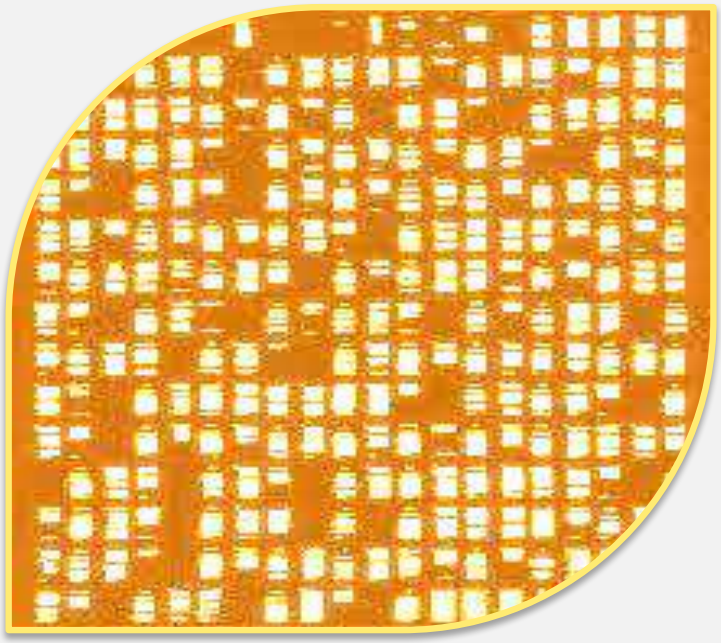
Mystiques

a feminist homage to Roland Barthes



pop essays by

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A feminist homage to Roland Barthes

I've always regarded *Mythologies* (1957) as the liveliest of Roland Barthes' works. The collection is full of humour and surprises. No reader can predict what the next topic will be, whether it is washing powder, wrestling, strip-tease, or decorative cooking. Years after his death, Barthes lives on in university reading lists and thesis bibliographies, on the shelves of cosy second-hand bookshops, and in the repetition of iconic phrases such as 'death of the author'. A decadent Hermès scarf was recently dedicated to his memory (Wampole 2015). Less recognised, however, are Barthes' contributions to feminist discourse analysis.

These contributions are both direct and indirect. Barthes was, at best, a proto-feminist: someone who was capable of seeing gender rather than taking it for granted as 'natural' or permanent. Occasionally, these insights were stated explicitly, such as in the *Mythologies* 'novels and children' essay. Barthes makes explicit a subtextual pattern in women's magazines, a discourse that carves out spaces of emancipation for female novelists while simultaneously reinforcing domestic limitations to those freedoms: 'Let them write as much as they like, let them decorate their condition, but above all, let them not depart from it' and 'enjoy a free rein for a while, but quickly come back…' (p.50). The same could be said of Barthes' unpacking of gender and patriarchy: that it goes so far, and no further. Gender does not form the core of his work in the way it became integral to other projects on discourse, philosophy of language, and representation (Das 1996; Butler 1990; Spivak 1981,1985,1988). Aside from the relatively few overt discussions of gender roles, Barthes' contributions to feminist scholarship are indirect. His interpretive methods, with his campy and unapologetic style of presenting them, has opened the door for a particular type of audacious feminist critical discourse analysis.

Readers disagree on whether Barthes was a constructivist – that is, someone who primarily interprets texts as consequences of prevailing power dynamics, or a poststructuralist, that is, someone who sees discourse as decentralised and constitutive of power dynamics in society. Barthes' reliance on Saussure would place him in the constructivist camp, while his attention to fashion, lifestyle, and

multiple layers of significance in texts suggests that his interpretation is not strictly limited to a structural conception of power and social change. Culler (1983) observes that Barthes moved from constructivism towards poststructuralism over the duration of his career. In much feminist scholarship, the middle ground between acknowledging systemic, structural violence – in particular, patriarchy – and recognising agency and potential even at the margins, is a sturdy foundation for an analysis of power and situated knowledge.

In her research for *The Feminine Mystique*, which the reader will recognise as the namesake of this volume, Betty Friedan conducted her own discourse analysis of sorts. She monitored the frequency of different types of 'happy endings' in short stories in women's magazines over several decades, finding that fiction of the 1930s was more likely to feature a heroine achieving a professional victory, rather than a romantic or domestic one, which became more common in the 1950s. However, *The Feminine Mystique* does not examine the content of these stories in any greater detail than whether they ended with a husband or an adventure. Late 20th century feminist attention to texts themselves, and the power relations of their production and dissemination, owes at least a tip of the hat to Saussure, Barthes and other old school figures of discourse analysis.

One of the founding texts of radical feminism within the 'western' tradition, Kate Millett's (1969) *Sexual Politics*, relies on literary interpretation to expose patriarchal conventions. For this work, Millett read 'against the grain' of famous American novels to demonstrate the violent construction of masculinities and femininities through the canon's instances of male abuse against women, and the framing of such abuse as sexually normative. Some classify *Sexual Politics* as primarily psychoanalytic, due to its focus on Freud (Weedon 1987). However, this perspective should be balanced against Millett's wide scope of discussion on discourse and power, which ranges from sex scenes in American fiction to the historical origins of patriarchy in colonial conquest. Radical feminist attention to violence does not replicate Barthes' blithe and carefree tone, for obvious reasons. His subjectivity emerges from indulgence in red wine, photography, and vaguely orientalist holidays in Japan (Barthes 1970); their subjectivities stem from abuse, erasure, and sheer survival. Nevertheless, radical feminists such as Kate Millett (1969), Mary Daly (1978), Audre Lorde

(1984) and Andrea Dworkin (1974), share his style of deconstructing symbolic politics with blunt and disruptive language.

Since the days of the so-called 'second wave', subsequent works have used qualitative visual and textual interpretation to shed light on gendered dimensions of consumerism and the beauty industry (Wolf 1990, military culture (Enloe 1983), racialised misogyny (Willis 2010; Hill Collins 2004) and, crucially, to interrupt the prejudices of the Euro-american feminist canon itself (Mohanty 1988; Spivak 1988). Poststructuralist feminist analysis gained popularity in the 1990s, and works such as Judith Butler's (1990) *Gender Trouble* can be justifiably described as canonical for 21st century feminist readers. Discourse analysis is an excellent tool for emancipatory scholarship 'from below', because of its ability to unpack established social orders, and to recognise ideologies as discursively constructed social facts rather than 'natural', immutable truths. For this reason, critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a common methodology for critical scholars of gender, race, empire, class, and other hegemonic intersections (Fairclough 1995; Lazar 2005).

New myths, new thinkers

No doubt my students felt the pressure of these legacies, because they felt uncomfortable writing their *Mythologies*-style vignettes. Each author was a candidate for the 2015-16 MSt in Women's Studies and a member of my *Gender, Discourse, and Representation* option class, and no doubt feeling the pressure of their first year in graduate-level education. Untethered to standard essay formats and standardised methods of persuasion and proof, they reported feeling insecure about putting their insights on paper. This in itself is a lesson on the production of authoritative discourses: a lesson on who is presumed (and presumes himself) to be a reliable narrator.

I had half hoped that writing their 'mystiques' would serve as a confidence-building exercise. However, I did not wish for the class to start mimicking the overconfident persona that some overly-privileged authors inhabit. We discussed how to strike this balance, as the students constructively critiqued each other's draft essays in class. Instead of elevating their individual perspectives onto the pedestal of a singular 'author, authority' (hooks 1989, 108), the collection and the collective nature of this project highlights the validity of multiple critical perspectives and multiple epistemic standpoints. In this spirit, I

hope this small collection does justice to feminist plurality, while also strengthening the authors' sense of voice and the legitimacy of their perspectives. I'm proud of them, and of their accomplishments since graduating in Summer 2017.

The writers chose a dazzling variety of topics. The first essay of this volume, Miriam Kilimo's commentary on 'black women's natural hair', was well-received by the class for its nuance. It is a complex interpretation explained in the clearest of terms. I've placed it first in the volume in part because its subject, black women's hair, connects with feminist theories of networks, textiles, and weaving, which I discuss below. Kristina Kampfer's piece on racialised discourses towards immigrants in Germany considers silences and absences, as well as existing texts, provoking her to ask, rhetorically: 'So if no one is racist, is everyone racist?'. Scarlett Cockerill's lighthearted yet trenchant reading of campaigns for national unity in the Scottish referendum campaign, makes a link between the sexual contract and the social contract in the imagined communities of nationalism. Two longform essays are also included. Jessica Rahman-Gonzalez illuminates the logic of gift exchange in beauty bloggers' spoken, written, and visual output, drawing upon concepts of reciprocity and hyper-reality from Mauss and Kierkegaard. Scarlett Cockerill investigates the use of Twitter as a space of collective narrative formation and the creation of epistemic and linguistic possibilities for sexual violence survivors.

The range of texts in this collection, from 'black hair' to 'hashtag feminism', might seem scattered. However, there is more cohesion to these texts than is initially apparent. Below, I draw a thread through text and textiles, community and network formation, and imagining feminist futures.

In *Gyn/Ecology* (1978), Daly calls for 'spinsters' (weavers and free women) to 'spin cosmic tapestries' of biophilic, universalist feminist networks. What *Gyn/Ecology* overlooked (in addition to racialised, postcolonial, and transgendered feminist claims to dignity) was the material technologies that enabled this dreaming: the 'webs' of the internet that were in the making at the time of *Gyn/Ecology*'s publication. Domestic technologies of weaving led to the creation of punch-cards for programming looms, which in turn became a precursor to the binary system of computers and other devices. Coding was long treated as a form of administrative work and was therefore

dominated by young women, before the field became saturated with men towards the end of the 20th century.

The women whose contributions were long ignored are currently being rediscovered in popular culture: women such as Ada Lovelace, Jean Bartik and Margaret Hamilton. After the 2013 launch of the Mars Orbiter Mission, the India Space Research Organisation (ISRO) released a series of photographs of the scientists celebrating the launch. Contrary to Hollywood depictions of white male American rocketeers in white, sterile settings, the real scientists wore florid saris and kameezes, and some wove lush marigold blossoms into their long plaits. On Twitter, 'Sister Jules' at @missyjack commented, 'to those who make sci-fi TV/movies – this is what real scientists who have just launched a Mars mission look like'.

This counternarrative redirects long overdue credit towards worthy individual accomplishments. However, the story of women's creation of space age networks should also be understood in collective terms, spanning thousands of years of human sociality. If there is a suppressed feminist 'herstory' to the common androcentric narrative of male-dominated science and technology, it is a story of how women's roles evolved from the creation of language and abstract thought as a fixer of human relationships (Dunbar 1996), to developing domestic 'arts and crafts' that are dismissed as trivial even as they support bare survival and facilitate unprecedented technological possibilities. Women's social reproduction grew from language to loom to laptops and back to language again, back to the words you are reading right now. The 'cosmic tapestries' Daly imagined were not merely an esoteric concept of female solidarity, but an existing set of tools that led to mass communication and the facilitation of feminist partnerships over vast geographical distances.

This collective story integrates universalist themes of maternal love within and beyond kinship networks, maternal struggles for survival, and the creation of text and technology to safeguard these networks. Appealingly so. However, there is a less benign story within. A story of language, literacy, and information coding as integral to the rise of state rule and with it, state conquest: globalised and imperialist political and economic regimes. Women's role in the creation of these tools poses a challenge to romanticised narratives of 'universal sisterhood' such as those identified by Daly. I've reflected on the interconnectedness of our stories and our technical ability to share

them, in order to show the possibility of a 'deep story' with more resonance for feminine subjects than the stories globalisation likes to tell about itself. Whether this deep story is a valid alternative, and whether it can subvert white androcentric creation myths, is a choice I leave to the reader.

Wrapping up: if we think laterally, we can see that this short collection draws a full circle from plaited/unplaited natural hair, to imagined national allegiances, to online webs of inspiration and solidarity for gender-critical thinkers. It's not just the message but the medium too. *Mystiques* is an open access publication, one of the first to be published by the Oxford Feminist E-Press (OxFEP) of the International Gender Studies Centre at LMH, University of Oxford. It is available for free, to all, online, and may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes under the Creative Commons license. OxFEP is based at a university whose own international branding calls to mind an opaque and exclusionary 'myth', one of dreaming spires, black robes thrown absentmindedly over tweed suits, and wrought-iron gates that are both aesthetically impressive and locked shut to outsiders. Sadly, the prestige of higher education is still at least partly a function of its exclusivity. Feminist scholars typically feel compelled to resist and dismantle these mythologies of prestige, since the legitimacy of feminist research rests upon its epistemic plurality and decolonising methods (Naples 2003; Harding and Norberg 2005; Smith 1999; Ramazanoglu and Holland 2002). A feminist at an 'ivy league institution', I think, identifies more with the 'ivy' than the 'institution', growing alongside ancient walls and eventually crumbling them. Open-access publishing with high editorial standards is one way for academic institutions to move towards education without barriers, to make boundless our learning.

As you read on, you will see that this tribute to Barthes is nothing as grand as a sassy mid-century French lifestyle magazine or an avant-garde silk scarf. All the same, I hope it will plant some feminist flowers upon the grave of its muse, and inspire its readers to author their own 'mystiques'.

Dr Kerrie Thornhill
Oxford, UK, October 2016

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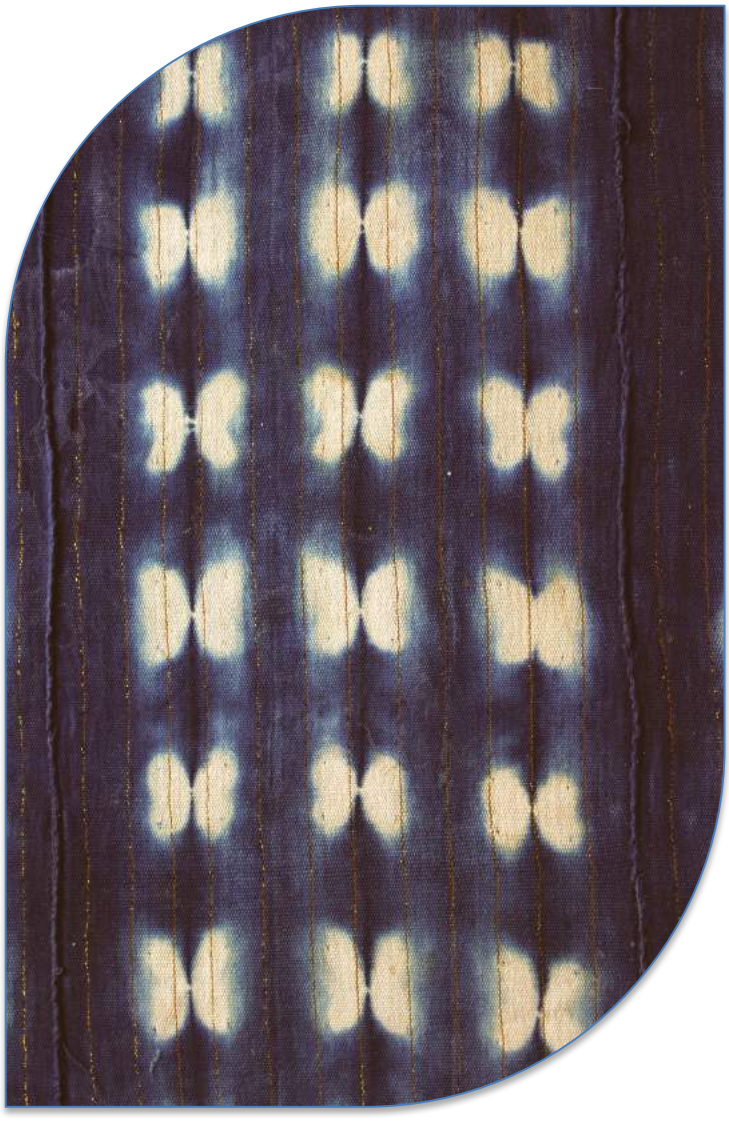
Short format essays



The Taliah Waajid World Natural Hair, Health and Beauty Show convenes every year in Atlanta, Georgia, in the United States. The expo is one of numerous conventions, hair shows, and natural hair meet-ups held worldwide nowadays, gatherings primed on shifting the black woman's focus to her natural hair, defined as her hair as it grows from her scalp. Though the Taliah Waajid show claims to be in its 19th year, the natural hair euphoria has only recently captivated black women around the world, from those in the diaspora to those living in Africa. This new movement is not reminiscent of the 70s and 80s eras of afros and the jerry curl. This natural hair movement is a whole new epoch characterized by imaginative vocabulary and creative ways of maintaining the black woman's hair, ranging from pre-pooing and big chopping to doing twist outs and protective styles. At the heart of the movement is the motivation to eschew white female beauty standards by encouraging black women to wear their hair in its natural state. In providing the forum like the convention, the Taliah Waajid show acts as a broker of the natural hair movement, ostensibly edging the black woman away from the white woman's long straight hair to her original mane found in a destination called 'natural'. The convention brings together all who claim to know the way back to natural: entrepreneurs and professional hair stylists and manufacturers. All those who claim to have discovered new secrets of mastering the textures of black women's hair, who can woo the black woman to taking the plunge to natural, and if she has already, to forging deeper into the natural.

