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Dismantling Disney. Post-feminism in *High School Musical: The Musical: The Series* (2019)

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Abstract

The post-feminist movement began more or less simultaneously with the globalization of the media. Although these two events do not seem to be related at all, they are actually closely connected, since it is considered that the discourse projected by the media plays a crucial role in the representation and development of this fresh feminism (Adriaens 2009, 1). For this reason, some franchises in the sector – as it is the case of the Disney Channel Company – have intended to use their influence among adolescents to distribute the post-feminist discourse through their programs. However, are the Disney Company characters as post-feminist and revolutionary as they want their viewers to believe? This dissertation argues that, despite their attempts to present themselves as post-feminist, the characters of the programs and series of the channel continue to behave in a traditional and non-feminist way. To argue this, an analysis of Kourtney, one of the characters in one of their most recent original series, *High School Musical: The Musical: The Series* (2019)*, will be carried out. This will include the presentation of various aspects of post-feminism, such as the consideration of fashion and the body as tools for empowerment, as well as deliberate misbehaviour, and the notions of agency and individualism, respectively. All these areas are introduced to analyse Kourtney in relation to them, with the final intention to prove that this Disney character is not as post-feminist as it seems.

Key words: Post-feminism, Kourtney, empowerment, masquerade, Disney

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Introduction

One of the most important historical events for women happened during the 1960s and 1970s. This occurrence is known as the second wave of feminism, which began after the achievement of women's suffrage. The second era of activists sought to focus their attention on a wider range of issues, including discrimination in the workplace, sexuality and liberation, and inequalities at home (Negra 2009, 12). In broader terms, the ultimate purpose of the movement was to provoke the "disruption of hegemony and systemic oppression," with the intention of "acknowledging and working to dismantle the patriarchy" (Cor and Chan 2017, 111). In order to do this, those affiliated with the trend promoted the female alliance, arguing that women were "bound together by a common set of innate desires, fears, and concerns" (Negra 2009, 12). However, this impression of globalized feminism did not comply with the beliefs of some sectors of feminism, since they considered that the movement only represented the experiences of white, middle-class, and hegemonic Western women (Ashby 2005, 127; Cor and Chan 2017, 111; Banet-Weiser 2018, 152). They argued that the exclusion of the voices and practices of women from different ethnicities, social classes, and ages made feminism look like out-dated common sense (Gill 2007, 149; Nash and Grant 2015, 978). Thus, post-feminism began to emerge during the 1980s as a response to those marginalizations. This new movement "acknowledg[ed] the diversit[ies] among women" (Holmlund 2005, 116) and marked out an epistemological and generational shift, and a break with previous women-centred movements (Litosseliti, Gill, and García-Favaro 2019, 3). Post-feminists invoked feminism as that which can be taken into account, but only to install a whole repertoire of new meaning (McRobbie 2004b, 255). They intended to record that the equality that feminism used to search had already been granted and that the movement needed to be considered as having already passed away (McRobbie 2004b, 255; Levine 2009, 138). What the movement suggested – as it continues to do nowadays – is that, in a world beyond sexism and beyond the need for collective political action, women should feel liberated, strong, and agent, thus eluding victimhood and claiming, instead, choice and autonomy (Negra 2009, 10; Gwynne and Muller 2013, 2; Pomerantz, Raby, and Stefanik 2013, 186, 188).

To analyse today's post-feminism, it is necessary to bear in mind that this movement is currently considered a new form of empowerment and independence that treats as central the "consumer culture, fashion, […] humour, and the renewed focus on the female body" (Adriaens 2009, 1). These topics are openly discussed and made visible in the media, which

enjoys extreme importance, influence, and impact on the lives of the vast majority of people. Therefore, it is not surprising that some authors defend that media discourses play a crucial role in the representation, evolution, and development of this fresh feminism (Adriaens 2009, 1). In fact, popular culture since the 1990s has been characterized by a heightened address to female consumers (Tasker and Negra 2007, 8). Then, everything that has been mentioned needs to be considered along with the idea that "adolescents have always embodied powerful feminist potential" (Gwynne and Muller 2013, 3), and that "tween girls are considered to be very large [TV] consumers" (Tally 2005, 313). Therefore, it is easy to understand why the different television industries, influenced by consumerism and the post-feminist movement, dedicate much of their programming to this sector, or why they even create channels exclusively dedicated to attracting the attention of this particular audience.

