In this movement the subversive potential of gender was muted. In this paper I will account for the genealogy of a muted resistance in search of some logics of incorporation. More specifically, I will use a reception study of popular culture texts (case MTV and TMF) amongst young consumers: do they read the bending of genders as resistance through pleasure?