Poster advertising the Taliah Waajid World Natural Hair & Beauty Show
Source: Taliah Waajid World Natural Hair Show Facebook

But what is natural for the black woman? Can a return to an aboriginal, to hair as it grows from her roots, be considered natural? From her birth, what is natural always expands beyond the hair that grows on her head to the community that partakes in maintaining it. It is natural for her, as a child, to have a caretaker fuss over how to tame her hair. Should she hot comb or blow dry or let it matt? How should this black child be presented before people? If she were to shave the hair that grows on her baby head in patches, would it grow back with the same soft baby-haired texture? When the decision to cut her hair has been made, and it grows out kinky and coily, the black child might choose, as a teenager, to get a relaxer in the hopes of easing its maintenance. The relaxer will break the protein bonds that cause her hair to spiral into itself. For the black woman with a tighter coil pattern, the sodium hydroxide will loosen the bonds, causing the hair to uncoil into a straight mane. Her counterpart with a looser coil pattern would have to use less of the chemical relaxer, lest the intensity of the alkali results in hair loss. Yet this decision, seemingly her own, was probably based on looking at her natural surroundings. Perhaps her female relatives with relaxed hair, who seem to have shortened the time they use to maintain their hair. Or perhaps she was influenced by the inconvenience of constant blow-drying, which straightens the hair, but only until the locks absorb moisture and shrink, the coils transforming into the afro against which she constantly battles. When she finally relaxes her hair, she will move into a new set of experiences, ones that are nonetheless primed as a natural experience of the black woman. She will visit hair salons to "treat" her newly relaxed hair. She will buy conditioner and treatment, products that will keep the protein ends of her hair less brittle. She will relax her hair again when the unrelaxed hair grows out, taking care not to let the chemical touch her scalp or the already relaxed hair. She will keep it out of the rain lest it falls apart. She will enlist a salonist to help her maintain this look, a fellow black woman in many instances. Throughout her life, she will keep drawing others into the frame of her hair care journey. A journey that is as natural for her as it was for those with hair like hers. Her hair, a black woman's hair, cared for under a communal auspices, becomes the expression of what is natural.

Photo credit: Michael Wilson

And so the natural hair movement, in being framed as a movement, extends the understanding of what constitutes natural. The movement proclaims that natural is the hair that grows out of the black woman's scalp. For Taliah Waajid, as the title suggests, natural hair becomes linked to health and beauty. Embracing one's natural hair makes one healthy and beautiful, and by extension, as a video on the Taliah Waajid Facebook page proposes, "That's when the tears stop falling." When a black woman allows herself to wear her hair in its natural state, she becomes truly herself, not subjected to the distress of having to manipulate her hair to fit the white standard of beauty. But going natural is more than a rejection of the white standard of beauty. As a child, what was natural was partaking in the communal care of her hair – allowing her caretaker to dictate her hairstyle and allowing a hair stylist to relax her hair as a teenager. As a member of the natural hair movement, going natural is individualizing her hair experience, focusing on an inner beauty unmediated by chemical manipulation or an unacknowledged desire to conform to whiteness. To go natural is to focus on the business of health and beauty.

But one cannot go natural alone, even though the movement individualizes hair care. In the video on the Taliah Waajid Facebook page, a young black boy is the one who sings to young black girls, telling them to embrace their beauty just the way God made them. Some of the girls smile in their natural hairstyles, some hold up posters that declare the beauty of natural hair, some are in the hair salon, but all of them remain silent as the boy becomes the voice encouraging

them to join the natural hair movement. The boy – an external figure without the experience of having a black woman's hair – is the one who ushers them into the natural hair community. Though he claims that God made them that way, he appears as the purveyor of the new beauty standard, the black man who assures the black woman of his acceptance even as she wears her hair natural. The natural is no longer only what she once experienced with the community that cared for hair. The natural is now also a state that can be set up and dismantled by the black male.

The young black boy singing in a hair salon
Source: Taliah Waajid World Natural Hair Show Facebook

The natural hair movement also entails the use of multiple products and involving hair regimens necessary for attaining the "perfect" braid outs or twist-outs. Natural extends the communal hair care experience to an online global community, where multiple YouTube channels and blogs have sprouted to offer advice to the black woman as she embarks on this new journey. Platforms that come laden with numerous overlapping routines that promise to help her grow her hair from TWA (teeny-weeny-afro) to waist-length. To ease the process of maintaining her natural hair, she will wear it in protective styles, which mainly involve braiding, weaving, wigging, tucking the ends of her hair or covering it in order to shield it from excessive humidity and cold. She will wear synthetic or human hair extensions of Chinese-factory, Peruvian, Brazilian or Indian origins. Though she maintains her hair as it grows from her scalp, she still remains natural when she chooses to wear braids or wigs or weaves. She has the power to

naturalize what was not natural before; to reframe the white beauty standard. To wear a straight hair wig is no longer to ape a white woman's long straight hair, but to use the wig as a tool for maintaining her new natural, her hair as it grows from her scalp.

Hence, the natural hair movement is no less natural than the hair care experience that characterized the black woman's childhood and teenagehood. When the black woman chooses to have relaxed or natural hair, she is only choosing the meaning of what her natural will be. But deciding over what is natural, in a time when natural hair is understood as black kinky hair (just as relaxed hair is seen to mimic the white woman's hair), reveals how 'natural' relates to blackness. Consider the experiences of black women in the diaspora and those living in Africa. What is natural for a black diasporic woman may be the inability of many hair shops in the diaspora to cater to black hair. Or the absence of black hair care products in mainstream beauty chain shops that claim to provide black hair care products, yet offer a limited selection of gels and creams, and mostly those that straighten a black woman's hair to mimic a white woman's. And so her blackness is based on an understanding of 'natural' as the absence of blackness. But what may be natural for the black African woman is the absence of hair salons in her environment that cater to white women's hair. Her natural is a blackness based on an understanding of 'natural' as the ubiquity of blackness. The natural hair movement, with its unifying global appeal and new hair regimens, at once harmonizes the experiences of black women across the diaspora and Africa, yet also reminds us that natural is only natural within the context of the interlocutor. Having natural hair is both having to choose between the ease of maintenance and the vicissitudes of buying endless bottles of new conditioners and shea butters and coconut oil. To go natural is not just having one's hair as it grows from the scalp, but also partaking in a global exchange that reconstitutes what it means to have natural hair. Ultimately, to have a black woman's hair is to be born and to live with hair that constantly shifts through spheres of naturalness.

Appendix:

For this essay, I drew from my observation of the Taliah Waajid Natural Hair, Health and Beauty, which I stumbled upon while looking for information about natural hair care, and my own lived experience as a black woman with a black salonist mother, who

has worn the 'typical hairstyles' associated with black women at various stages of her life, (these include relaxed and natural hair, braids, weaves and wigs). In this revised essay, I have sought to problematize the understanding of 'natural' through showing how black women's hair complicates notions of what is natural and how the natural is constructed. I had initially used the Taliah Waajid show as an entry point to an analysis of how black women are often dissociated from ownership of their hair, as different entities constantly speak to and about their experiences – be it black men who indicate their preferences, white women who question black women about their hair, or who 'discover' and subsequently wear black hair styles, and the manufacturers or hairdressers who participate in the manipulation of her hair. This approach takes after Patricia Hill Collins' (2004) discursive engagement in *Black Sexual Politics* and Maria del Guadalupe Davidson's (2010) "'You…You Remind Me of...' A Black Feminist's Rejection of the White Imagination."

However, on further reflection, I opted to reframe my essay as an analysis of the term 'natural,' which underlies the basis of the natural hair movement. I have taken the rejection of white beauty standards as a given within the natural hair movement, thus enabling me to turn my attention to the diverse meanings of 'natural' within the phenomenological experiences of black women who choose to wear different hair styles. This approach also allows me move beyond a simple discussion of racialized understandings of black women's hair, which, in falling under discourses of the black female body, becomes a subject that has been variously discussed in different blogs and articles, for example through themes on black female agency or the objectification of black women through the white imagination. Instead, I have narrowed my focus to the natural hair movement to illustrate how focusing on a single terminology complicates the meanings of what constitutes the black woman's natural hair.

To construct the essay, I used elements of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1989), semiotic analysis (Berger 1991) and visual argumentative theory (Birdsell and Grorke 1996). Under critical discourse analysis and in line with Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional axes (1989), I positioned the black woman's hair as a text, focusing on the Taliah Waajid show (description), a black woman's relationship to her own hair (interpretation) and her hair within a larger social context (explanation). I analyzed the title of the Taliah

Waajid itself and one of the videos on its Facebook page, showing how the convention reframes our understanding of what is natural. I illustrated how the concept of natural functions in the greater social context within which meanings around a black woman's hair are constructed. These contexts include black political consciousness and ideas around beauty standards, especially in relation to white women. Hence, the essay illuminates how both institutionalized entities and lived experiences attain the power to construct what becomes understood as natural.

Semiotic analysis and visual argumentative theory have also informed my use of critical discourse analysis. In this essay, both semiotic analysis and visual argumentative theory complement each other. In the former, the black woman's hair is a sign around which an entire system of meanings of what is natural can be recast. In the latter, I have shown how the black woman's hair functions as a visual metaphor[1], where the immediate visual context becomes inextricably linked to the visual cultures that surround understandings of her *natural* hair. Both semiotic analysis and visual argumentative theory have relied on my own cultural memory and emotional memory of my lived experience. By mentioning the Taliah Waajid show and other examples of black women's experiences, I triangulated my conclusions in order to complement my own reflexivity, which nonetheless remains central to the construction of the essay.

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[1] My descriptions of visual metaphor, cultural memory and emotional memory are based on Wekesa's interpretation: Wekesa, Nyongesa Ben. "Cartoons Can Talk? Visual Analysis of Cartoons on the 2007/2008 Post-election Violence in Kenya: A Visual Argumentation Approach." *Discourse & Communication* 6, no. 2, 223-38.

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Shades of Grey, by Kristina Kampfer

There is a blank space in the German public discourse: The term *race* (in German: *Rasse*) has been eradicated from the political vocabulary. It took a French philosopher talking about this phenomenon in her country for me to realize that the same holds true for Germany. There is, of course, a reason for this: The Third Reich and the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime have left their mark upon our society, our politics, and our non-existing sense of national identity, but moreover upon our language. The term itself ended up in a drawer, which remains closed for most of the time. If opened, it is solely for the purpose of history. Outside this realm, *race* functions as a marker on behalf of the person using it as someone with a right-wing attitude and gives the surrounding people more than just a shiver (I am speaking out of experience). It has become an unspeakable term. The underlying logic this myth follows seems to be: If we do not use the term, what it describes does not exist. But what are actually the consequences of this eradication?

Racial discrimination cannot be contested with ignorance, as the German example illustrates most obviously at the moment. In light of the rising number of asylum seekers and refugees seeking shelter, asylum and refugee policies have become the pivot of public debates. But these are distorted by the impossibility to account for racism: Following a particular post-racial ideology adapted as a response to World War II, the absence of debates on racism leaves behind an uneasy void. This attitude, which I deliberately named post-racism, resembles the bad of what the popular prefix *post* can denote. It can designate a move beyond, but in critical engagement with the term it is attached to (e.g. post-structuralism and post-modernism). This is not the case for the phenomenon at stake. Like post-feminism, the debate about racism is rendered unnecessary as we seem to be blind in the right eye. For feminism, gender equality cannot be achieved by omitting the demanding, painful, and exhausting debate on existing forms of gender oppression. The same holds true for racial discrimination: Not talking about it does not eliminate what we pretend to have overcome. Instead, it slowly deteriorates our society, values, and political system from inside. This silence, which fills the void, speaks louder than words and locks us in stalemate: We cannot talk about something we do not name. History has taught us that racial

discrimination is not only fallacious but also deadly. We cannot debate whether *race* is an ontological, materialist category or an epistemological problem, constructed through language. We cannot become aware or even critical of our own whiteness and the privileges attached, if we refuse to show our colours and to account for the dichotomy of black and white or, even further, for shades of grey to exist.

Problematizing the unspeakable, naming if discrimination is based on a racial stereotyping or prejudices, irrevocably leads to crossing path with political correctness. Whereas advocators of political correctness intend to support oppressed and marginalised groups, this objective is exploited on the other end of the political spectrum and deliberately misunderstood as a form of censorship. However, this also resonates with an indispensable critique from a political perspective: Being unable to name and speak about certain things deprives us of the possibility to act against them. It is this imbrication, the heritage of the past and misuses of political correctness, which makes it unable to denote existing acts of racism if we do not allow ourselves to use this term as an analytical category – and it is not only useful, but indispensable for challenging and dismantling racial injustices.

But (how) can we name the unspeakable for the purpose of this demystification? First of all, it would call for dismantling the crucial misconception that silence only assumes shape in what is rendered as excluded, unrepresentable, unthinkable, and unnameable. As Judith Butler has shown, the construction of identity rests on foreclosures. These are contingent and a negative mirror of what is included, representable, thinkable, and nameable. Who has the power to determine these lines of exclusion and what motivates them do so?

Actions speak very loud and they do so at the moment: On a daily basis, refugee camps are set on fire by anonymous arsonists all over Germany. Nearly all police reports commenting on these events end with the following sentence: We do not assume a xenophobic motivation. There can be no racism, and so there is no racism. Again and again we recall that history has taught us better than to believe in a racist ideology. What would have been (and need to be) named acts of racism are deprived of their content and turned into an empty form, lacking any meaning.

In the aftermath of the night of 2016 New Year's Eve, which culminated in numerous sexual attacks against women in various

German cities, most notably in Cologne, the media coverage and political discourse followed a scheme of black and white that eventually fell prey to its own logic. Sexism was presented as a problem of the 'other' and instead of accounting for the complexity of any discrimination, (German) women were advised to keep their distance from 'strangers' and the police concealed for days the fact that a majority of the possible perpetrators, whose identities were checked that night, were of non-German origin, fearing that the far right might use this for their benefit. As soon as this information rose to the surface, it was exactly this end of the political spectrum that misused both these facts and that they were concealed in the most horrendous way, demanding to save 'German women' from 'migrant men'.

Politicians of 'established' parties refuse to partake in TV debates if the new right-wing party AfD (Alternative for Germany) is also invited; being in denial of the fact that not talking to the enemy actually makes him stronger. Their xenophobic ideology is wrapped in and exploits the argument of free speech. This, however, is a fallacy, as they do not speak about racial discrimination but are racist. Eventually, they are testament to the fact that drawing up any kind of dichotomy leads in the example of the silence on racial discrimination to a racist noise.

The spell on post-racism has long been broken and instead of listening to what is part of this racist noise, what is omitted should be of even more interest: Why do we not speak about migrant women's experiences of (sexual) violence? What do we (not) know about sexual assaults committed by German men against German (and non-German) women? More importantly, how can we account for discrimination based on sexual and gender identities that challenge such dichotomies and especially the heteronormative framework that dominates in our society? Some people's stories are more likely to be heard than others and there are clear mechanisms that determine who is in a position to speak and who is not. Acknowledging the complexity of discrimination and domination is not only complicated and partially ambiguous, but will most likely boil down to a debate on privilege – and since the latter is distributed unequally and not according to merit, disregarding this will disable us to get to the heart of the problem. Instead, it allows people to detach themselves from their political responsibility and relates to what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva calls *racism without racists*. It poignantly grasps racism in its subtle and most

persistent form: (White) individuals are no longer outspoken racists, but the structures that constitute our society still function according to this logic. Moreover, just because *race* is socially constructed, it does not mean that it does not create effects like privilege and discrimination. Stereotypes are larger than (individual) life and can easily be detached from the actor if there is the institution to blame.

In East Germany, a massive right-wing backlash is in progress and proves that history seems to have taught us nothing. In the latest state election in Saxony, the AfD won 24.3 % of the votes. The myth of an absent racism reflects a particular ideology that runs counter and away from what is happening. Bracketing out the term *race* deprives us of the ability to speak about it. The void created by this is filled with racist noise and voices who claim to create a pseudo-counter public the 'political elite' does not leave room for: We have to stand up against migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, and if they call us Nazis for this, we do not care, because there is no law against speaking. But there seems to be an invisible law to keep silent when it comes to *race*. Hannah Arendt argued in an essay responding to the critique surrounding her publication 'Eichmann in Jerusalem' against the collective notion of guilt, because if everyone is guilty, no one is guilty. So if no one is racist, is everyone racist?

Methodological note:

In the preceding 'Barthes-style mythology piece', I wanted to look for absences and silences in discourses. How do I, in the frame of my argument, define these? An absence is defined as "something that *could* be present in language use ore discourse, but is not, possible for ideological reasons" (Baker/ Ellece 2011: 1). A common method used to reveal absences is the comparison of different discourses to see "what could have been present but is not" (ibid). Similar to absences, a silence is defined as the "lack of articulation or voice" (ibid: 131). Thus, the practice of 'silencing' refers to "certain practices that discourage speaking or where linguistic assertiveness is stigmatized" (ibid: 132).

Absences and silences are not mere coincidences but lend themselves to ideologies and this is testament to the fact that they are political in character. Following, only tracing and shedding light on those blind spots is not enough, we need to raise other (and more important) questions: Why do they exist in the first place and what is

their function in the particular discourse? Both concepts of absence and silence are related to erasure and exclusion. Something "can be erased in order to secure the appearance of stable, discrete and different identity categories, helping to maintain a clear power hierarchy" (ibid: 41). Drawing on the aforementioned relation to ideologies, these, as well quantitative restrictions, can explain why exclusions occur. Exclusion designates a process in which "particular social actors do not appear in a text or as a part of discourse" (ibid: 44).

