

Bykova Anna

HUMANITARIAN WAYS TO ADDRESS GLOBAL THREATS AND HISTORY OF FEMINISM IN WESTERN POP CULTURE

We can not deny that women have come a long way to get a miracle of «equal rights». Gaining the right to vote, the opportunity to obtain proper education and get a prestigious job, participation in the public sphere – we owe everything to women’s movements. Feminism, once – the only strategy of acting that could change the role of a woman in western society, today is still gaining in popularity over the world – including Eastern Europe countries. However, every achievement is accompanied by criticism; the ideas of feminism and the women's movement have long been a «hot topic» in popular culture.

When we talk about mass culture, we mean a culture accessible to everyone, visible and close. In times of rapid technological progress, when the Internet becomes more and more available, and the mass media – diverse, it is easier to express one's own views. «The Net is feminine» – the title of Sadie Plant's best-known essay. It becomes even more relatable in Ukraine as Ukrainian language has the category of grammatical gender and the original word «Net» («merezha», «мережа») is feminine [1, p. 35]. Cyberspace has really made it easier for feminists to spread the idea and concept of their movement, and made available forums and websites from which we can learn about feminism, its roots, achievements and disappointments from which we should learn.

The Internet is the space where the action happens, where the information is disseminating; it is the resource of popularizing certain events on which I would like to focus attention. Speaking of pop culture, we usually mention the «pop stars», celebrities, whom we like or dislike (in any case, we often hear about them). Pop music has become one of the components of modern mass culture, in which the ideas of feminism are apparently spreading. One of the most popular singers of our decade, Beyoncé, linked her work to feminism. In 2010, Beyoncé set a record with the highest number of Grammy Awards in the history of pop music; after the release of «Who runs the world? (Girls)» song, 2011, in which the singer accuses men of not respecting women and supports the main ideas of feminism, the popularity of this singer has strengthened even more. In 2013, Beyoncé released the song “Flawless», which became the unofficial hymn of the young generation of feminists. The reason for this were lyrics about the ideal of a feminist image of women, as well as recorded speech of the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie included in the song. In a monologue, the writer expresses her concern about the fact that society imposes on women the desire to marry and focus on being attractive to men, instead of encouraging the desire to receive better education and achieve professional success.

The author also accuses the society of imposing on girls the observance of the difference in the sexual behavior of men and women. The speech ends with the words «feminist: the person who believes in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes». By doing so, Beyoncé did not only support the idea of feminism in her songs, but publicly declared her affiliation with feminists. It is also worth noting that Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie was not collaborating with

Beyoncé during the «Flawless» production and lately said, that she was flattered by being quoted, but she considered the part of her speech «taken out of context», she also noticed that the singer and her had different point of views on what if feminism [3]. Beyoncé was already a popular singer before she inferred into feminist discourse, but after she joined the movement, her popularity grew.

The above-mentioned song, «Flawless», also has a remix version sung by Beyoncé and Nicki Minaj together, which the singers performed for the first time during a concert as part of the Beyoncé concert tour. It was definitely a sign of supporting the feminist movement (or rather its pop version) from Nicki Menaj's side; after a while she released a song «Anaconda», which by some recipients is considered a manifest against the existing stereotype that rap is a domain of men.

Although, there exists the opposite view that this song (and especially the music video) is completely non-feminist, because it presents the racist oversexualized display of a dark-skinned woman's body. In any case, moving the subject of feminism (whether supporting or accusing him) evidently brings popularity to performers and there lays the problem of feminism in western mass culture: it is too ambiguous to define as a sincere action in support of women's movement or as a next trick to get attention and new audience.

Another famous pop industrious activist who supports the feminist movement during its growing popularity is Jennifer Lopez. In 2016, the singer presented the song «I ain't your mama», which deals with the current problems of women's role in marriage, a music video also appeared in which Jennifer Lopez encourages women to change their role of «mother» in marriage. It is also worth noting that this

feminist manifesto from J. Lopez was held in the same year as the Beyoncé “Lemonade» album, which suggests the current popularity of feminist subject matter.

The rapid popularization of feminist views in contemporary mass culture began in 2010’. The main problem of modern western feminists is that the authentic function of feminism in social media was transformed [2, p.103]. The struggle became entertainment and on the one hand it helps spreading the idea of gender equality between mass culture audience, but on the other hand the difference between «pop feminism» and «authentic feminism» grows and causes misunderstanding between followers of the same ideology.

References

1. *Kobiety, feminizm i media*, red. E. Zierkiewicz, I. Kowalska, „Konsola”, Poznań 2005.
2. *Oczekiwania kobiet i wobec kobiet: stereotypy i wzorce kobiecości w kulturze europejskiej i amerykańskiej*, red. Bożeny Płonka-Syroka, Warszawa 2007.
<https://www.thefader.com/2016/10/07/chimamanda-ngozi-adichie-beyoncs-feminism-comment>.

3. *Gender- kultura- społeczeństwo*, red. M.Radkiewicz, Kraków 2002.
4. Hawkesworth, Mary E. (2006). *Globalization and Feminist Activism*. Rowman & Littlefield
5. Walters, Margaret (2005). *Feminism: A very short introduction*. Oxford University
6. Garofalo, Reebee. *Rockin' the Boat: Mass Music & Mass Movements*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: South End Press