This is precisely the case of the Disney Channel, one of the multiple divisions of the Walt Disney Company (Blue 2017, 1). Since its inception, the original corporation has attempted to portray the traditional ideals of femininity (Stover 2013, 1). It has done this by creating a set of different princesses who often promote unrealistic body types and the ideal of marriage as the happiest of endings for young women (Stover, 3). However, although Disney Channel partly reproduces hegemonic notions of idealized girlhood by inculcating tween girls into heteronormativity (Blue 2017, 2, 5), their messages are intended to be more moderate, modern, and innovative. The shows and series produced by the company – normally starring middle and high school girls and aimed at an audience with the same characteristics – have attempted to break with the more extreme and obvious dynamics of Disney princesses. Their intention is to offer a portrayal with which young contemporary girls can better identify themselves (Beail, Lupo, and Beail 2018, 126). For this reason, their characters have evolved following the progress of the feminist movement. This supposed progression can be seen in *High School Musical: The Musical: The Series,* which was first broadcasted in 2019. This series is a remake of the original Disney Channel movie *High School Musical* (2006), and its plot revolves around the lives and experiences of the protagonists of a high school musical which is based on in the story-line of the aforementioned film. Due to the wide time frame between the two programs, the characters that appear respectively in each one of them present quite a few discrepancies and differences regarding behaviour, agency, and beliefs. For instance, Kourtney, the best friend of the protagonist of the remake, defines herself as a feminist who intends to dismantle the patriarchy (Federle 2019a, 05:10). This simple statement is of great importance since it implies that, through her, the influential Disney franchise presents for the first time in its history a character who, apart from declaring herself

an intersectional feminist (Federle 2019a, 09:10), displays post-feminist behaviour. However, does Kourtney embody post-feminist characteristics as firmly as Disney makes it seem at first glance? The purpose of this work is to prove that, beyond the progress that the company wants to show to the public, Kourtney continues to adhere to the norms of the traditional patriarchal canon.

To answer this question, this essay is going to analyse various episodes of the aforementioned series. The essay will consist of the introduction of a characteristic of post-feminism, followed by a preview of why Disney makes the spectator believe that Kourtney adheres to the current of post-feminist thought. Each section will conclude with a deeper analysis of the behaviour of the mentioned character which will intend to illustrate that she is not post-feminist, together with an explanation of the various reasons that lead to that judgment. The first topic to be discussed will be the post-feminist empowerment through the use of body language and fashion. Secondly, it will deal with misconduct disguised as recoding of words that carry negative connotations and which are generally associated with women, as is the case of the noun "bitch." It will then deal with Kourtney's false projection of autonomy and agency, to end up analysing the character in relation to post-feminist individualism

Body and Fashion as Tools for Empowerment

The history of humanity has almost always been culturally conditioned by the objectification of women's bodies. Across the years, femininity has generally been considered a bodily property that subjects and ties women to men (Gill 2007, 149). Contrary to that, the authors of this new tendency state that "the female body [needs to] be considered fundamental" (Adriaens 2009, 1). They define the body as a focal point in emphasizing women's liberation and in demonstrating the empowering possibilities of reconfigured femininity (McRobbie 2004b, 256; Gwynne and Muller 2013, 3; Banet-Weiser 2018, 153). This implies that "the conventional manners of articulating femininity […] do not conflict with female power anymore" (Adriaens 2009, 5); rather, they serve as a tool that women may use in order to illustrate their renewed options and opportunities, as well as define themselves not as objects, but as subjects. Then, according to these statements, in a post-feminist environment, the body needs to be understood as an essential part in "the work of identity formation and performance of the self" (Blue 2013a, 58).