How can absences and silences be connected to Barthes concept of the myth? According to Barthes, anything "conveyed by a discourse" (2009: 131) is potentially a myth. He classifies the myth as "a mode of signification, a form" (2009: 131). This form is a special one, since it is "motivated" (150). What does this exactly mean? As Barthes perceives of myths as "*second-order semiological system[s]*" (137), the sign, which connects the signifier and the signified on the first (linguistic) level, functions as a signifier on the level of mythology insofar as that a new meaning is added to it for a specific reason or motivation. Thus, the signifier is both meaning and form, but on respective levels (cf. ibid: 140 – 142). The myth has to be situated within "a greater semiological system" (139) to be deciphered. Its function is to freeze, purify, and eternalize (cf. ibid: 148), it is "stolen and restored" (ibid: 150) speech. Barthes classifies myths as "depoliticized speech" (ibid: 169), which is of major importance for my analysis. Myths "empty reality" (ibid: 169) and embody a "perceptible absence" (ibid) – which allows me and relates back to why I chose to focus on a particular absence and silence in the political discourse in Germany.

I was interested in disclosing what is omitted in the public discourse on refugees and asylum seekers, as I argue that the Germany history, more specifically the history of Nazi Germany, is reason for the fact that the word *race* is no longer used in neither the political nor other public discourses. I first noticed this when I started reading English literature, and especially scholarly literature on gender and post-colonialism. There, Race is frequently used as an analytical category and helps to illuminate and account for specific forms of discrimination and oppression. Furthermore, as I connected the absence of *race* to debates on political correctness, Michel Foucault's account of Frankness helps to locate and account for the racist misuse of this argument: Confronting German's attitude of being proud of

not-being proud, Foucault links *parrhesia* to frankness, thus describing the speaker as one who "does not hide anything but opens his heart and mind completely to other people" (2001: 12), even if it could be "dangerous to himself and thus involves a risk" (ibid: 13). Thus, right-wing parties pride themselves with speaking the 'truth'. Doing so, they create and make use of any kind of dichotomy and coding like using the word race denotes a racist.

The inability to name such discriminatory practices in Germany leads to the impossibility of dismantling and opposing them. A recent study revealed that one third of people living in Germany has experienced discrimination because of e.g. their age, gender (identity), sexuality or race (cf. Beigang 2016). Thus, I aim to disclose how the myth that in the particular case of racism not naming it does not cause its distinction, but effectively provides reason for the opposite to be true.

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"Better Together" in the Scottish Referendum, by Scarlett Cockerill

The significance of the 2014 Referendum on Scottish Independence in the social and political history of the United Kingdom can scarcely be overstated. Reflecting this significance, Scotland found itself, albeit briefly, over the summer of 2014, to be no longer England's quiet or comedic appendage, but suddenly the epicentre of a debate which caught the attention of the public, politicians and media sources all over the world. As the day of the vote approached, discussion surrounding independence became an almost constant facet of daily life in Scotland. The topic dominated headlines and saturated social media; it steered conversation with colleagues, family and friends alike; advertisement campaigns and celebrity endorsements sprang up on both sides and just about every lamppost on every high street seemed to be declaring one political affiliation or another. Wherever you were and whatever you were doing, it was, for the most part, impossible to overlook the magnitude of the political choice that was imminently facing the Scottish people.

What was perhaps easier to overlook however, was the repeated employment of specific, emotionally charged discourses as part of the ongoing referendum debates. Emotive language was frequently engaged in order to attract sympathies on the sides of both the 'Yes' and 'No' parties, building up, over time, a set of widely unquestioned narratives which came to structure dialogue surrounding independence as a whole. Herein, I look to excavate the foundations of one of the most pervasive of these narratives; that is, the repeated invocation of the notion of family unity and security in anti-independence discourse regarding the benefits of continued membership of the United Kingdom. A brief examination of just a fractional proportion of the advertising materials distributed by the "Better Together" Campaign, will, I believe shed light not only upon the insidiousness of these narratives but, perhaps more ominously, upon generally held notions of the family which run pervasively through British culture and society.

One of the most widely discussed facets of the "Better Together" Campaign's advertisement was the video titled "The Woman Who Made Up Her Mind" or, as it became more commonly referred to among Scots, the "Patronising BT [Better Together] Lady". This two and a half minute long advert details the decision making process of a woman who, at the start of the video, claims to be

undecided about her vote in the upcoming referendum. The woman is found in her kitchen, having just served breakfast to her husband and children. She speaks directly to the camera, voicing her confusion and hesitancy about the impending vote. Interwoven with this dialogue, the advert draws repeated attention to items that reaffirm the woman's status as wife and mother; her wedding ring, children's drawings, toys, and a photograph of a smiling child pinned to the fridge. Whilst the woman's husband - absent from the video - is portrayed as a politically involved and passionate supporter of independence, she herself emphasizes her disengagement from the debate. She is less ardent and more cautious in her political persuasion than her husband, founding this caution upon her concern for the security of her family in post-referendum Scotland. Her reservations include uncertainty regarding how a Scottish-run government would pay for "the kids' school" and "Mum and Dad's pension". She concludes the video by telling the viewer that "most of all I want what's best for my children", and that it is on this maternal basis that she will be voting against the formation of an independent Scotland.

It is by no means my opinion, of course, that the issues raised in the video do not represent valid concerns in the context of potential political and economic upheaval; the point I make is simply that they represent a very particular type of concern; one which revolves around familial life and the woman's responsibility to maintain this as her primary concern. Ultimately, the video urges women in particular to vote against independence on the basis of devotion to their families. "There's one thing I do know," the Patronising BT Lady decisively tells us, "I will not be gambling with my children's future". It is implied that other women bear a similar obligation to demonstrate their love and concern for their children's security by voting in favour of continued political unity.

It is, as I hope it goes without saying, by no means a novel or nuanced reading of this piece to highlight its misogynistic nature. "Woman: good for making breakfast but baffled by politics" hardly qualifies as subtle in terms of sexist 'undertones' (or overtones, as the case may be). On these grounds, the advert attracted widespread ridicule in the press and across social media platforms. What is perhaps more insidious however, is the persistent focus on the notion of the family in such a way that, whilst blatant sexism is observed and widely discredited, ideas about the sanctity and inherent value of family ties

are allowed to pass under the radar; compelling neither public attention nor substantive problematisation. It is in this context therefore, that I deem it imperative to examine the social conditions which render this not only a seemingly palatable line of political argument but also, more disturbingly, a line of argument so foundational to common understandings that it is implicit within discourse and appears to require no further elucidation. What, I want us to ask, does this say about the societal value placed upon the traditional notion of the nuclear family, and the importance of unity therein? And what can awareness of this value system uncover with regards to British society's embedded assumptions concerning women's obligations to the family more broadly?

I propose, in beginning to respond to such questions - and I concede I can only scratch the surface of the issue herein - that one can draw interesting parallels between the woman's depicted relationship with her family and Scottish relationship with the rest of the United Kingdom. Discourse relating to the referendum relied heavily upon the notion of "the union" between the constituent parts of the UK, which was presented as a prized, cherished and family-like bond. In terms of the semantics and politicised rhetoric employed, this fetishisation of the notion of unity can be seen as intricately linked to a fetishisation of the notion of the traditional union of marriage. Feminizing rhetoric within the campaign cast Scotland within a specifically female marital role; the duty of preserving the 'marriage' fell on her shoulders, whilst dispersions (whether valid or not we cannot know) were cast regarding her ability to support herself economically and politically in the absence of her more established partner. She was threatened with the loss of shared assets (i.e. the Sterling currency), and reminded extensively of the advantages of union she stood to lose if she turned away from the historical partnership (for example in terms of the Barnett Formula which granted proportionately higher levels of public expenditure to Scotland than England). Reminders of shared passions and interests were thrown emotively into the mix (to such an extent that "but what about The Great *British* Bakeoff?!" was, on more than one occasion, presented to me as a valid political sticking-point), so as to ensure no one would overlook the supposed sanctity of shared history and experience. Certainly from my own experience of working with survivors of abusive relationships, these experiences of financial and emotional coercion are far from uncommon; indeed they seem to

provide some of the most routinely exercised avenues of both external and internal justification for remaining in unhealthy domestic environments. If we take the advertisements on Scottish independence as such a microcosm for wider discourses relating to marital and familial relations therefore, we can see the emergence of a narrative which both draws upon and reinforces this dangerous notion of women as socially obliged to centre their choices upon the foundational criteria of maintaining the unity of their family, even where this unity has the potential to leave them in a dependent and subordinate position to a dominant force.

Fig 1: "I Love My Family. I'm Saying No Thanks".

Fig 2: "We Love Our Kids. We're Saying No Thanks".

These ideas can be further exposed in another of the major "Better Together" advertising materials; a series of anti-independence posters/billboards which were displayed across the country. This campaign mirrors the video advert insofar as it eschews even the pre-text of reasoned political argument in favour of a focus upon the emotive notion of family ties. The series featured three posters all

bearing images of women accompanied by people implied to be their families (Figures 1, 2, 3). The posters bore the captions "I love my family. I'm saying No Thanks"; "We love our kids. We're saying No Thanks"; and simply "I love Scotland. I'm Saying No Thanks" (It is worth noting, of course, that lack of direct reference to the family in the third caption is mitigated by a large image of the female 'speaker' holding a young baby, thus communicating implicit references to her motherhood and kinship). In all three images, despite the fact that two of the three feature men, the 'speech bubble' which indicates to whom the attached statement is attributed, appears to be emanating from a woman. On aggregate therefore, the poster campaign, like the video advert, clearly presentes a narrative in which remaining part of the UK was intricately connected to the notion of the family, or more specifically, the notion of female responsibility to safeguard the security and sanctity of the family unit.

Fig 3: "I Love Scotland. I'm Saying

The implicit and unsettling assumption which provides the bedrock for the specific narrative employed in both of these campaign materials; that is, the assumption that the family – *any* family – is, as the campaign self-titled, "Better Together"; rests upon the idea that there exists some inherent good, recognized by the public at large, in a family existing as a cohesive and unbreakable union which prizes this unity over and above other relevant considerations. Let us here hypothesise that there were distinct social, political and/or financial advantages available to Scotland in breaking the political union of Great Britain[2]: the "Better Together" Campaign implies that these should be disregarded by women whose singular concern should be maintaining the cherished bond of the nuclear family. Again, distinct parallels can be drawn between Scotland's decision making process

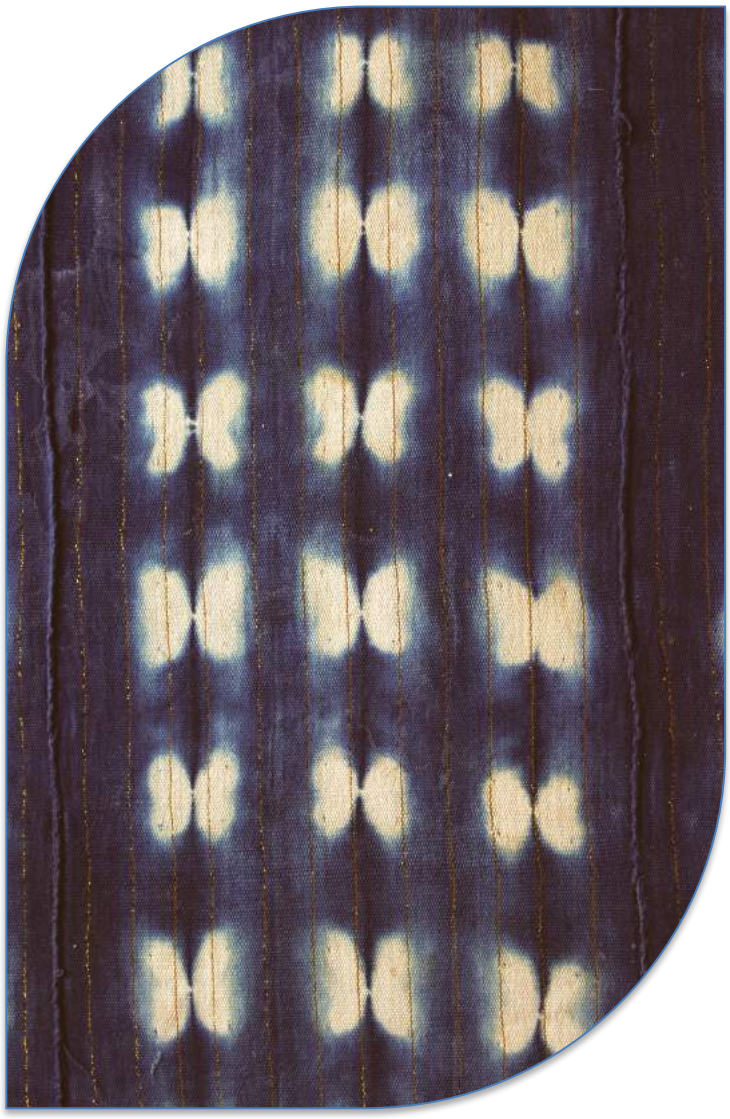
[2] Naturally, it should be noted that the benefits, costs and outcomes of Scottish Independence were, as they remain, widely contentious and beyond the scope of this piece to delve into. It is my belief, however, that conceiving of purely hypothetical advantage to Scotland can more fully elucidate the arguments of this short essay.

and that of a woman questioning her individual marital or familial status, and again it is upheld that such decisions should be founded not upon personal feeling, political ideology or economic reason, but upon the aspiration to keep the family stable and unchallenged as a social unit.

It is worth also briefly reiterating and considering those discussions which were absent from the materials described above. Where one would expect political arguments to be expressed in terms of, at least nominally, 'factual' or 'objective' claims regarding the specific policy and procedural changes that would be necessary for a political shift of such magnitude, these discussions were almost entirely absent from the adverting materials produced by the "Better Together" campaign. The video advert, as noted above, is void of any substantial political discussion beyond the woman's concerns for her immediate family; neglecting a wide and varied plethora of other issues which were at stake as part of the vote. In this sense, the case was indeed materialized that decision making processes were necessarily founded largely upon emotional influences, as more substantive information was widely unavailable, or at least did not play a major role in advertising strategies. and the idea that members of a union are irrefutably "Better Together".

Narratives of the family in the Better Together Campaign can thus be taken as simultaneously founded upon, and exacerbating of, an ideology which decrees that women have, in some sense, an obligation to remain part of both constitutional and matrimonial unions on the basis of the importance of the united nuclear family, which continues to be endorsed and promoted as the social ideal, alone. The narrative which construes this union as taking precedence over women's social and economic positions, as well as their political leanings and personal choices, presents a highly damaging narrative for the social, political and economic position of women both within and outwith the context of political debate. The insidious permeation of this ideology into discourses surrounding Scottish independence speaks to its pervasiveness within society as a whole, and thus must be recognized, challenged and disrupted as part of a broader opposition to the perpetuation of female subordination.

Long format essays



In 2015, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) banned a YouTube make-up tutorial by Ruth Crilly for not explicitly stating that Proctor & Gamble sponsored the content (Sweney, 2015). By obfuscating the truth, Crilly's subscribers felt deceived. However, seven days after the banned video, she posted another make-up tutorial, but this time included a disclaimer that the content was not sponsored. Whilst both videos followed the same style, as a make-up tutorial, the presence or absence of payment reveals a difference in how this indistinguishable tutorial style was consumed, as there were no complaints with the non-sponsored video. A few months later, Crilly uploaded a *vlog*[3] in which she documented an expenses-paid trip to Paris for a make-up launch. Interestingly, this video also includes a disclaimer that the content was not sponsored. The disclaimer becomes ambiguous, as non-sponsored and gifted content are grouped together without any distinction made. Whilst it does not make economic sense for companies to give away products for free, and pay for trips, its inclusion in the non-sponsored disclaimer means that the viewer will consider any review imparted by the blogger as a truthful one, due to the non-payment; bypassing any issues associated with explicit, paid advertorials.

This raises a multitude of questions about how we perceive gifts, the importance of authentic reviews, and the blurring between the personal and the economic (and how we attempt to resist the economic from entering the personal). Sahlins (1972: 208) states, 'A gift that is not yet requited in the first places […] engenders continuity in the relation, solidarity – at least until the obligation to reciprocate is discharged.' Within a gift economy, any gift that is exchanged without specific conditions attached to it produces a sense of obligation to reciprocate. Therefore, I will use Mauss' (2002) concept of the gift in order to explore the role of gift exchange within the beauty industry through two cases: AVON parties and the relationship between the beauty blogger and cosmetics companies. I will also challenge the idea of a 'pure' gift, demonstrating how its conceptualisation is primarily ideological, and a reaction to societal anxieties over the pervasive reach of the commodity within our personal lives.

