Gender identity: Exam preparation task 1

“One is not born a woman, one becomes a woman” (Simone de Beauvoir on The Second Sex. Questionnaire, 1975)

“There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; ... identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results”
“Gender is a performance and gender lifestyle magazines provide the script for this performance”
(Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble).

“Identity is complicated. Everyone thinks they’ve got one. Magazines and talk show hosts urge us to explore our ‘identity’. Religious and national identities are at the heart of the major international conflicts. Artists play with the idea of ‘identity’ in the modern society. Blockbuster movie superheroes have emotional conflicts about their ‘true’ identity. And the average teenager can create three online ‘identities’ before breakfast...Thinking about self-identity and individuality can cause some anxiety – at least in cultures where individuals are encouraged to value their personal uniqueness. Each of us would like to think – to some extent – that we have special, personal qualities, which make us distinctive and valuable to the other people in our lives (or potential future friends). But does this mean anything? Is individuality an illusion? Maybe we are all incredibly similar, but are programmed to value minuscule bits of differentiation.”

Task 1: **Explain** these three statements: Are the three of them saying the same, using different words?

Task 2: **Analyse** two examples of your choice, taken from two different media platforms, in order to **discuss** (either for or against) these statements. Your examples should include one negative representation (detrimental) and one positive (empowering) representation of women in the media.