On many occasions, the mentioned self-expression is carried out through the interaction with fashion, considering that it is assumed that the outside appearance may be a

window to the individual's interior life (Gill 2007, 150; Blue 2013a, 58). In *High School Musical: The Musical: The Series* it can be seen how Kourtney, the supposed post-feminist character, corroborates this statement since her continuous changes in clothing and hairstyle propitiate the assumption that physical image or style constitute one of the most obvious female signifiers for her (Davies 2002, 284). In fact, in her second appearance in the series, she already mentions that "looking [that] fabulous" (Federle 2019a, 09:07) is a job for her, reinforcing the idea that she considers it something almost mandatory. Later on, it becomes a compulsory duty for her, as she is chosen to be part of the costume-making committee for the musical that will be performed in her high school. After an unfortunate fire damages both the theatre and most of the props, Kourtney confesses that she feels like "[she] lost a piece of [her] spirit when those costumes went up in flames" (Castells-Esquivel 2019, 01:16). Moreover, although being the protagonist's best friend and appearing in 9 of the 10 episodes that constitute the series, the average time of her presence on screen is approximately of 5 minutes per episode. In spite of that, throughout the season she is seen with a total of 18 different outfits, in which she combines all sorts of extravagant and colourful clothes made with materials ranging from denim to feathers. Apart from that, Kourtney also adds flashy hair accessories, earrings, jewellery, and even different manicures to her already showy looks. With this, she remarks on the idea that, as a post-feminist, fashion, physical appearance, and, by extension, the body represent some of the basic principles for her when trying to create and define her identity.

Thus, at first glance, Disney makes Kourtney look like an empowered post-feminist character with enough freedom to decide what she wants to wear and how she wants others to perceive her. However, when examined in more detail, it may be seen how the strength she projects is nothing more than a mask. Angela McRobbie introduced the concept of "post-feminist masquerade" to insinuate that girls and young women have the misconception that exaggerated femininity expressed through fashion represents their liberation (McRobbie 2007, 725). This theory states that what this magnification actually does is contribute to the creation of a false self at the service of traditional physical stereotypes (McRobbie 2007, 725; Blue 2013a, 57). This implies that women are invited to believe that they are making their decisions on their own, when the reality is that they are unconsciously adhering to a set of stringent rules that are conceived as culturally acceptable and desirable (Gill 2007, 149-152; Marston 2012, 1). Additionally, the concept also conveys the idea that the final purpose of projecting that security is to hide insecurities.

It may be identified in Kourtney's behaviour how her "choice[s] and self-expression via physical appearance and adherence to trends" (Blue 2013a, 58-59) hide her fears and weaknesses. For instance, Miss Jenn, the theatre teacher, offers her to replace Gina in the musical when she has to leave town for family reasons. When Kourtney first receives the proposal – and considering that there are only a couple of hours left before the premiere –, she looks insecure, doubtful, and nervous. However, she decides to accept, and right after that, she begins to worry about "what [she is] gonna wear" (Goldstick 2019, 02:46-02:59). This may illustrate that she uses beauty and her body to create a false sense of security and thus be able to feel "happier, stronger or healthier" (Beail, Lupo, and Beail 2018, 127). In fact, later in that same episode, Gina comes back by surprise during the performance. Kourtney looks completely relieved when she notices Gina in the backstage, as that means she can quit acting and that she has the chance to go back to doing what makes her feel safe, which is clothing and make-up (Goldstick 2019, 16:16). The same happens in the tech rehearsal that they do in the El Rey theatre, when Miss Jenn asks Kourtney to sing in order to check the sound system and the microphone levels. Although being aware that she has nothing to be ashamed of because she knows that she has a wonderful voice – since she admits singing in church –, she laughs nervously and tells the teacher that she is "not an actor" (Castells-Esquivel 2019, 14:46-14:53). This exposes that she feels scared or uncomfortable about having to put aside the job she is accustomed to for doing something she does not feel confident enough about, like acting. This demonstrates that she does not use fashion to prove her agency and freedom, but as a mask or defence that provides her with a comfort zone. Then, the idea that she uses fashion and corporal expression for post-feminist and empowering purposes is dismantled.