[3] A blog in the form of a video

Methodologically, I will perform a content analysis on a selection of vlogs by beauty blogger, Lily Pebbles, to observe the extent of reciprocation when the gift is involved compared to paid advertisement. Fairclough (2013: 5) characterised Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as 'relational, dialectical and transdisciplinary.' I will rely on CDA to understand the complex relations formed within capitalist societies, how the economic impacts the social, as well as how structural oppressions are replicated, particularly illustrated by the relationship between women and precarious labour. This article will be transdisciplinary, as it combines Mauss' theory of the gift, other anthropological perspectives on gift exchange, and, when considering this article within the wider context of society, the dialogue it opens up with the philosophical frameworks of Kierkegaard and Baudrillard. I will use Kierkegaard's ideas about the Media and the Public to understand the media's construction of the 'public' and the subjectivity that the individual assumes by becoming part of the public and its collective identity and opinions. Furthermore, the poststructuralist roots of this analysis will help understand the construction of reality through looking at Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality, which I define here as an imitation of reality that is presented – and consumed as – real.[4]

AVON Parties:

AVON is a cosmetics company with 6.5 million reps worldwide (Hughes, 2011). With direct selling being a 'nearly $29 billion-a-year market,' it is important to evaluate what makes AVON parties such a success (Stebbins). The emphasis on it being an AVON *party* rather than an AVON *sale* results in the event being portrayed as a social gathering – with an element of selling – rather than selling as the primary objective. Its conceptualisation as a party means that it is able to accentuate the social, associated with parties, whilst muting the

[4] Due to my focus on the construction of (hyper) reality, it should be noted that this qualitative discourse analysis is more appropriately defined as a form of CDA with strong poststructuralist influences.

economic, which is considered separate from the home, at least in Western industrialised societies. After the party ends, the representative will hand out order forms so that the guests can buy the products. AVON will then provide the representatives with a commission based on their sales.

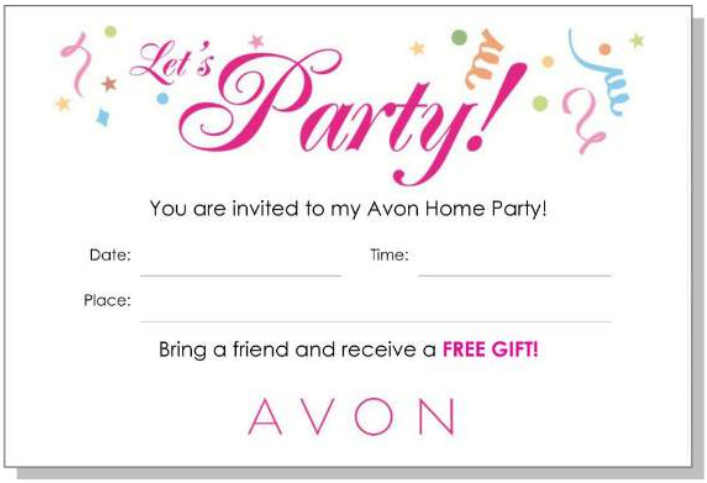


Figure 1: AVON sample party invitation

Mauss viewed the gift as obligatory and inalienable. This system of exchange means that obligation must be considered three-fold: the obligation to give a gift, the obligation to graciously receive a gift, and the obligation to reciprocate the gift to the other person (Mauss, 2002: xi). In terms of inalienability, we must look toward the social connection between the giver and the object within the gift, which pushes the gift to be reciprocated back to the giver. By contrast, the commodity, which can be sold and change ownership multiple times, thus *alienates* the commodity from the original owner. There are several gift exchanges occurring between the AVON representative and the guest. First, the AVON representative sends out invitations, which state that if the invitee brings a guest they will receive a *free gift* (see figure 1). Secondly, in the other direction, the guest buys make-up from the representative, arising from the sense of debt that has been created by receiving a gift from the representative, either by bringing a guest or winning one of the games at the party.

Levi-Strauss, heavily influenced by Mauss, argues that Western societies engage in holidays and ceremonial events that also rely on a system of gift exchange, using the example of Christmas (Levi-Strauss, 1977: 56) At Christmas, we attach significant meaning to gift giving by

considering it as an altruistic act, coming from a place of love and generosity for others. However it is the intension of reciprocity, Levi-Strauss argues, that actually drives forward this holiday of gift exchange on a gigantic scale. He argues:

The skilful merchant knows that a way to attract customers is to advertise that certain high-priced articles must be `sacrificed'. The motive is economic, but the terminology retains an air of mystery. (Levi-Strauss, 1977: 56)

The merchant's rhetoric uses the framework of the gift; if the consumer pays more money for gifts, it is worth it because the value the giver will be reciprocated with (by the recipient of the gift) will be similar or higher. Merchants advertise their products as worth the money for the reciprocated cost, obfuscating the fact they want people to spend more money for the company's own economic gain. AVON also adopts the model of the 'skillful merchant,' as, whilst the AVON representative has to buy their own AVON products to give away as free gifts, there is an underlying implication – due to the inherent gift exchange culture – that the gift reciprocated in return by the guest will be of the same value or greater.

Furthermore, Douglas (2002: xx) argues that the notion of a pure gift demonstrates our own anxieties toward commodification. The pure gift becomes a defence mechanism against this anxiety, protecting the subject from the commodification of their personal lives. By exchanging with an AVON representative, the subject feels like they are engaging in an interpersonal relationship away from the market and commodification, which plays into the sentimental arena those individuals in a capitalist society desire. Hughes (2011) states, 'Within 30 seconds of us all squeezing on to Fiona's sofas, I have forgotten we are here to make money flogging makeup.' AVON parties present a way of AVON's influence trickling down to a more local stratum, whereby products are sold on an individual and personal level. Within an AVON party, it feels like the subject is not buying from AVON, the company, but AVON, the subject's friend. This is also exemplified by the fact that these parties take place in the home, the place in which women are relegated to, as the domestic is associated with the private and personal sphere (Vosko, 2006: 56). The guests believe that they are separate from the public and economic sphere in which capitalism has its claws, by interacting within the private sphere instead. However,

whilst AVON parties feel like a social event, this obscures the economic driving force that is underlying this event. Although the guests feel that they are in a space away from commodification, this process is still happening. For example, the AVON sales script provides a template for the way a representative should present herself. This loss of individualization allows for the commodification of them into a brand. They are no longer an individual, but a *representative;* they represent AVON on a micro level; rather than represent themselves as the individual they are outside of this job. Furthermore, the games that AVON suggests playing also fabricate the economic motivations. For example, one game involves answering questions based on the AVON products in the catalogue.

The concept of the 'Avon Lady' is geared towards emancipating and empowering women as AVON's key business model. Whilst it is sold as a social empowerment tool, as it allows representatives to make money independent of their (assumed) full-time employed partners, the casualisation and flexibility of work associated with precarious labour means that 'being your own boss' becomes a double-edged sword. This is emphasised by Fudge and Owen (2006: i) who state, 'Women perform a disproportionate amount of precarious work.' Precarious labour is characterised by low pay and lack of security or benefits (Sanders and Hardy, 2013: 16). In order to earn 20% commission, the AVON representative must order above the minimum order value; however this means they only earn '£1 in every £5.' To earn 25% commission, the representative must order above the higher order value, which comes to '£1 in every £4' (AVON, 2016). This is further exemplified by the small print on the benefits section of the AVON website states 'do not be misled by claims that high earnings are easily achieved' (AVON, 2016). By having to register as self-employed by the HMRC, these low earnings become further reduced. Therefore, whilst AVON claims on their representative recruitment page that the representative is capable of generating 'unlimited earnings,' the likelihood is that the commission they will receive will be significantly low compared to individuals employed outside of the precarious labour market.

Furthermore, AVON simultaneously emphasizes the domesticity and genders the representative's freedom to a freedom contingent upon their family. Vosko (2006) argues that precarious labour relies on traditional models of motherhood and domesticity to work. Women

are told that they should go for flexible, temporary jobs instead of well paid permanent full time jobs so that the job can fit around their childcare schedule, when is then used to justify their low pay poor benefits and security attached to the job. Therefore, precarious labour – in terms of the feminization of work – needs these dominant ideas about motherhood in order to exist or else people (read: men) would resist it if they were limited to these same employment options. This is exemplified by the 'benefits' that AVON advertise, which are in constant dialogue with the needs of the family. Rather than health and social benefits usually associated with full-time employment, AVON offers 'WOW benefits,' which are corporate and brand discounts and vouchers. On the section about benefits on the AVON website, one representative, Angharad, is quoted, 'Avon has enabled me to buy a few nice toys for my son and take him on days out to the zoo' (AVON, 2016). Here there is an ambiguous line between caregiving and precarious labour. The money that Angharad earns is invested directly into looking after her child.

AVON creates the illusion of empowerment and independence, which in turn is gendered in its terms and reward. Instead of providing the financial independence that these women desire, AVON representatives, and women represented within precarious labour, produces a woman who is still dependent on a full-time employed partner for secure income and benefits, and whose investment in her family (time, economically, emotionally) means that any financial independence provided by AVON is not only contingent upon their role as mothers and wives, but is also likely to go back into financing the family. Moreover, AVON have managed to bypass traditional modes of advertisement by implementing direct sales tactics so that interactions between consumer and AVON products are achieved at a localized level. By commodifying the personal through the rhetoric of a 'party,' the economic is successfully silenced. The relationship between cosmetics companies and beauty bloggers provides another example to help comprehend the complexity of the gift, and the effect this has on how the bloggers' content is consumed by the viewer. This example also provides a platform to discuss the role of authenticity for the beauty blogger and their subscribers.

The Rise of the Beauty Blogger:

Beauty bloggers explicitly state in their videos when the content is sponsored. However, it becomes much more ambiguous when we consider the tactic many cosmetics companies are using: sending beauty bloggers free make-up as well as inviting them on expense-paid meals and trips. Zoella, in an interview with *Vogue,* discusses the importance of 'integrity,' asserting that the products she reviews are either bought by herself or through press releases, *never* with any money involved (Sheffield, 2014). However, Mauss (2002: 4) argues that even the gifts that appear as a kind, generous gesture, are nothing other than trying to induce 'obligation' and for their own 'economic self-interest.' Whilst there is no money involved, using Mauss' framework of the gift, cosmetics companies create an unpaid debt, which seems to arise from a place of generosity, which would make bloggers, such as Zoella, more likely to review products on their YouTube channels, than if they were paid directly. This then provides the cosmetics company with more exposure, as the beauty blogger now yields considerable influence, with their imagined communities often consisting of millions of subscribers.

These cosmetics companies give away a gift, which does not ostensibly make sense under capitalism, to give something away for free. However, here, cosmetics companies are using the gift to uphold a social position. Mauss (2002: xi) conceived of the gift as the *total prestation,* which means that multiple institutions – religious, kinship, moral and economic – are all expressed at once within the social. Therefore, the social phenomenon of gift exchange has wider implications for the entire community. Here, exchanges are made between groups rather than individuals, and can solidify the strata of society, because of the way it cuts across – and transcends – so many institutions within the social. From this, Sahlin (1972: 169) explains that what Mauss has sociologically argued is that the gift becomes the social contract, because the gift keeps societies together without a state or central government. Hence, the *hau*[5] forces the reciprocity and

[5] Mauss attaches a mystical power to the gift, the *hau,* which means that the gift is inalienable from the giver (compared to the alienation within commodities). If the individual who has received the gift does not reciprocate back to the giver, the spirit of the giver will cause misfortune or illness. Therefore, Mauss sees local cultural variations of beliefs about the nature of gifts as the driving force behind reciprocation.

solidifies groups, such as clans and families with chiefs as heads, into permanent social relations (Mauss, 2002: 3). This also helps explain why opting out of gift exchange is seen as a hostile act, as keeping close ties is socially advantageous and conducive to survival. A similar example can be seen with football and company sponsorships. Sponsorships and gifts are not just a way of generating more capital in the future[6] but also a way of solidifying themselves and creating brand visibility. These companies (including cosmetics companies) through brand association, then become cultural artefacts, that everyone sees and that then have a place in society.

Have cosmetics companies managed to increase their exposure, and sales, by using the free gift? This content analysis examines six videos from Lily Pebbles' YouTube channel: three videos, which include paid advertisements, and three videos, which she has included a disclaimer that the video is not an advertisement. In the paid advertorial videos, I measured the amount of time dedicated to talking about the product, or paid experience, compared to the amount of time in which she produces original content. By original content, I mean the time she spends talking about things other than the paid content. In the non-advertorial videos, I measure the amount of time in which she produces original content, to the amount of time in which there is indirect advertisement. By indirect advertisement, I mean that Pebbles explicitly demonstrates that she has received a free gift, and the time she spends reciprocating the gift, by talking – and reviewing – it. The findings are presented below:

Title of video and URL	**Paid or not paid**	**Total duration of video**	**Paid advertisement (mins, secs and % of total video)**		**Indirect advertisement (mins, secs and % of total video)**	
'Vlogging at Paris Fashion Week' (www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQ7Ukt9FeAk)	Paid	12m42s	**Original content**	**Paid content**	**Original content**	**Reciprocated content**
			8m3s *64.65%*	4m39 *35.35%*	N/A	N/A
'Shopping Frenzy in Amsterdam' (www.youtube.com/watch?=S_CJ8KOMQIU)	Paid	15m36s	**Original content**	**Paid content**	**Original content**	**Reciprocated content**
			7m72s *50.26%*	7m64s 49.74%	N/A	N/A

[6] Capitalism cannot be separated from capitalist society; the economic and the social cannot be differentiated.

'ASOS Try-On, Beauty Haul and Exciting Announcement!' (www.youtube.com/watch?v=eL4OUe5Bey4)	Paid	15m37s	**Original content**	**Paid content**	**Original content**	**Reciprocated content**
			13m11s *85.3%*	2m26s *14.7%*	N/A	N/A
'Chanel Fields' (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Seq_qRIEGjE)	Not paid	4m10s	**Original content**	**Paid content**	**Original content**	**Reciprocated content**
			N/A	N/A	0.8s *19.6%*	3m3s *80.4%*
'We Sat Next to Blake Lively!' (www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_mG12fpBLY)	Not paid	5m42s	**Original content**	**Paid content**	**Original content**	**Reciprocated content**
			N/A	N/A	3m54s *65.4%*	1m87s *34.6%*
'International Blogger' (www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4Bt1Ui7tHo)	Not paid	11m36s	**Original content**	**Paid content**	**Original content**	**Reciprocated content**
			N/A	N/A	8m3s *70.65%*	3m33s 29.35%

Within the videos examined, the three that were paid advertorials involved Pebbles spending more time on original content rather than paid content. In *Vlogging at Paris Fashion Week*, Pebbles spends more time documenting her own personal adventures around Paris compared to the significantly less footage she has documenting the *Weller Professionals* hair products (who have sponsored this video) and the Paris fashion week events themselves (Lily Pebbles, 2016). Whilst in the three videos that she added a disclaimer that they were 'not advertisements' – in which she documented expense-paid trips and gifted free products – she spent a significant amount of time reciprocating. In *International Blogger*, between 2m26s and 4m20s, she talks about a brand of camera bags that she explicitly states she was gifted. She states:

"I'm meeting somebody today in the lobby who has ***very kindly gifted*** *me one of their amazing camera bags. They got in touch saying 'would you like to try one of our camera bags?' and I was like 'well I'm actually in New York next week' – it's a New York based company – so he's going to come and meet me, show me one of his bags, and hopefully I can use it whilst I'm on this trip instead of trying to hold my SLR camera over my shoulder in the rain […] Oh my god guys, I just went and met him. So the brand is called ONA.* ***I was so happy when they got in touch.*** *They do actually ship internationally, so you can get it in the UK. I will* ***put a link to this specific bag under the video and hopefully I'm going to take some photos with it today for the blog****"* (Lily Pebbles, 2016)

Pebbles then describes the details and functionality of the bag as well as demonstrating the bag. Whilst she claims this video is not an advertisement, because she has not been paid, she still produces a product review for this brand that has gifted her a free bag (Lily Pebbles, 2016). Whilst Pebbles, in her review of the bag, is not giving a review that she was paid to say, because the gift came from a person (although employed by the brand), she sees it as a normal social relationship rather than for the economic tie it actually possesses. Here, the 'gifted' or 'free' product videos were more targeted, and spent more time reviewing compared to paid advertorial products. Therefore, the findings suggest that the gift-exchange mechanism is a better way to ensure a product gets increased visibility rather than traditionally, directly paid advertisements.

Figure 3: Lily Pebbles' Instagram post (Lily Pebbles, 2016)

In the same video, she films beauty blogger, Amelia Liana, describing her favourite doughnut shop in New York. Pebbles jokes that 'this is like an infomercial' in response to Liana; as if the previous footage about ONA was not something similar (Lily Pebbles, 2016). Western societies have produced the concept of a pure gift, a gift that is given freely without any explicit conditions of repayment placed upon

it. Mauss (2002: 83) criticizes this, and argues that we 'possess more than the tradesman's mentality. The invitation MUST be returned…the round of drinks is ever larger in size.' As obligation plays a key role for Mauss within this process of gift exchange, the conception of the pure gift is primarily ideological. Mauss argues that people within a capitalist society are constantly subjected to processes of accumulation and sales maximisation. These people then desire a counter-public space, which is isolated from these processes, where individuals can participate in relationships that are not marked by the market and commodification. As Levi-Strauss (1977: 56) mentioned, gift giving in Anglo-Saxon societies becomes a nostalgic space, associated with the subject's family and traditions, such as Christmas and birthdays, that must be (somehow) distanced from the market economy. However, it is not possible to differentiate between the social and economic spheres. Pebbles vlogs demonstrate how these two spheres are combined, as she vlogs – thereby documenting – her personal, social life which is inextricably linked to the economic: her personal experiences of fashion week, which she was sponsored to experience by the beauty company.

Bloggers' constant documentation of their personal lives, regardless of the content being paid or not, suggests an effort on the part of beauty bloggers to maintain their connection with their subscriber base. Their personal life remains a constant fixture within their vlogs; these vlogs provide a way of distinguishing themselves from the other beauty bloggers in an oversaturated market who are all giving similar product reviews and tutorials. Therefore, even if the video involves paid advertisement, they will continue injecting their personal life around it. I argue that cosmetics companies are aware of this, and are thus paying for the beauty blogger – in this instance, Pebbles – to document her personal life in a way that uses their commodity simultaneously. This seamless incorporation allows for brand association that the consumer will retain, and increase the likelihood of them buying the product. This marks an evolution in marketing, away from explicit advertising at the beginning of a YouTube video (which viewers will usually skip), permeating into their personal lives, so that the line between economic and social becomes even harder to draw. The marketization of the beauty bloggers' personal life induces their commodification, as their life becomes the brand.

