In the Hollywood hit movie Elektra, actress Jennifer Garner plays the role of a Marvel Comics super heroine. She is an assassin for hire and is gifted with the art of Kimaguraia: a limited ability to see the future. Throughout the film she is fighting the battle between good and evil. In fighting this battle she becomes friends with Mark and Abby Miller, whom she has been paid to assassin. In doing all of this super girl fighting she is portrayed as smart, strong, mysterious, seductive, and sexy. Elektra seems to have the perfect amount of male as well as female attributes. Thus leading us to our discussion of gender and the media.

Gender roles in films have seemed to transform during the past few years. In movies such as Elektra, women have begun to take over the roles that men traditionally held, such as that of the super hero. However women still continue to be sexualized even as they attempt to look tuff. This sexualization has been existing since Wonder Woman was around and continues to exist in movies such as Elektra. With the use of women playing male roles, film makers have begun to target both male and female audiences. In the article, Men and Women’s Conflicting responses, by Brenda Cooper, she mentions that “The implications for how women and men read film narratives are profound: they see different plots—indeed different movies—based on the cultural subjectivities they bring to their film experiences” (p. 34). So while a female might sit threw Elektra and think that this is a good way of women getting their vengeance, a male might be thinking how cool it would be to get beat up by a hot woman dressed in red spandex. Just like men are known for loving action movies, now women can share in that experience with movies such as Elektra. Although two people might be sitting side by side in the movie theater, they
might both be getting two different experiences which most likely have to do with their life experiences. And such life experiences are usually determined based on their gender.

In his article, “Wake Up!”: Narratives of Masculine Epiphany in Millennial Cinema, Daniel Tripp discusses masculinity as portrayed in the media. “Masculinity, then is not a stable essence with which men identify by nature: rather, it is an effect of the consumption and remediation of gendered images” (p. 187). I understand Tripp to mean that nature has not given men their masculine qualities, but rather that they are learned through images that are shown to them from a young age. Thus when men watch movies such as Elektra or other action films, one perception of reality (their regular life) is being exchanged for another perception (an actor in a movie). With movies such as Elektra the role of protagonist is being taken away from men and thus other media texts such as music, television, and magazines are beginning to fill that gap by giving men more of what they like to see.

In summary, although it might be fun to live out one’s fantasies through films, it is important to recognize the role that gender plays in the media that we consume. The images that we broadcast to our children are shaping the way that they will view femininity and masculinity. Do we want our young men to expect every woman to be beautiful such as Elektra? Do we want every young lady to feel that she has to be a super heroine? Although many times the answer to these questions is that all we have to do is teach our children that these performances are all fantasy. But even though most adults know that movies are fantasies, does that stop them from picking up gender traits and characteristics from modern media?