Recoding of Words or "Bitch Behaviour"

The stream of thought also promotes the revision of words that were traditionally used to negatively define women. Their intention is to reverse the meanings of those words to use the negative characteristics that they represent as tools to their advantage. For instance, women are stigmatized as "bitches" whenever they do not adhere to the patriarchal canon of femininity (Marston 2012, 1). This means that acting assertively, dominantly, manipulatively, ambitiously, or viciously, makes women be automatically categorised as bitches (Stevenson 2016, 107). In fact, "a bitch is essentially female because what makes her a bitch is her overexpression of certain masculine qualities" (Stevenson, 114). Ironically, these qualities are considered widely acceptable, natural, and even positive when associated with men. The explanation to this controversy lies in the fact that, when women did not stick to the rules of

patriarchy, men saw their dominance conditioned, and their entire social structure modified. As a method of coping with the situation, they used the strategy of associating the concept of bitch in a pejorative sense with women (Freeman 1970, 226). Their intention with this was to isolate and discredit a class of people that they considered that did not conform well to the socially accepted patterns of behaviour (Freeman, 226-227). As a result, they managed to make females feel somehow compelled to follow and internalize their patriarchal rules.

In 1970, activist Jo Freeman published *The Bitch Manifesto*. Even though it was not the first text written to reverse traditional assumptions, it did help to start recoding words with negative meanings, as is the case with the word bitch. In this manifesto, Freeman tried to reject the vicarious life deemed natural to women and to break with the stereotype that women are aggressive or not feminine just because they do not behave in a submissive way (Freeman 1970, 226-227). At the same time, it spread the message that acting like a bitch should be interpreted as an act of display of freedom and affirmation by self, and not of negation by others (Freeman, 227). Apart from the already mentioned, she defended that women could present qualities traditionally associated with masculinity without having to reject femininity (Freeman, 227). This happened because women did not have the necessity or obligation of acting as a "true woman" anymore, as the concept itself no longer exists (Freeman, 227). Thence, the post-feminist "bitch mentality" involves having the mindset that you can do and be anything and everything you want, even when society is telling you not to do so (Stevenson 2016, 108).

At first, Kourtney fits perfectly into the new description of bitch proposed by Freeman in her manifesto. For instance, her personality embodies some of the characteristics included or mentioned by the author: Kourtney might be considered slightly aggressive both for her continuous gesturing, and for her extremely direct and cheeky way of speaking. The clearest example of this can be seen at the beginning of the first episode when Nini and Ricky talk for the first time after he broke up with her over the summer. While they are conversing, Kourtney continually meddles in with teasing comments. Big Red, Ricky's best friend, who is also witnessing the scene and who seems to be tired of Kourtney's criticism, tells her not to interfere. Kourtney, quite rudely and abruptly, replies that he is the one who should not get involved (Federle 2019a, 01:43-05:10). Not only does this show an attitude traditionally considered quite inappropriate for a young woman, but also reinforces the idea that "[post-feminists] have loud voices and often use them" (Freeman 1970, 226). Apart from that, she also meets other mentioned requirements, such as being impulsive or having a dominant attitude –a topic which will be further discussed later in this paper. The aforementioned

impulsiveness can be seen, for example, when Kourtney shows up at Nini's house with various personal items that she has stolen from Gina. It is true that she does it as revenge and intending to defend her friend because they both suspect that it was Gina who stole Nini's phone; however, Kourtney's later preoccupation about going to jail (Dodes 2019, 16:10-16:21) and the fact that she vetoed this idea when Nini firstly proposed it (Dodes, 10:00) prove that she did not carry out this act of vandalism deliberately but on impulse. Then, by embodying several of the characteristics necessary to be considered a bitch, it may be said that Kourtney represents the post-feminist attempt to recode some of the negative substantives attributed in the past to women.