Similarly, Strathern (1999: 180) argues that a distinction between people and things is not always possible, as people are capable of becoming things through the process of commodification. Again, in reference to Douglas' argument that the conception of the pure gift is a reflection on the social anxieties toward commodification, Charlotte Tilbury, a cosmetics company named after the make-up artist who started it, demonstrates an example of this defence mechanism in action. I will analyse two beauty bloggers – Estée Lalonde and Amelia Liana – and the impact that being invited to a Charlotte Tilbury product launch had on the beauty content they generated afterwards, and their attempt to distinguish between Charlotte Tilbury, the make-up artist, and Charlotte Tilbury, the commodity. Both bloggers film the Charlotte Tilbury launch event, in which a group of bloggers sit in a circle listening to Tilbury herself talk through her new products (Amelia Liana, 2014; Estée Lalonde, 2014). After the event, Lalonde and Liana show the camera the 'goody bag' of free Charlotte Tilbury make-up they were given. In Liana's video, whilst in a taxi with Lalonde, she addresses the camera (and in turn, her viewers):

I love Charlotte Tilbury, don't you? I love her make-up, her, her personality, just everything; she's just so funny. We got to see all her new launches: she's got a facemask coming out in March – which was the one we were trying on our hands – she has some darker skinned lip liners to go on with all the new matte revolution lipsticks in February and lip balms also coming out in February (Amelia Liana, 2014)

In April and May 2015, Liana uploaded two videos directly related to this Charlotte Tilbury launch. Liana (2015) waxes lyrically about the facemask in both videos, describing it as a 'total game changer.' Similarly, Lalonde (2014) uploaded a beauty review, 14 days after the launch, in which she states:

I went to a Charlotte Tilbury event the other day and I LOVE her, I love her so frigging much! I'm borderline obsessed with her, she's a real badass and I love that, and she's really cool. Anyway, on days where I've been wearing eyeshadow, I've been using her palette and I love it! […] It is good quality, it is beautiful and I love Charlotte Tilbury! (Estée Lalonde, 2014)

Whilst the palette that Lalonde refers to is not part of the new product launch, it is interesting to examine the footage Lalonde takes of the room the launch takes place in. When Lalonde enters the room, she is drawn to one of the tables, which has *Charlotte Tilbury* products displayed on it (Estée Lalonde, 2014). At 7m18s, we can see the palette (see figure 4 and 5).

Both bloggers keep referring to Charlotte Tilbury as the individual rather than the brand, reviewing the products and event in terms of her personality rather than the products themselves. Therefore, the bloggers are trying to resist commodification by focusing on the individual over the commodity, but the impact it has had on their video content demonstrates that this is not the case; ignoring that the individual and commodity are inextricably linked and cannot be easily discerned as two elements in isolation.

Wider implications:

Returning back to the Crilly controversy, the ASA have commented, in relation to vloggers' relationships with companies that it 'pays to be honest' (ASA, 2014). Within beauty bloggers' disclaimers, they also state that any products they review and use are because they *genuinely* like the products. The frequent repetition of terms such as 'honest' and 'genuine' in relation to product reviews calls attention to where the bloggers, and their subscriber base, place value; here, to be honest and genuine is to be *authentic*. By exploring the philosophy behind authenticity, we can begin to understand the wider implications that this article has on Western society. Authenticity, as thought of by Golomb in terms of commitment, involves the subject acting in accordance with what they truly believe in, rather than how one is expected to act (Golomb, 2012: 39) To ensure authenticity, the subject

must – disengaged from the potential social approval –fully commit to the act.

Kierkegaard (2010: 38), argues that the public is 'an idea' in which individuals become subsumed into the public identity, and consequently, agree with the general consensus, rather than being actively responsible for their own individual thought. Kierkegaard argued that the public takes on the opinions delivered by the Church and the Media. To achieve authenticity, subjects *must* confront reality in order to form their own opinions, away from those imposed on them as 'the public,' and then behave in accordance with these authentic, original thoughts. Hence, beauty bloggers that produce original content, with no paid advertising, will be considered by their viewers as actively shaping their own opinions on products in their reviews, as there is no external agent interfering with their reviews. However, beauty bloggers who have received free gifts by cosmetics companies hold an interesting position. I argue that because there are no explicit conditions on the gift (compared to the conditions that paid advertorials would set), the gift will be read as having no external pressures, and the call to beauty bloggers to review these products or document their expenses-paid experiences, will be seen as arising from the blogger in question, rather than the company who set up the free gifts.

Why do the viewers then rely on beauty blogger reviews, instead of seeking out the products themselves, and experience the products based on trial and error? The age of mass culture has produced an abundance of commodities – particularly considering the numerous make-up brands available – that can be overwhelming to the subject, and thus it becomes easier to rely on the beauty bloggers' opinions. The viewer trusts the beauty blogger to review a product using their personal opinion after going through the experience of testing the product for the viewers' benefit. As such, beauty bloggers that are being paid directly by cosmetics companies are not being authentic, as their opinions are likely to be based on the cosmetics companies who have provided them with payment.

The trust the viewer has for the beauty blogger introduces the importance of truth and subjectivity within authenticity.[7] Here, the pursuit of authenticity also becomes of a Kierkegaardian pursuit of the

[7] 'Subjectivity is truth' (Kierkegaard, 2009: 175)

subjective truth.[8] Kierkegaard considered subjective truths to be the most important, particularly because of the individual experience and process one must go through to arrive at the truth.[9] Objectivity will render the truth to, and consider it no further than, an object, whereas subjective thought will also consider the subjectivity of the subject (Kierkegaard, 2009: 161). If the beauty blogger is paid, the review will be framed within just discussing the product as the *object* it is, following the script that the cosmetics company would have provided in exchange for the payment; this would not be a true lived experience from which a subjective truth emerged. If the beauty blogger is reviewing a product they personally sought out, it will involve a lived experience of acquiring and testing the product before blogging about it, revealing a unique relationship between the subject matter and the bloggers' subjectivity. Through the lived experience of using the make-up, they are able to reach the subjective truth of the product, i.e. whether to recommend it or not in their review.

However, in the case of the gift, the beauty blogger will document their lived experiences, such as Lily Pebbles' expense-paid trip to New York, and the process by which the subjective truth was formed, such as at the end of the video when Pebbles films the *Urban Decay* launch party and then her opinion of the new lipsticks. Therefore, in the process of reciprocating the gift, the beauty blogger will talk about the subjective truth they reached in a product review or vlog. This explains the controversy over Crilly's video, as the viewer was under the impression that they were receiving a subjective truth. Considering the viewers' distrust of paid advertisement, as they believe that the review will carry no weight, it makes sense for the cosmetics company to provide the beauty blogger with a gift, because then the beauty blogger will indirectly advertise it whilst providing their subjective opinion about it, which will be consumed as the truth by the viewer.

How are subjects supposed to confront reality, in order to become authentic, if the reality they are experiencing is not real? For

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[8] For Kierkegaard, objective truth governed by empirical reflection whereas subjective truth involves the individual living through an experience in order to arrive at its truth.

[9] Kierkegaard (2009: 168) used religion to argue that truth must be experienced and attained subjectively, through an individual relationship with God, rather than attempting to empirically prove God's existence.

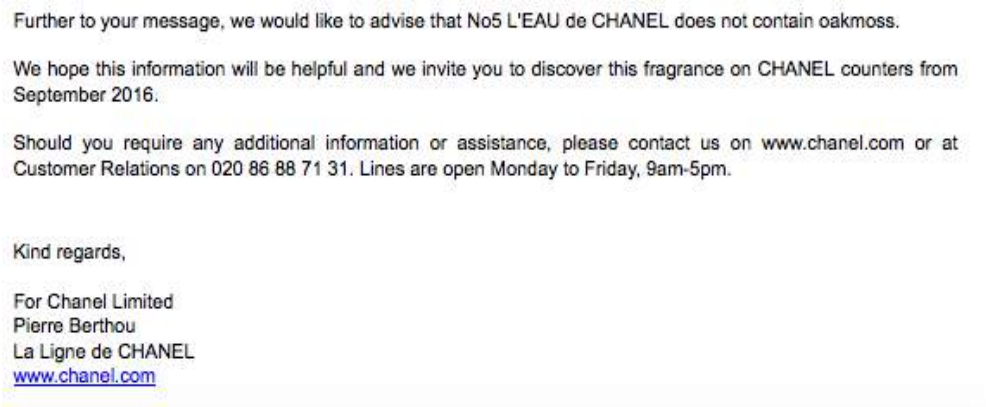
Baudrillard, the line between reality and a 'copy' of reality is ambiguous; questioning where reality ends and fiction begins. Baudrillard (1994: 1) defines *hyperreality* as 'a real without origin or reality.' Eco demonstrates that in the pursuit of reality, we receive, instead, a false reality that we consider as real. Eco's (1990: 7) argument that the sign destroys the 'distinction of the reference' means that hyperreality becomes a place whereby the sign possesses no referent. Potemkin villages are helpful illustrations of such a reality. These facades are constructed with the objective of misleading others about the truth of a situation. This is exemplified by the case in 2013 whereby local authorities in Suzdal, Russia, camouflaged neglected houses with banners that depicted pristine window frames with flowerpots in the windows in preparation for Vladimir Putin's visit (BBC, 2013). By superficially altering the appearance of the houses, they produced a sign with a referent that does not exist.

Within the context of this article, Pebbles' invitation to the CHANEL Fields (as part of the CHANEL No. 5 relaunch) is a great illustration of this. There is an interesting juxtaposition in Pebbles' footage where she is in the fields whilst a promotional white hot air balloon is in the field, with a large, black number 5 on it (see figure 6). The number '5' holds great significance beyond the perfume itself as Coco Chanel, as a young girl, 'believed profoundly in its magic and its beauty' (Mazzeo, 2010: 9) Coco Chanel resided in Aubazine, a commune in France, with Cistercian nuns; coming from the word *cistus,* a rose with five petals, which also grew in the commune gardens (Mazzeo, 2010: 10). The original meaning of the number five for Coco Chanel, with its heavy symbolism and mysticism that she attached to it, and its consequent influence in the name, CHANEL No. 5, has become alienated from its contemporary meaning. By re-launching Chanel no.5, CHANEL have produced a copy of the original, reliant on the '5' symbol to restore 'the figurative where the object and substance have disappeared' (Baudrillard, 1994: 7). In the absence of

Figure 6: *Chanel Fields* (Lily

substance, we have this white hot air balloon with a large number 5 in black: not the logo 'No. 5', but just the number. Whilst white and black are colours associated with CHANEL packaging, the connotations are not grounded in the original meaning or history, and therefore this balloon is a sign with no original referent.

Furthermore, the image that Pebbles' produced is far from the reality of the CHANEL Fields. The *Financial Times* estimate that in the three weeks spent handpicking the roses; they require over 60 tonnes of flowers from Grasse annually. Fifty – predominantly women – are employed to handpick these flowers, working 80.5 hours a week to pick these flowers (Ings-Chambers, 2008). These exploitative hours do not match the image that Pebbles creates of having fun and running through the fields whilst casually picking some flowers for a day's work. Furthermore, this re-launch has been advertised as an attempt to appeal to the younger generation (hence these beauty bloggers in their 20s being invited to document the experience of the CHANEL fields) (Wagner, 2016). However, this is far from the reality behind the re-launch. In 2014, the EU stated their intentions to ban oakmoss from perfumes, due to the allergic reactions it produces for many people. A CHANEL spokesperson at the time said they would reformulate it, as oakmoss is one of the base notes in their perfume (Penketh, 2014).



Further to your message, we would like to advise that No5 L'EAU de CHANEL does not contain oakmoss.

We hope this information will be helpful and we invite you to discover this fragrance on CHANEL counters from September 2016.

Should you require any additional information or assistance, please contact us on www.chanel.com or at Customer Relations on 020 86 88 71 31. Lines are open Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.

Kind regards,

For Chanel Limited
Pierre Berthou
La Ligne de CHANEL
www.chanel.com

Figure 7: Email from CHANEL (Berthou, 2016)

In an email exchange with CHANEL, they confirmed that the re-launched version of Chanel no. 5 would not contain oakmoss.

By creating a public relaunch, CHANEL are able to blur the economic reality behind the need for the product to be reformulated. The reality of the need to reformulate the perfume has been disguised, as CHANEL has generated this simulacrum to distance the truth of

their product from the image. In a report presented on behalf of CHANEL, they described CHANEL's values as embodying those of luxury, and as such, must ensure that 'every link in the chain' from production to its purchase in stores must remain 'coherent with the image of the brand' (European Commission, 2008). Maintaining the luxurious brand image demonstrates that CHANEL are trying to sell a certain lifestyle alongside the commodity; by purchasing CHANEL, the consumer can share in this luxury. Emmerson – in a discussion about what the rich want to spend their money on – argues that there is real interest in the 'craftsmanship of a product…and story behind its making' (Grahame-Clarke, 2015). At the sales counter, a story can be sold to entice customers; a quaint tale about the small group of women who delicately hand pick flowers for the perfume in the south of France, obscuring the truth that these women have to work laborious, exploitative hours. Therefore, CHANEL have presented us with a fake reality, a simulacrum, that we consume as true. Furthermore, Crystal states, 'Hyperreality can also take the form of reality by proxy, in which a person takes someone else's version of reality on board as his or her own.' Here, Lily Pebbles has consumed the 'reality' that CHANEL has presented her with as real, and thus presents it as real through her vlogs, which then has a knock on effect on the subscriber base who consume her vlogs as real, and by extension, the world that CHANEL has created.

Conclusion

Using CDA has provided an understanding of the gift within the beauty industry at both a localized and institutional level. Through a transdisciplinary approach, I was able to combine Mauss, Levi-Strauss, Strathern and Douglas' critiques of the gift to argue that the gift – within a gift economy – with no explicit conditions placed upon it creates an unpaid debt that the recipient must reciprocate in order to resolve the sense of debt they feel after receiving a gift. Within the context of this article, this meant:

i. AVON representatives provide free gifts (i) to invited guests who bring extra guests with them; (ii) to winners of the party games (which were based on AVON product knowledge). In exchange for these free gifts,

guests feel obliged to reciprocate by ordering AVON products from the representative at the end of the party.

ii. Cosmetics companies provide free make-up and expense-paid trips to the beauty blogger, who reciprocates through product reviews and provides the company with (enhanced) visibility on their videos.

Therefore, AVON parties and beauty bloggers are both examples of gift exchange whereby through the introduction of a gift with no conditions – AVON representatives giving free gifts to their guests and cosmetics companies providing free make-up as well as expense-paid trips – sets up an unpaid debt. This sense of debt drives reciprocity forward, through the guest buying AVON products from the representative at the end of the party, or the blogger documenting and reviewing their paid trips and make-up products.

I also grounded these anthropological perspectives within the philosophical frameworks of Kierkegaard and Baudrillard. I argued that authenticity was highly valued by the beauty bloggers' subscriber base and evaluated its wider societal implications by using Kierkegaard's argument that mass culture has resulted in the loss of the individual means there is a desire – within the pursuit for authenticity – for the individual opinion. However, this remains insufficient, as Kierkegaard argued that it is necessary to confront reality before authenticity can be found. Using Baudrillard, I was able to identify examples of hyperreality within the beauty industry – such as the Chanel fields – and how both the beauty blogger and their subscriber base consumed this reality as true. By focusing on the construction of reality, this added a strong poststructuralist dimension to my CDA. However, once we look past the Potemkin village illusion of the Chanel fields, identifying its exploitative (female) labour and the truth behind its relaunch, we were able to reduce it to a simulacrum rather than reality.

CDA's focus on complex, dialectical relations, allowed for a critical analysis of precarious labour particularly within AVON. Whilst the model of the 'Avon Lady' has been considered an emancipatory tool for some women, making money independently of their assumed full-time employed spouse, this ignores the significantly low commission that they receive, and whilst there are benefits advertised, none of these provide security for the representative; instead they are

commercial benefits, often centered around family-orientated needs, such as discounts on groceries and cinema tickets.

The ambiguous terrain of where the social ends and the economic begins was furthered by the content analysis, which combined sponsored and 'gifted' videos by Lily Pebbles. Whilst in the videos where she was 'gifted' with free products or expenses paid experiences, she spent a significant amount of time reciprocating, it is also interesting to look at how the paid advertorial was situated within these vlogs. Pebbles repeatedly vlogs her personal life in combination with the paid advertorial. Here, her social life is inextricably connected to the economic forces driving the video in the first place; commodifying her life into a brand. Therefore, when Zoella told *Vogue* that any product she is sent to review does not involve money, she is ignoring that the 'free gift' is an ideological concept, and instead, illustrates our societal anxieties toward commodification. Cosmetics companies are using this blind spot, appropriating the gift for their own long-term economic gain without their true objectives being questioned. The social sphere is not capable of being a hiding place from our societal anxieties toward commodification and the market; it must be confronted, and only then, will the economic reveal itself.

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#TweetingTrauma: the discursive politics of sexual violence, by Scarlett Cockerill

Content Note: Explicit discussion of rape, sexual violence and relationship abuse. Contains strong, emotive language; personal, descriptive accounts of sexual and gender-based violence; and presentation (without endorsement) of victim-blaming sentiments.

ABSTRACT:

This dissertation documents and explores the increasing use of social media platforms as sites for survivors of sexual violence to publically disclose and discuss their experiences. It adopts two case studies reflecting this trend: the 2016 letter of Stanford rape survivor, Emily Doe, published online via BuzzFeed, and the 2014 Twitter hashtag #BeenRapedNeverReported. Using a synthesis of process-tracing and discourse analysis methodologies, it is shown that social media testimony is inherently rooted in lineages of feminist praxis and hermeneutics. The piece undertakes an analysis of similarities and disjunctures between online disclosure, canonical feminist texts (Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex and Hélène Cixous' The Laugh of the Medusa), and the Women's Collectives which emerged during the second wave. It establishes a cyclical pattern, found across the spectrum of these mulitple sites, of moments of linguistic politicisation and reclaimation followed by periods of de-politicisation and co-optation into dominant discourses. Social media is, however, shown to posses the novel features of temporal dynamism and spatical fluidity, which allow online feminist platforms to adapt to the shifting field of a postmodern environment. Further analysis of survivors' online statements demonstrates that by challenging socially sanctioned constructs of victimhood and intimacy survivors are using online spaces to mould a more nuanced and representative language surrounding sexual abuse. This again confirms the natural place of social media testimony in feminist lineages of countering and disrupting systems of language formed in and by male oppression.

INTRODUCTION

On the 3rd of June 2016, the website 'BuzzFeed' published an anonymous letter from a 23 year old woman to the man who had attempted to rape her. The 'Stanford Rape Victim' - referred to as 'Emily Doe' in protection of her privacy - released the statement online, after having read the piece aloud during courtroom proceedings. This publication followed the minimal sentencing of her attacker, Brock Turner, after he had been found guilty of multiple sexual offenses, including attempted rape, against her. The emotional and detailed account of Doe's trauma generated hundreds of thousands of comments and 'shares' across numerous social media platforms (Doe 2016; Osborne 2016; Koren 2016).

This testimony was not an isolated case but rather formed part of a growing trend, across all incarnations of online forum, towards survivors of sexual abuse publically disclosing and discussing their experiences. On Twitter, for example, October of 2014 witnessed the emergence of the hashtag #BeenRapedNeverReported (Been Raped Never Reported).[10] This hashtag, initiated by Canadian journalists Antonia Zerbisias and Sue Montgomery, originated as a commentary on the trial of broadcaster Jian Ghomeshi for the physical and sexual violation of more than 20 women. The denoted topic was quickly embraced and expounded upon by the Twitter community, generating over 8 million responses (Armstrong 2014). However, whilst some tweeters did speak of the Ghomeshi case, "This [was] not about Jian Ghomeshi" (*ibid*). What the hashtag elicited instead was hundreds of thousands of personal disclosures of unreported abuse, alongside copious messages of support from allies and fellow-survivors.

Online testimonies of trauma open a fertile site for academic exploration; bringing that which is usually relegated to the personal sphere into the realm of broader public discourse. Edkins states that such iterations function to reveal the underpinnings and contingency of any given hegemonic social and ontological order, such that the stability of this order becomes disrupted and open to challenge (2002:246; 2003: xiv).

[10] A 'hashtag' marked by the # symbol is a means of denoting a particular subject within a tweet, such that users can quickly view and connect to broader conversations grouped by the shared tag. Popular hashtags become social media 'trends', wherein they are among the most discussed topics online over a given period. This was the case for #BeenRapedNeverReported.

Informed by an extensive literature on the foundations of language and its construction, this thesis works on the foundational premise that language is constructed in and through power (see, for example, Spender 1980; Edwards & Potter 1992; Devitt & Sterelny 1999; Edkins 2003; Fricker 2007). Language "constructs realities and constrains social practice" (Howard et al. 2000:296) such that there exists a void of linguistic resources available to name, comprehend and communicate phenomena which fall outside, or pose a challenge to, structures and systems of socio-historical domination. Hence, Edkins argues, "the only words [survivors] have are the words of the very political community that is the source of their suffering. The language of the powerful, the words of the status quo." (2003:8). The result is an inhibited capacity for comprehension and communication of the traumatic subject or experience (Edkins 2002, 2003; Howard et al. 2000).

This piece will apply Edkins' arguments to the context of sexual violence as committed in a social order established upon, and mediated by, patriarchal structures. Where language has been sculpted by a lineage of patriarchal oppression, linguistic tools that may facilitate rape survivors in articulating their experiences remain largely undeveloped. This infers a discreditation and delegitimisation of the epistemic foundations of survivors of intimate trauma, rendering their experiences neither personally understandable nor socially communicable (Fricker 2007:163). In this piece, I explore if and how disclosure on social media is facilitating a disruption of hegemonic language and how this fits into existing trends of countering patriarchal constructions of language in feminist spaces.[11]

Drawing upon an analysis of the two examples of online testimony outlined above, this piece will address two key questions. First it will ask in what ways does this use of social media mimic, or diverge from, previous historical junctures or paradigms in the lineage of feminist praxis. It will then explore the function of social media as a tool of linguistic and epistemological empowerment for survivors of abuse, asking secondly:

[11] It should be noted that this dissertation will focus primarily upon sexual violence as committed by men against women. This is not intended to belittle the experience of male survivors, nor to deny or obscure the fact that sexual abuse can be, and is, enacted by female perpetrators. My focus however, is guided largely by the statistical prevalence of male-on-female rape and sexual abuse, which is estimated to comprise between 85 and 95% of cases (Rape Crisis England and Wales 2016; Office of National Statistics Report on Sexual Offending 2013). Further, as this paper addresses the patriarchal foundations and implications of sexual violence, analysis of male/female, perpetrator/victim roles provides the most relevant and generalisable starting point for this bed of research.

how is this forum helping to instantiate a novel and insurgent mode of self- expression. To this end, the paper will be formed of two main sections. Following a discussion on methodology, Section I will look at three paradigms wherein women have been said, or encouraged, to find collective hermeneutical resources: Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex; Hélène Cixous' notions of 'female writing', "L'Écriture Féminine"; and finally the Women's Collectives of the second wave feminist movement. In each case, I will offer a comparative analysis between these modes of feminist epistemological and linguistic collectivity and that intersubjective dialogue facilitated via social media. Viewed as part of this wider context, social media can be situated within a cyclical pattern of feminist hermeneutics, defined by moments of remembering, politicisation and 'hermeneutic breakthroughs' followed by periods of 'forgetting' or absence of insurgent language from public discourse. I look in this piece to capture a snapshot of the present moment of linguistic insurgency; a moment of significant importance in the scope, evolution and accessibility of feminist collective space.

Having established this cyclical pattern of remembrance, articulation and subsequent forgetting, Section II will use an analysis of language and self-projection in online spheres to argue that periods of forgetting occur as the language of oppressed groups is co-opted, gentrified and reincorporated into norms of binary articulation which do not threaten prevailing structures of patriarchal power. Insurgent voices are transformed into 'victims' and denied their political or revolutionary status. Social media will be argued to offer a re-politicisation of notions of victimhood, which relocates survivors from within to outwith existing social understandings of the norms of traumatic experience. It will be shown that survivors operating on social media are using their experiences to disrupt the familiar language of intimacy, denying the linguistic and corporeal separation of violence and sexuality which has hitherto functioned to conceal the inherent, and traumatic, interplay of these spheres which creates, sustains and instantiates patriarchal systems of oppression.

METHODOLOGY AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Collier describes process tracing as a method that "analyses trajectories of change and causation" (2011:823). He argues that tracing is a useful process for identifying and understanding novel

political and social phenomena. By exploring the relationships between these novelties, preceding series' of events, and the changes that have occurred over time, a greater understanding of new phenomena can be garnered and explored (*ibid*:824,829). Lupovici proposes that combining this methodology with elements of discourse analysis enhances coherence and facilitates greater contextual validity of findings (2009:195/6). Following Lupovici, this dissertation will combine these two methodological techniques in a synthesis which documents the evolution of female collective spaces. Selected excerpts of social media testimony will be treated as a series of texts, analysis of which will facilitate a greater understanding of processes of change and the role of online survivor-testimony in politicising and re-politicising particular social and linguistic cleavages.

The arena of social media facilitates a rapid pace of change in how discussion presents and manifests itself, as well as who is involved in these manifestations. The field cannot be considered a static entity, and this paper is thus contextualized within a specific temporal location. This opens an opportunity for academically capturing a 'snapshot' image of the present moment. Looking at Emily Doe's letter and #BeenRapedNeverReported as important sites in the evolution of feminist spaces, I contextualise this development within a framework of cyclical insurgency and incorporation. The two case studies identified were selected on the basis of their pertinence to this current snapshot of online linguistic insurgency. They provide two of the most prominent examples of online survivor testimony and are representative of a much broader sphere of survivor participation in online sharing forums. Emily Doe's letter, released only months prior to the time of writing, presented one of the most widely shared and discussed testimonial texts released to date. The #BeenRapedNeverReported hashtag was selected due to the volume of engagements it generated on Twitter from people all over the world; it seems to represent the most prolific instance of testimony. The two examples contrast against and compliment one another. Doe's letter, at over 7000 words in length, offered an in-depth, personal account of her abuse, her emotional responses and the responses of legal and medical professionals involved in her case. Testimonies presented on Twitter, on the other hand, are limited to 140 characters, and thus produce highly condensed vignettes of survivor experience.

Owing to this groundswell of participation there were obvious challenges in gathering and collating the data presented in the current study. With over 8 million tweets attached to the #BeenRapedNeverReported hashtag, it would have been impractical to personally review each one. For this reason, I identified two critical phases for analysis: the two months following the emergence of the hashtag (October-November, 2014) and two months in the same temporal frame as the Stanford letter (May-June, 2016). My aim here has been to produce an analysis of personal and interpersonal relation to language, rather than numerical prevalence or statistical frequency of particular words or phrases. Purohit et al.'s 2016 analysis of Twitter-based references to gendered violence provides a thorough overview of quantitative research in this vein. Whilst their work is undoubtedly significant in documenting statistical patterns of discussion, a more discursive approach appeals here in order to facilitate sensitive handling of, and textural congruity with, the personal and contextualised nature of the information at hand. To this end, all tweets posted in the two selected periods were reviewed, with a selection of representative examples selected for inclusion in this final paper. Using a qualitative method helped to ensure that tweets selected for specific analysis are representative of broader themes.

All tweets presented herein, alongside thousands of others, can be found by searching #BeenRapedNeverReported on Twitter and are fully visible online to the public audience.[12] Gathering data via observation online, however, raises questions regarding informed consent of participants and how their details, experiences or opinions should be ethically incorporated into the study. Whilst I have been careful to draw my observations only from forums which are available for public view, I am conscious that this information has not been shared with the expectation of analysis in the context of academic study. Thus, in order to protect the anonymity of sources used, all names/usernames have been replaced with pseudonyms and any identifying information has been removed from presented data.

Many users in online forums, of course, have already adopted a pseudonym or alternative 'online' identity. Thus, some contributors' online identities/personas may not be congruent with those

[12] Searches were also conducted on variants of this hashtag; #BeenRapedNotReported, #RapedNeverReported, #RapedNotReported

individuals' offline or 'real life' existence (see, for example, Bell and Flock 2011). As this study is concerned with the public interaction of online spaces, I will examine these personas as they are projected. I do not see it as within my role as a researcher to make assumptions about what constitutes a source's true or 'authentic' identity. Thus, where a source identifies their sex/gender/race or personal experiences, barring any significant cause for doubt, these identities and experiences will be taken as genuine.

A wide literature spanning multiple fields of critical engagement evidences the unviability of attempting to occupy an objective or 'outsider' standpoint (Fonow & Cook 1991; Brooks & Hesse-Biber 2007; Collins & Gallinat 2010; Šiklić-Mićanović 2010). My work and understandings are inevitably formed, in part, through the lens of my own experiences of sexual violence, as well as more recent experiences of supporting fellow survivors in a women's Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre. I take it as advantageous in handling this sensitive and personal topic to have that awareness born of experiential familiarity. Often, undertaking thorough academic exploration of these issues is broadly accessible only to those with the privilege of little or no immediate involvement (Henry 2013). Yet there remains a communicative divide between inside and out, such that agency and language for survivors must first be formed and sculpted from within (see Das 2008). This is not to say, of course, that work contributed to the field by non-survivors has not been of merit, nor that I claim any hermeneutic authority over the experiences of other women; nor indeed that I will try to develop any such authority herein. The importance of this synthesis between scholarship and personhood will, I hope, be apparent and reflected in the following analysis.

I

SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARADIGMS OF FEMINIST COLLECTIVITY: A SHARED TRAJECTORY?

A great lineage of writing within spheres of feminist praxis establishes that language - alongside the ontologies and hierarchies of which it is both constructor and construction - proffers a field of contestation which marginalised groups must fight to reclaim, re-embellish and regenerate as a political sphere (Spender 1980; Devitt &

Sterelny 1999; Edkins 2003:9; Fricker 2007:147). Within and against natural evolutions of language, women, in tandem with other constellations of oppressed populations, have coalesced to develop alternative communicative forums and epistemological modalities. Growing in parallel with and in contrast against natural changes resulting from the non-fixity and perpetual evolution of all linguistic resources, subaltern or otherwise marginal groups have worked throughout history to render inarticulable experiential phenomena nameable and communicable.[13] The salience and extent of this lineage of disparate and yet often allied populations has expanded, evolved and transformed in line with the evolution of mass communication; the printing press, the radio, the television, the Internet.

The ascension of the Internet has been of such significance that its modes of communication have become integrated parts of the social world, felt both by online participants and offline observers (Kasana 2014:246). Social media in particular has had profound implications for interpersonal projection of identity and self-performativity. In addition, it has had significant repercussions for modes of political praxis, supporting social movements and motivating and organising political change (Kasana 2014; Craig 2015). In such spheres, social media can be understood neither as an entirely unprecedented phenomenon nor as a mere continuation of previous generations of media. On one hand, foundational modes of communicative practice employed in social media do not entirely diverge from offline practices: processes of disclosure and concealment mirror those processes employed to perform and aestheticise lived experience across the spectrum of communication. On the other hand however, social media is novel insofar as it instantiates a decentralised and intersubjective field in which subjects are able to cultivate multiple channels of spatially decontextualized and temporally dynamic interpersonal dialogue (Craig 2015:185).

This dissertation documents the historical rise and fall in pertinence and revolutionary potential of a number of paradigms which have forged feminist consciousness and hermeneutical resources.

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[13] For example, the development of new modes of communication and self-expression by slave populations as discussed in Zhu (2011). See also Grada Kilomba's "Plantation Memories: Episodes of Everyday Racism" (2013) which discusses, in far greater detail than I could proffer herein, the communicative modalities developed in line with reclamation of black subjectivity.

Identified is a cyclical repetition of evolution, subversion and then reincorporation of different mediums of feminist praxis. These forums are shown to arise, develop and then become superseded by something that is both new and familiar; a series of moments of hermeneutic breakthrough, followed by periods of forgetting, of re-subscription into hegemonic practices of linguistic representation and social consciousness. For reasons of concision, I will focus my, necessarily much abridged, tracing of this process primarily on the second wave of feminist praxis.[14] However, in order to contextualise second wave discourse it is instructive to first consider the influential insights on the nature and situation of woman offered by Simone de Beauvoir's seminal 20th Century feminist text 'The Second Sex'.

Simone de Beauvoir and The Second Sex:

Beauvoir asked her reader to challenge the notion of "L'Éternel Féminin"; to question what is this "thing" which we designate "woman"? Culminating in perhaps her most iconic quote, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", Beauvoir's work offers her readership, at any historical moment, a radical potential for liberation and self-fulfilment, tied to an understanding that "it is not nature that defines woman" (1949:15,295). Womanhood becomes less a submission to a natural and static ontological status, and more a process of actively interpreting, reinterpreting and appropriating a set of received socio-cultural possibilities (*ibid*:69; Butler 1896: 31).

To Le Doeuff, "For twenty years, The Second Sex was the movement before the movement… In one-to-one dialogue of reading, thousands of women found what later they got from meeting in groups: reference points for understanding the situation given to all of them, a language to express feelings of unease and the sharing of this unease." (2007:57) By this account, Beauvoir's work facilitated an awareness of the collective nature of women's oppression and the development of a

[14] I write here in line with the notion on 'waves' of feminist praxis. However, it is worth note that the idea of 'waves' is at times disingenuous, overstating and exacerbating the distinctiveness of these periods (Bailey 2002:139; Snyder 2008:177). Recognising these complexities, I appeal to the idea of 'the second wave' in facilitation of an analysis which acknowledges and explores broad themes of particular historical contexts, rather than assuming a cohesive or monolithic body of feminist thought to have existed at any temporal juncture.

language that could, as far as possible, articulate this oppression such that it be understood as a shared phenomena, rooted in the unjust structures of patriarchy rather than individual shortcomings. Reading The Second Sex taught woman to examine her situation with critical objectivity "instead of looking within ourselves for some hidden cause of an existential incapacity" to discover that she was not an anomalous failure, but that her situation was mirrored in that of a vast majority of women (*ibid*).