This bitch behaviour or mentality reflects the empowerment that feminists have always fantasized about (Blue 2013b, 665). However, contrary to what it seems, what post-feminists do is use this new mindset as an excuse to have licence to behave badly without being judged (McRobbie 2004a, 9). They project or embody the negative aspects of man that have always been widely accepted by the patriarchy, thus "discourag[ing] misbehaviour, [but] encourag[ing] 'bad' behaviour disguised as feminism" (McRobbie, 7-8). In fact, if Kourtney's sarcastic and shameless demeanour throughout the series is closely observed, it may be seen how her behaviour sometimes resembles that of a bully more than that of a feminist (Myers 2013, 201). With this idea in mind, the aforementioned scene between Kourtney and Big Red needs to be re-analysed taking into account the calmed, peaceful and carefree attitude that he generally has, along with the fact that she is being quite impertinent and even annoying. Then, it may be seen how Kourtney does not defend herself from Big Red's verbal attack, but that she intentionally provokes him with her insolent attitude so that later she can be threatening and defiant for pleasure. This perverse attitude is sometimes seen as causing post-feminists to help patriarchy and its standards more than harming it (Stevenson 2016, 108). This issue is associated with the presupposition of having enough power or dominance to impose ideas or make decisions on behalf of others. Thus, it may be said that the concept of post-feminist masquerade is also applicable when it comes to explaining that what women really do is not try to invert the meaning of the negative words attributed to them and demonstrate their empowerment, but rather take pride in misbehaving.

Agency

Regarding agency and determination, post-feminist women are considered to have already unbound themselves from their traditional passive constraints (Gonick 2006, 2). Instead, they have become assertive, dynamic, and rational agents who claim to have choice and autonomy

over their own lives and decisions (Gonick 2006, 2; Pomerantz, Raby, and Stefanik 2013, 188, 191-192). In relation to this, Kourtney is at first presented as an intrepid, choice-making agent who seems not a victim, but someone able to control her own life (Gwynne and Muller 2013, 2; Gill 2017, 607). For instance, after the already presented scene in which Miss Jenn encourages Kourtney to sing during the soundcheck, Seb asks her if she is planning to leave the make-up crew. Kourtney replies that she will not, but that she does not like categories (Castells-Esquivel 2019, 21:35-54). This hints that the analysed character, as a post-feminist, is open to multiple opportunities and that she knows that she is the only one with enough power and agency to decide between them all. Moreover, in her scene with Big Red in the first episode – even though it has been argued that Kourtney deliberately behaves unpleasantly (Federle 2019a, 05:10) – she proves to have plenty of attitude, perseverance, and self-confidence to do whatever she wants and defend herself against anyone.

However, throughout the series, Kourtney turns out not to be as agent as she wants to project. The clearest example of the falsity of her determination is reflected in her way to approach her conflict with Tonya Freeman: In Episode 4, Kourtney tells Nini that a senior year student has "made herself head designer [of costume crew] and vetoed every one of [her] decisions" (Magee 2019, 13:22). Nini asks her if she has notified the problem to the teacher or if she wants her to do something about it. Kourtney, trying to show full confidence in herself, replies that she does not need anyone to fight her battles for her and that "if Tonya wants to track [her] turtlenecks, [she]'ll T-bone her track pants" (Magee 2019, 13:28-13:31). Although the fashion-related undertone of the phrase seems to reinforce her post-feminist attitude, the reality is very different: when Nini tells her that she should fight back and demand respect, Kourtney replies that "[she]'ll just shut [her] mouth and focus on make-up crew" (Magee 2019, 13:44), and changes the subject immediately. This makes the viewer intuit for the first time that she is not that determined. The supposition is confirmed in the next episode when the two girls go to the bowling alley and casually meet Tonya. The senior is dressed in one of the outfits designed by Kourtney that Tonya herself vetoed for the musical (Federle 2019b, 09:16-09:38). Despite being quite angry, annoyed, and uncomfortable with the situation, Kourtney does absolutely nothing about it, nor does she let Nini do so, justifying herself by saying that a confrontation would ruin their girl's night and that she did not go there for a fight (Federle 2019b, 15:46). Thence, regardless of her apparent freedom, through her lack of determination and her cowardice, she shows that she is unconsciously called upon to be silent (McRobbie 2004b, 260). This illustrates that what post-feminism actually does is fetishize female empowerment while limiting it (Negra 2009, 4). Thus, it is proved that neither is she

as agent as she feigns nor is her freedom of choice as unconditioned as post-feminism suggests it should be.