Kasana observes that social media has encouraged and facilitated a critical view of media and political voices, such that a sense of alternative political space and solidarity is fostered amongst online communities (2014). There are then distinct parallels to be drawn between Le Doeuff's characterisation of engagement with Beauvoir and engagement with online movements such as the survivor testimony of Emily Doe and the #BeenRapedNeverReported hashtag. Social media activism and disclosure have opened an intersubjective mode of communicative engagement wherein deindividualisation becomes an inherent feature of recognising the patriarchal oppression that fosters and enables sexual violence (Hunnicutt 2009:1).

Situating women and their supposed characteristics as a product of their environment, Beauvoir acknowledged that the world we inhabit is sculpted and projected in male terms. Without the historical or cultural opportunity to forge her own space, reason, or language, woman operates within a space and 'logic' created and imposed by man: there is no feminine epistemology or ontology (Beauvoir 1949:83,109). Whilst woman does not necessarily wish to acquiesce to the precepts of masculine construction, she knows she cannot contest a world built on his terms; she does not play the game "because she knows the dice are loaded" (*ibid*:623). Woman thus becomes imbued in her constitution *by* and *through* oppression: a product thereof. Where oppression permeates even ontological freedom, transcendence from the status quo becomes unimaginable. The current social order is taken as natural; a neutral reflection of intrinsic hierarchy rather than an obfuscation of social and symbolic domination (Kruks 1990:56).

Yet Beauvoir does not permit herself or her reader to abandon the idea of individual agency**.** She writes and reflects instead on a human condition that is "a synthesis of freedom and constraint, of consciousness and materiality", wherein the individual is both socially

embedded and intersubjective rather than fully autonomous (*ibid*:44,59). To counter the socially dominant narratives which constrained their being, women must realise their collective situation and achieve their liberated potential (Moi 1994:83). This act of collective communication and realisation is that which will endow the group with the capability for revolt. Beauvoir calls upon her female readership therefore to recognise the communality of their 'immanence' and to work collectively in the scripting of new linguistic modes of communication (*ibid*:608,639).

The #BeenRapedNeverReported hashtag demonstrates how social media fulfils this appeal for collective communication. The movement was, as one Twitter account reported, "Creating a web of solidarity through just a few words: #BeenRapedNeverReported" (November 2015). By uncovering the prevalence and structural concealment of abuse, online participants were able to increasingly navigate the terrain of disclosure through mutual support and awareness of their sheer numerical abundance. Responses on the hashtag thread documented the personal significance of this realisation. "I am freaking out right now", Tracy reported, "but in a "holy cow I am not alone" sort of way. Crying. #BeenRapedNeverReported" (October 2014). Jacquie likewise attested, "I felt so alone, and broken following my assault. Can't explain how important #Beenrapedneverreported is. You are NOT alone." (October 2014).

These women began to instantiate a Beauvourian-style challenge to socially-imposed narratives of surviving abuse. Where these narratives routinely attribute blame for traumatic experience upon individual behaviours, lifestyles or attitudes, they function both to conceal the androcentric and patriarchal structures of which sexual domination is an inherent function, as well as to individualise and pathologise the victims of these structures; embedding notions of an isolated, and thereby shameful, experience (Du Mont et al. 2003; Anderson 2012; Ward 1995:28). Phoebe on Twitter concisely summarised the personal and interpersonal magnitude of the sharing phenomenon: "If you've #beenrapedneverreported you're not alone any more. A shift in thinking is happening, finally. Testify!" (November 2014). Mass projection of their experiences allowed survivors to script an alternative discourse of sexual violence, which itself posed an insurgent challenge to notions of shame and isolation.

Kasana conceives of social media as an essential site for the creation and consolidation of networks of solidarity in the modern era: "Women can give a voice to their aspirations and make bonds with other women, materialize activism for their goals, and be heard. This networked feminism enables online mobilization and coordination of feminists around the world." (2014:246). In this sense, further to connecting to one another as co-survivors, contributions to the #BeenRapedNeverReported thread evidence the establishment of an increasing networked feminist collectivity in online spaces. Twitter user, Sarah, stated that "Women connected to #feminism through #beenrapedneverreported" (May 2016). By engaging with the realities of women's experiences, the hashtag encouraged many women to take on a political voice. Dr Bury of Canada's Open University reported that she had interviewed a number of women who had used #BeenRapedNeverReported and found that the trend "made feminism "legible" for many younger women" (2015). Thus we can trace an instantiation of that collective realisation that Beauvoir envisioned as the groundwork for revolt against patriarchal structures and ontologies.

There are of course distinct divergences between the two paradigms of feminist communication. Beauvoir's descriptions of communality were orated upon by a single – albeit resonant – voice, heavily rooted in Western philosophical and academic traditions. Social media by admitting thousands of women into temporally active discussion, facilitates the exploration of multiple experiences, standpoints and alternative interpretations in ways which confront and contest Beauvoir's notion of what and whom constitutes an acceptable interlocutor for other women. Beauvoir's writing was heavily tied to her particular socio-economic and historical context; a middle-class, educated, white woman in mid-20th century Paris (Oakley 1986:21; Le Doeuff 2006:13). Hence her work demonstrates a strong influence from the racial and class-oriented divisions that permeated her ontological stance. Jarring to many contemporary readers, Beauvoir frequently relied upon divisive anthropological assumptions, which enabled her to draw the conclusion that only "certain women" - inferably Western, educated women - were fully capable of elucidating the realities of the situation of woman more broadly (see, for example, Beauvoir 1949:27; Oakley 1986:23).

Social media however, permits those questions and observations raised through Beauvoir's work to be reflected upon repeatedly and interactively, accounting for multiple perspectives from multiple sites of race, ethnicity, religion and socio-economic background. In so doing, these discourses are able to challenge Beauvoir's preoccupation with a single, monolithic notion of womanhood; indeed in many ways averting the necessity of a notion of womanhood altogether. Of course, online platforms cannot nullify class, race and religious hierarchies in some utopian networked-egalitarianism. The online environment is often fraught with such tensions and remains an arena where white, liberal feminism is able to propagate (Snyder 2008:181). However, certainly to a greater extent than engaging in the unreciprocative dialogue that defines author and reader, online forums instantiate a space wherein the demonstration of multiple subjectivities is able to levy a challenge to notions of a unitary womanhood or singular feminism. The intersubjectivity of the medium itself facilitates a re-scripting of certain debates, inciting an awareness of divergent experiences of persecution at the site of multiple, intersecting oppressions. New identities are shaped and adopted at the interstices of conflicting discourses (Snyder 2008:186) such that if to Beauvoir "One is not born but rather becomes a woman", to this evolving networked-feminism 'One is not born a woman, but may come to inhabit one of many possibilities which can be performed and/or socially interpreted as womanhood'. This postmodernist turn in identity politics has, in part, been responsible for the annulment of the revolutionary pertinence of Beauvoir's work.

Despite its limitations, Beauvoir's writing provided a mouthpiece for many of the frustrations and puzzlements experienced by her female readership. She recognised these emotions as rational and legitimate, in ways which had previously been broadly denied, or attributed instead to the onset of hysteria or a psychotic-break. She created an inherently political text which instilled intimately political realisations and experiences in the female reader. Beauvoir told her she was not alone, that her problems were shared, and that there was a need to form a language - a whole framework - for women which represented their situation and ardent desire for equal subjectivity (Le Doeuff 2006:17). She created a space wherein women could begin to self-extricate from the myths of patriarchal language and society. This is certainly a project which continues to find expression in online

projects of disclosure and discussion of the gendered experience of sexual violence. However, whilst it instantiated its own significant moment of hermeneutical breakthrough, and continues to be regarded in canonical status as a feminist text, The Second Sex itself has broadly lost its insurgent and revolutionary potential. Due to its strong temporal and cultural attachment to the upper-middle classes of 20th century Europe, alongside its heavy invocation of existentialist philosophy, the text has become inaccessible to the modern readership: an important document of feminist history, but hardly an insurgent use of language as defined in the present day.

Hélène Cixous and L'Écriture Féminine:

In the context of exploring the insurgent potential of female linguistics it would be remiss not to turn briefly to the work of Hélène Cixous. Writing perhaps her best known piece, "Laugh of the Medusa", in 1976, Cixous called for the inculcation of a new mode of writing; a mode which would disrupt, overflow and exceed phallocentric systems of male expression (Cixous 1976; see also Showalter 1992). It would be a style of writing about, for, and by women - l'Écriture Féminine - acknowledging women's hitherto oppressed desires and creativity; striving to reclaim these passions as well as, or in tandem with, a reclamation of the female body and sexuality. Cixous, like Beauvoir, speaks to women's dissatisfaction within current social trajectories, as well as to the incommunicability of this unease in current linguistic and ontological frameworks. "And I too said nothing," she writes, "I was ashamed. I was afraid, and I swallowed my shame and fear. I said to myself: You are mad! ... Who, surprised and horrified by the fantastic tumult of her drives (for she was made to believe that a well adjusted normal woman has a… divine composure), hasn't accused herself of being a monster?" (1976:876).

For Cixous, the act of writing presents "the very possibility of change"; forging a space for subversion and delineation of dominant ideas and thus offering the transformation of social and cultural spaces (*ibid*:879). She claims that preceding the birth of a culture of women's writing, "truth" remains a product and function of phallocentrism; concerned only with the preservation of historically derived systems of social, cultural and ontological advantage, as manifested along cleavages of domination defined by sex/gender, race and class (*ibid*).

Cixous thus argues that "[woman] must write her self, because this is the invention of a *new insurgent* writing which, when the moment of her liberation has come, will allow her to carry out the indispensable ruptures and transformations in her history" (*ibid:*880).

These ideas however, are mediated with an acknowledgement that women are broadly prevented from enacting such writing. A pretence of writing as 'high culture' - "it is reserved for the great, that is, for "great men"" - alongside assumptions about its triviality when undertaken outside of those echelons, prevent women from shaping the kinds of language through which collective liberation might be expressed (*ibid*:876). To Cixous, woman must thus position herself in opposition to these ideals, writing with abandon and without concern for social judgements. She asserts that it is this act of truly writing ourselves - writing as women - that will mould the new linguistic resources that are themselves essential to the project of liberation (Zhu 2011:616).

Here too, social media provides a fruitful ground; although not, perhaps, in either the manner or form Cixous might have hoped or anticipated. Twitter in particular, which limits the user to 140 characters per tweet, invites contributions which significantly differ from the lengthy, flowing, almost poetic, prose which defined Cixous' own 'feminine' writing style. However, there is a distinctly Cixous-esque texture to the removal of writing from the realm of the "high culture" and "great men" into the diverse forum of the Internet. Online mediums offer a social and intersubjective platform where writing is presented, shared, sculpted, and consumed in a public forum, without the necessity to conform to ideas of cultural quality, literary norms, or standards of 'high art'.

Feminist appropriation of online spaces has therefore rendered writing one's experience of rape accessible to a plethora of previously silenced voices. Where only women with the time, literacy, and privileged social capital to document their experiences in novels, memoirs or academic papers are accepted as reliable interlocutors of experiential resources, we are liable to simply reinforce pervasive narratives of a white, middle-class victim (Anderson 2012; Ward 1995:28). Social media offers instead - or as well - a space for the reclamation of the marginal voices of survivors for whom writing to high cultural or academic standards would appear simply untenable. Dawn, for example, used the #BeenRapedNeverReported thread to

discuss her experience of surviving sexual abuse in tandem with struggling against poverty and alcohol addiction (November 2014). She describes her low self-esteem, and sense that "no one gives a shit" about her trauma as compared to those more eloquent survivors who can be identified as holding greater shares of social and cultural capital. On the Internet voices like Dawn's, which will never be heard in the academy and of whom even my most earnest attempt at representation is at best a reconstruction, can be found in abundance. In this sense, where women are able to carve a niche within the vastness and complexity of online space, we find liberational potential for creative or subversive expression, particularly for those who may be otherwise excluded from conventional arenas of creative or expressive language.

Cixous, furthermore, observes the rarity of cases wherein women have never written anything whatsoever of their experiences, "you've written a little, but in secret", she asserts, in conspiratorial dialogue with her reader, "And it wasn't good because it was secret" (1976:876). This furtive feminine writing, to Cixous, curtails the potential for liberational edge. Writing in secret makes the act feel shameful, and what is written is thus without full ownership or embrace. Online spaces permit women to dispel this secrecy; disclosing their insights and writing in a way which is neither co-opted by the academy nor subjected to the artistic critique of literary circles. Writing is thus divested of the spectre of shame, and sharing relieved the from co-optive structures of institutional interference. Where social media can counter co-optation of literature by resisting extant notions of cultural standards of purity of writing, feminist spaces of collective engagement can attempt to resist the power structures and hierarchies which govern institutionalised practices.

Consciousness Raising and the Second Wave:

The use of social media to form deinstitutionalised sites of solidarity, collectivity and interpersonal dialogue invites a natural comparison between these platforms and those which proliferated as part of 'second wave' feminist praxis. Broadly coalescing around the need to challenge traditional gender roles and the aim of protecting women from institutional discrimination, this movement began to take root a little over a decade after the release of The Second Sex. Many second wave feminists remained heavily influenced by Beauvoir's work,

closely tying the concept of 'woman' to her experiences, and emphasising her capacity to revolt against the notion that these experiences constitute her being or define her role in social configurations (Le Doeuff 2006, 2007; Grant 1993). The women of the second wave however, sought out a more actionable political agenda than was practicable from the pages of The Second Sex (Le Doeuff 2006:19, Goss 2013:49, Kisner 2004:129).

To Braidotti, "The novelty of the sixties was that women started talking to other women, to compare notes on their respective conditions"; allowing women to become accepted as interlocutors for themselves and one another (1994:264). By the 1970s, this function of the movement was well established, and with it a whole agenda built around women's collectives, salons, protests, speak-outs and consciousness-raising workshops. These spaces acted as a means of understanding and sharing women's unique experiences and countering patriarchal hegemony over epistemological and experiential knowledge (Snyder 2008:175). In contrast to The Second Sex, far from collectivity existing as an idea or relationship communicated through text, this collective communication and action became embedded within the grassroots of feminist praxis itself; founded in communal spaces where ideas could be shared, discussed, critiqued, examined and evolved. Based upon a founding assumption that sharing personal experiences would generate an understanding of communal oppression tied to the structures of patriarchy (rendering the 'personal' 'political'), narratives of classic second-wave feminism posit the movement as heavily centred around the construction of communicative tools which could articulate hitherto incommunicable aspects of the female experience (*ibid*:184). Through these mediums, second wave feminists conceived a common link among women insofar as they did indeed constitute 'The Second Sex', recognised in the shared bond of oppression.

Irrespective of Beauvoir's influence upon the individual lives of her readers, many female experiences remained obscure and often unspeakable, even to women themselves into and beyond the stirrings of renewed feminist connection in the early 1960s. Women continued to incorporate their self-concept into the available epistemological and communicative frameworks, whilst at the same time "the whole engine of collective social meaning was effectively geared to keeping these obscured experiences out of sight." (Fricker 2007:153). Lacking

appropriate concepts, women were compelled to create, and even become, versions of themselves or events which could be narrativised, conceptualised and ultimately made to sit within the structures dictated by the androcentric status-quo (*ibid*:168). In the communal women's spaces which became available in the 1970s however, women began to speak these unspeakable realities. Piecing together the inherited language of man, here women found ways to dissect it, change it, to subvert it, or to forge new meanings and ideas within it (Cahill 2001:16; Fricker 2007:148).

This process is in many ways mirrored in the emergence of testimonial discussion via particular Twitter hashtags. The nature of the hashtag system means users are able to engage with a wider debate or collective group. This can be seen, in some ways, to mimic the aforementioned second wave collectives where people would come together to discuss particular topics; facilitating a rupture to women's isolation and to challenging the individualisation of problems or disturbances encountered by women. In the coming together of these spaces, women are able to feel part of something; to understand that we are not alone in our experiences. Anecdotal and autobiographical in nature, such engagements use reading or hearing about the life experiences of a diversity of individuals to facilitate women garnering insight into their own lives and the societal structures which govern them (Snyder 2008: 184)

Significantly, #BeenRapedNeverReported and The Stanford Rape Letter also enact the functions of awareness raising and political mobilisation which were key to second wave activism. Many Twitter users, both male and female, expressed a new awareness not only of the sheer prevalence of unreported sexual violence, but of the barriers and difficulties which prevent women from taking legal measures against their abusers. "I'm shocked at how many women keep sexual assault quiet," Simon posted in response to the hashtag, "But I am starting to understand why. So awful. #rapedneverreported" (October 2014). Alone, of course, such cognisance is unlikely to motivate structural changes to investigative and legal procedure, but combined with other social factors it seems plausible, at least, that increased public awareness of the practical, social, and emotional obstacles associated with reporting abuse to authorities may facilitate certain leverages in terms of instantiating measures of improvement.

This is an important point of consideration, as one of the main arguments levied against online activism is that it amounts only to "slacktivism"; political involvement of minimal effort which fails to translate into any significant impact upon the 'real' - that is offline - world (Christensen 2011). However, even where the emotional realities of women are not taken to constitute the 'real world', Doe's letter evidences the potential of online spaces to achieve political impact in ways which confirm its place in the political lineage of feminist praxis. The letter brought mass attention to the unfathomably light sentencing of Mr. Turner, as well as to the inappropriate justification of this by appeal to his academic and athletic achievements. In so doing, the piece sparked public outrage both on- and offline, attracting campaigns for more severe and transparent sentencing decisions in cases of sexual assault, as well as for the immediate removal of the judge responsible for the lenient treatment of Doe's attacker in the present case. In culmination of this outrage, the letter was eventually read aloud, in full, in the House of Congress in the context of appeals to increase legal and regulatory frameworks combatting rape on university campuses (Aguilera 2016). In light of this growing movement, it becomes untenable to deny the political sway held in social media as a mode of feminist activism.