Individualism

In addition to what has been mentioned so far, post-feminism also promotes the celebration of women's individual freedom, as opposed to the feminine collectivism suggested by the first and second waves of feminism (Banet-Weiser 2018, 154). It presupposes the liberation from patriarchal and feminist impositions since authors posit that a shift with respect to classical feminism, has occurred (Litosseliti, Gill, and García-Favaro 2019, 3). This progression implies that women, already empowered, do not require support in almost any aspect of their lives anymore. (Pomerantz, Raby, and Stefanik 2013, 186-187; Banet-Weiser 2018, 154; Litosseliti, Gill, and García-Favaro 2019, 3). Then, considering women are no longer conditioned by inequalities or power imbalances, it is assumed that their practices are – or should be – freely chosen, and that the only thing necessary for them to succeed is to make the correct decisions individually (Gill 2007, 153; Beail, Lupo, and Beail 2018, 127). However, Kourtney is neither an independent, agent person – as has been previously argued – , nor someone that lets others try or become one for themselves.

In the episode in which they go on a girls' night, Nini asks her best friend why she is so good "at sticking up for [her], but [she] can't do it for [herself]" (Federle 2019b, 15:44). With this phrase, the dynamics of their relationship and the argument presented by this paper are perfectly captured: Kourtney defends an updated brand of feminism that opposes the classical passivity of women (Lewis 2014, 1849), but she is unable to put her post-feminist theory into practice. What she does instead is trying to instil post-feminist thinking in her counterparts in order to live through them. This is what happens with her friend Nini, whom Kourtney indirectly and unconsciously tries to force to "focus upon individualism, choice and empowerment" (Gill 2007, 3). Kourtney's behaviour is, a priori, presented as something positive since she intends to encourage Nini to become the "own person" (Federle 2019a, 10:29) she states she is. This would imply that Kourtney should want her best-friend to transform herself into someone who does not depend on anyone when having to make decisions, that faces her fears and makes her dreams come true without external help. For example, when Nini is involved in a crisis that conditions her performance in the school musical, and, therefore, affects her emotionally on a personal and professional level, Kourtney supports her unconditionally and reminds her several times that "it's okay to be sad" (Magee 2019, 18:54). With this, she reinforces the idea that post-feminist women are – and need to be

– strong. Furthermore, considering that most of the problems that surround Nini's life stem from the catastrophic development of her love relationships, Kourtney intends to try to get her friend to renegotiate gender roles (Gwynne and Muller 2013, 3). To do so, she even gives a speech in song form through which she wants Nini to realize that "[she has] spent way too much time trying to see [herself] through [other's] eyes" (Federle 2019b, 17:16) and that it is the moment to threaten male control in order to be the only one with enough power to control her own decisions.

Although Kourtney seems to project a liberation speech, what her behaviour shows is that girl power is embedded in a patriarchal wave that hides beneath the celebrations of female freedom (Pomerantz, Raby, and Stefanik 2013, 189-190). In this case, it is Kourtney herself the one who develops the patriarchal function which is normally associated with male characters. For instance, at the beginning of the series, Nini claims to have matured and evolved during the summer and after her breakup with Ricky (Federle 2019a, 10:30), and it may even be seen in her actions how she seems to be self-confident and determined. Nevertheless, Kourtney mentions that she does not want to see "another boy hurt [her]" (Federle, 10:14). Not only does this suggest that she considers that Nini, as a powerful individual, should not need a heterosexual partner to define her identity (Lotz 2001, 107), but also that she perceives her best friend as being dependent and fragile. Then, with the supposed intention to protect her, she intrudes on the natural development of the relationship between Ricky and Nini by interrupting them whenever they are alone or trying to converse. This may be seen when the ex-couple speaks for the first time after their relationship ended – a conversation that Kourtney witnesses in its entirety –, but also when Nini decides to confront Ricky for auditioning for the musical. Nini believes that he had done that to confuse things and ruin her chance to be a star, but the reality is that Ricky did so to be nearer to her. When the boy tries to explain this to his ex-girlfriend, Kourtney appears out of nowhere, takes Nini by the arm, and takes her out of the conversation with an expression of both relief and satisfaction (Federle 2019a, 30:28-31:28), thus limiting Nini's authority and conditioning both her decisions and her relationship with Ricky.

In addition to that, when it comes to overcoming her fears, the analysed character does not let Nini decide when to take the plunge to confront them, but rather it is Kourtney herself who tries to rush her friend to do so. This is seen when Miss Jenn, believing that "[she is] losing [her] leading lady's focus right when [she] need[s] it the most" (Federle 2019b, 02:38), takes the two girls to karaoke. The teacher wants to show Nini that people in the room have "half [her] talent and twice [her] confidence" (Federle, 06:04), with the final purpose of

making the girl realize that she should not feel that insecure on stage. Kourtney decides to go further and tries to force Nini to step into the spotlight by signing her up to sing without her consent (Federle 2019b, 15:54). The worst thing is not that Kourtney thinks that she has enough authority over Nini to make minimal decisions for her, but that she allows herself to do so on a large scale, even going so far as to condition her academic life and future: at a time when nothing fits, the protagonist of the series considers sending an application to the performing arts school, but, for personal reasons, she decides not to do so (Kim 2019, 31:19). Kourtney, who is initially very disappointed to find out that her best friend has contemplated the idea of "spend[ing] [their] senior year without [her]" (Castells-Esquivel 2019, 05:59), then changes her mind and decides that "if [Nini] is not gonna put herself out there, [she will] do it for her" (Castells-Esquivel, 29:05), and calls the Youth Actors Conservatory to send an application on Nini's behalf. The duality of her behaviour when having to confront this situation demonstrates once again how Kourtney's character opposes what the post-feminist authors suggest since she continually conditions the decisions of her best friend and does not let Nini choose individually. Then, it is proved that neither is she independent and autonomous to decide for herself nor does she let others be so due to her semi-patriarchal, unconscious performances.

Conclusion

Thus, everything considered up to this point may lead to the assertion that Kourtney is only post-feminist in appearance since the conclusions obtained after analysing various aspects of the character prove that she does not behave in accordance with how a post-feminist is supposed to. To begin with, it has been said that post-feminist authors consider that the female body must cease to be objectified as it has traditionally been and to commence to be used as a tool for empowerment. At first, it seems that Kourtney uses her body in relation to fashion as a method of creating her empowered identity. Nevertheless, the different examples analysed have shown that what she does is to hide her fears by putting into practice the post-feminist masquerade. This concept refers to the idea of unconsciously adhering to traditional rules under the belief that you are being powerful. As it has been proved, the notion is also applicable to other areas, such as the attempt to reverse the negative connotation associated with the concept of bitch. Post-feminists defend bitch behaviour – which implies behaving in a way that is typically considered masculine – as a way of proving their empowerment, thus stopping the word bitch from being considered something negative. However, it has been demonstrated that projecting such behaviour is only an excuse for misbehaving without being

judged or condemned by others. In addition to that, it has also been argued that post-feminism suggests that women are agents and that they have the ability to choose for themselves. Contrary to that, the analysed character has been proved to be unable to face the injustices carried out by her senior enemy, which illustrates that she does not possess this quality considered basic for post-feminism. Finally, it has been shown that Kourtney is not an individual or an independent person and that she also conditions the possibilities that others are. This is especially seen reflected in her way of interfering in Nini's life and deciding for her, considering that Kourtney's behaviour is sometimes more like that of a patriarchal persona than that of someone who has previously – and repeatedly – projected speeches associated with liberation and empowerment. All these lead to the conclusion that, although the Disney franchise has tried to adapt and reflect the progressive evolution of feminism in its programs, the company still sends the classic patriarchal and old-fashioned message to its audience.

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