Yet online platforms, of course, cannot be considered wholly analogous to those spaces privileged in the second wave. Most obviously, the Internet is not an exclusively female environment. In many ways, the Internet fails even to constitute a hospitable environment for women to navigate (see Hunt 2016; Lafrance 2016). Online harassment, 'trolling', or otherwise threatening behavior is a significant problem for women operating in the digital sphere[15]. Whilst is clear that collective spaces held, at least to an extent, some notion of togetherness, shared purpose and, even where opinions may vastly differ, a shared notion of the value of the female voice and women's emancipation (Cahill 2001), this is not the case in many online environments. The ephemeral, partial and fluid nature of the Internet facilitates the simultaneous enactment of multiple contrasting and

[15] Internet security firm Norton estimates that 76% of women under 30 have experienced some form of abuse or harassment online, including, but not limited to, unwanted contact, aggressive online exchanges, sexual harassment, threats to reveal intimate information or images ('revenge porn', for example), and threats of rape, physical attack and/or murder (cited in Hunt 2016).

overlapping spaces. As demonstrated, this, on one hand, permits women to carve out spaces that can accommodate and enhance female subjectivity, yet on the other, the public and broadly anonymous nature of the online environment as a whole produces a concurrent, and broadly unavoidable, space for exposure and vulnerability. Jillian, for example, used #BeenRapedNeverReported to disclose her rationale behind not reporting her assault to the police. Whilst she received many supportive comments from people who were also compelled to tell their own stories of abuse in the space created by her testimony, she was also subject to comments which highlight the lack of safely or sanctity available on publically accessible platforms. One response, for example, read, "Fuck you… There's nothing admirable, commendable or brave in what you're doing. You're acting completely selfishly by allowing a rapist to go unreported… You're a rape enabler… You're an accessory to every rape he commits from this day forward… FUCK. YOU." (November 2014). Jillian confronted such personal attacks with, at least an external performance of, confidence in her own position, yet it must be acknowledged that for many survivors this would not be possible. For any survivor in a vulnerable condition, such comments may be catastrophically damaging.

Other significant divergences between the second wave and the modalities of feminist interaction emerging online can be found less in the realm of practical realities of the media employed, and more in the existential or philosophical underpinnings of the debate as a whole. As identified in reference to The Second Sex, the transition to an online forum permits the meaningful involvement from women of multiple standpoints and backgrounds to disrupt notions of a single or superior interlocutor for women's experiences and needs. Yet in the context of a comparison with second wave feminism we can take this analysis further; asking whether the online platform redefines and restructures the need to adhere to a particular category of 'woman' at all?

An extensive literature has documented a transition, beginning somewhere between the mid-1980s and late-1990s depending on the account, away from second wave feminism and towards a more postmodern account of female solidarity and praxis (Bailey 2002; Brooks & Hesse-Biber 2007; Snyder 2008). Of course, this division is not as stark as it is painted by many critics of the second wave; although frequently caricatured as such, the movement did not constitute a monolithic body of cohesive thought and in fact embodied

a long history of internal (and admittedly often silenced) calls for diversity and individual variance (Bailey 2002:139,149). However, there is broad agreement on the decline of second wave paradigms - as situated in a wider academic trend towards postmodernism - due to an internal crisis stemming from its overreliance on a hegemonic, and broadly Western-liberal, conception of a singular notion of the female experience (Snyder 2008:186).

Operating in a space that is ungoverned and not (formally) hierarchical, social media sources are able, for the present moment, to avert the paradox of 'woman' which plagued the second wave. Female experiences and subject positions are occupied with increased fluidity, disrupting essentialist narratives of dominance and passivity as correlational to 'male' and 'female' identities. Thus, Beauvoir's question of what precisely defines a woman is nullified. Women are able to define themselves in terms of personal identities or experiences without having to accede to those standards of aesthetic or behaviour that may regulate offline identities. Online, identities can be inhabited, rejected, evolved, and changed, such that participants are able to engage with those forums that feel relevant to them, and disengage from those that do not. Social media thus presents a forum wherein participants are able to reject or subvert accounts which prescribe a monolithic set of 'female' experiences. Experiences are taken to amount to histories, circumstances or encounters inhabited by online personas, which may or may not be congruent with one's own, but are evidently not congruent with a universal standard. The sheer volume of standpoints, experiences, identities and environments which comprise the body of online participants renders the idea of a monolithic womanhood or female experience untenable.

As noted, by circumventing the requirement for high cultural or academic standards, or by collapsing those distinctions which render writing of 'high' or 'low' culture, online public platforms render linguistic space accessible to, and subvertible by, groups who are traditionally excluded from conventional arenas of expressive language**.** When the feminist hashtag "#YesAllWomen" for example, was instigated as a means of expressing a unitary female dissatisfaction and experience, its primacy was negated by the interjection of the alternative hashtag "#YesAllWhiteWomen". Women of colour used this space to challenge a hegemonic notion of the female experience which failed to account for the intersecting oppressions of race and

visible ethnicity, as well as to build ties of solidarity with other feminists of colour. The temporal dynamism and spatial disconnection of social media allows such spaces to flourish and evolve in intersubjective dialogue. Thus, where both Beauvoir and the discourse of the second wave both held prescriptive notions of appropriate womanhood, social media – whilst by no means utopian, or even egalitarian - has the capacity to somewhat disrupt or avert these notions through the multiplicity of voices presented.

However, the rejection of universalist appeals to a common experience that constitutes 'woman' does not infer a necessity to discard the concept of experience altogether. The personal story is central to the intrinsic value of social media testimonies. Insight gained from personal experiences provides the foundational material upon which challenges to dominant narratives are constructed. Here however, the foregrounding of such personal narratives can be viewed as part of an intersectional and multi-vocal version of feminism which embraces networks of productive knowledge over theoretical synthesis or justification (Snyder 2008:184). Sharing personal experiences maintains its centrality in the work of consciousness raising, yet rather than attempting to raise consciousness of an overarching female experience there is scope to embrace a multiplicity of female experiences as informed by a multiplicity of identity-signifiers and individual circumstance. The project is liberated from the constraints of tracing one particular code of lived experience, becoming able instead to accept and document the 'messiness' of lived contradiction (*ibid*:177).

By the 1990s, the observations and demands of feminism's second wave had largely been either co-opted and depoliticised by 'postfeminist' ideologies, or destabilised and fractured by the stirrings of postmodernism (Goss 2013:49; Kisner 2004:129). In both instances, the collective action of the second wave was broadly deemed historical (Kinser 2004:124). It thus becomes possible to trace a process of epistemic and hermeneutic female empowerment and subsequent reincorporation, wherein each arising moment of repoliticisation or breakthrough incorporates and yet surpasses previous incarnations**.** Beauvoir's writing was emancipatory insofar as she demonstrated that women are neither biologically destined to subjugation nor alone in the prevailing sense that the world was not as each wished it to be. However, her work was limited by the horizons of her time, its

philosophical inaccessibility to those many women lacking her significant education, and its lack of practical agenda for legislative change. Thus, over time, The Second Sex has been largely reincorporated into the canon of history/philosophy, rather than retaining the insurgent potential of its original scripting. Cixous' work suffered similar downfalls; whilst she made a revolutionary call for a new, liberational language of women, her roots in literary traditions rendered this ideal still unattainable and inaccessible to women outside of her class and educational background. Where the activism and collectives of the second wave provided a more accessible and actionable base for a greater number of women, they remained plagued by prescriptive notions of womanhood which, after their legislative successes, saw them surpassed in a world of feminist scholarship increasingly dominated by postmodern influences.

Social media evades some of the issues highlighted by the ascent of postmodernism by presenting a multiplicity of voices and thus offering avenues for circumvention of essentialising discourses. Although it retains some problematic features, and is not always a hospitable environment for female involvement, the increasing development of hashtags, blogs and other spaces aimed specifically at uncovering elements of women's experiences renders it more broadly amenable to multivocal narratives of multiple experiences. Social media does not lose sight of the value of autobiographical and anecdotal testimony in forging a collective space – albeit one less concerned with a singular identity – but rather foregrounds this autobiographical trend in the project of subverting and countering the limitations of hegemonic, patriarchal structures of epistemic and linguistic exchange.

So whilst there are key differences between reading or writing feminist texts, participating in a collective and testifying about experiences of oppression online, there are also distinct similarities. In online forums, women are able to read the experiences of others as they might read Beauvoir; to write outwith the pressure of high culture or art, embodying aspects of Cixous' l'Écriture Féminine and to engage in discussion as they might have in a more traditional - that is physical represents a distinct snapshot of engagement with the hermeneutics of the female existence.

II

DISRUPTION AND POLITICISATION OF LANGUAGE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The decline of each of these feminist spaces has been broadly characterised by their incorporation into the neutralising structures of institutional power (Stammers 2009). Proliferation of postfeminist ideologies in particular has to a great extent nullified and supplanted once insurgent modalities of feminist hermeneutics. These structures co-opt, re-script or conceal radical discourses such that they exist within, rather than against, dominant frameworks of patriarchal power. Having documented this pattern, I turn to look specifically at the narratives of trauma emanating from social media as a moment of political reclamation of language; a new moment of linguistic insurgency as defined by its existence outwith prevailing systems of naturalisation. This moment, captured as a socio-political snapshot, is of particular significance in its problematisation of widely accepted polarisations and bifurcations. The remainder of this dissertation will focus on an analysis of the process whereby dichotomous notions of victimhood/protest and sex/violence have been deconstructed and challenged. By capturing a snapshot of this articulative moment, it is possible to unpack the emancipatory potential held in the composition of a more nuanced, if often conflicting and contradictory, understanding of survivors of sexual abuse.

The Victim/Agency Dichotomy:

Trauma occupies a perhaps unique space of oscillation between victimhood and protest (Edkins 2003:9). Many forms of traumatic experience impart distressing or disruptive insights into the underpinnings and contingency of hegemonic social and ontological systems (*ibid*). Denial of linguistic avenues by which this insight might reveal the inherent violence concealed within patriarchy facilitates the transformation of insurgent voices into 'victims'; minimising the political challenge to prevailing hierarchies. Social media offers a space for exploration of the insights of survivors of trauma; facilitating repoliticisation of notions of victimhood by disrupting dichotomous

notions which position victimhood and personal agency as binary, oppositional constructs.

A satirical article published on the Huffington Post website claims that, "The right way to act after a sexual assault is simple: don't do any of the things that people actually do when dealing with the complex mix of shame, fear, pain, and anger that they feel after being sexually assaulted... Instead, just act like the perfectly rational fantasy image of what people would like victims to act like" (Ross 2016). An extensive literature on the ideology of the 'perfect victim' of 'legitimate' sexual violence documents this paradox (see Anderson 2012; Du Mont et al. 2003; Howell 2002; Jordan 2008). Howell speaks, in this vein, of "post-traumatic gendering", whereby women in particular are socialised into victim roles that are codified in coherence with, and thus concealment of, patriarchal structures (Howell 2002:14). Most typically, Howell demonstrates, expectations dictate that female survivors acquiesce to "the good girl" framework. This framework is heavily reliant upon the exaggeration of pre-conceived gender roles and stereotypes. In the wake of sexual trauma women are expected to amplify 'feminine' traits of passivity, helplessness, dependency, emotionality, insecurity and suggestibility (Broverman et al. 1970; Howell 2002:14). Informed by historical tropes of female silence and subservience, survivors of rape "are often instructed to lose their voices, that is: "Don't tell."" (*ibid*).

Edkins proposes that in contemporary culture, submission to "good victim" ontologies endows the survivor with sympathy, pity and re-admission into the social order. In exchange, however, the survivor must adopt a modified worldview, now known, or suspected, to be inaccurate (Edkins 2003:9; see also Thomson 1994; Lim 2014). This adoption infers a resignation of political voice (Edkins 2003:9). By exaggerating and acceding to traditional roles of quiet dependency and helplessness, women are reincorporated into social frameworks, but do so with curtailed agency and limited capacity for protest.

Corresponding to familiar tropes of the Madonna/whore polarisation, the derivative of this socially sanctioned "good" victim inhabits the space of the "sexualized bad girl"; the fallen woman whose behaviour dictates her responsibility – and thus patriarchy's non-responsibility – for her situation (Howell 2002). This group is largely comprised of women who exhibit 'high risk' behaviours including drinking alcohol, taking drugs, dressing provocatively and associating

with unknown males. Women are not deemed to fulfill the role of 'legitimate' victims due to a notion of complicity in inciting or encouraging the crimes committed against them (Du Mont et al. 2003:468/9; see also Nixon 1992; Gregory and Lees 1999; Jordan 2008:702). Ultimately, both categories support the structures of patriarchy by reducing women's capacity to vocalise the realities of sexual violence and thus curtailing survivor agency and communicability.

Social media proffers the possibility of disrupting these binary notions. Looking first to Emily Doe's letter to Brock Turner, Doe demonstrates that her actions were clearly divergent from those of the 'good girl' victim. On the night of her attack Doe exhibited a number of behaviours which, according to Howell's analysis, should delegitimise her claims to innocence and inculpably. Doe had been at a party; she had been drinking heavily and had willingly kissed her attacker; she had little or no memory of the event. In conventional narratives, Doe could be dismissed as distastefully over-sexualised and thus broadly responsible for permitting the assault to occur. As recently as 2005, an Amnesty International survey documented that upwards of 26% of people in Britain believed a woman to be fully or partially responsible for sexual violence enacted against her if she was known to have had many sexual partners. Over 30% felt similarly in the event that she had consumed alcohol prior to the attack (Amnesty International 2005).

Doe's letter, however, documents her refusal to permit this good victim/fallen woman dichotomy to excuse the wrongs committed against her. Addressing her attacker she states "[I have been made] to listen to your attorney attempt to paint a picture of me, the face of girls gone wild, as if somehow that would make it so that I had this coming for me… This is not a story of another drunk college hook-up with poor decision making. Assault is not an accident… Alcohol is not an excuse. Is it a factor? Yes. But alcohol was not the one who stripped me, fingered me, had my head dragging against the ground, with me almost fully naked". Doe makes an inherently political statement which disrupts notions of bifurcation which divide victimhood from personal agency and political dissent by means of appeal to notions of complicity. The viral sharing of the letter saw online communities affirming this disruption and broadly instantiating a counter-

hegemonic discourse around the attribution of sexual attacks to patterns of female behaviour.

In spite of those factors which may delegitimise her victim status however, Doe was perhaps in a stronger position to inspire acceptance than the majority of survivors. She had a number of documented physical injuries, forensic evidence of sexual intrusion and multiple witnesses to the attack. She came round from the night in hospital and reported the crime to the police; garnering institutional legitimacy therefrom. The social value placed upon such institutional legitimacy is evidenced in the #BeenRapedNeverReported hashtag.

Coalescing around #BeenRapedNeverReported, the Twitter community demonstrated the sheer volume of women who have not reported the crimes committed against them. Sexual abuse remains among the most underreported, and least prosecuted, crimes (Jordan 2008:702; Rape Crisis England and Wales 2016; Kelly 2001). Non-reportage to police authorities is frequently a source of social confusion and rejection. Women who have not reported are excluded from socially sanctioned narratives of victimhood. Twitter demonstrated how non-reporting survivors are frequently chastised as non-genuine; "It's simple ladies," Mike surmised on the hashtag thread, "You are full of shit. If you claim to have #beenrapedneverreported it's a red flag that it's all BS" (October 2014). Additionally, as we saw in the case of Jillian's post above, non-reporting women were frequently said to be socially irresponsible; facilitating repeat offences. A moral responsibility is placed upon survivors, imbued with notions of letting down 'the sisterhood' through failure to represent or protect fellow women.

Posting on the #BeenRapedNeverReported hashtag, survivors embraced this position; refusing to acquiesce to the curtailed agency and depoliticised notion of the 'good' victim nor to be assigned to the composite category of 'bad', culpable or deserving. Rachael, for example, told the Twitter community, "Why didn't you go to the police is a ridiculous question. How," she asked, "can you be a grown ass adult and not know why? #BeenRapedNeverReported" (October 2014). She followed this question with a statement on the unrealistic standards prescribed to survivors of sexual abuse: "TW:rape. Some people blame me for not going to the police WHEN I WAS 14. What's expected of victims is ridiculous #BeenRapedNeverReported" (October 2014).

Many Twitter users employed this insurgent space to document their rationale behind non-reportage; countering and politicising hegemonic notions of culpability. These rationales tended to coalesce around thematic bodies of retraumatisation; institutionalised stigma and disbelief; and attribution of blame. Sam, for example, states that she did not report "Because I didn't want to have to defend myself to police officers who do not believe survivors #BeenRapedNeverReported" (November 2014). Rosie attested the truth, in her experience, of this claim: "#BeenRapedNeverReported except i did report it and police didn't believe me. Second time, i didn't even bother to go to police" (November 2014). Georgina spoke of her anxiety about institutional and public victimisation; "Was 19 never reported was victimized by the guy, didn't want to be victimized by the police or society #BeenRapedNeverReported" (November 2014). Whilst Michelle stated, "I lost my autonomy to multiple rapists and abusers. I wasn't losing it to a police & media investigation too. #BeenRapedNeverReported" (October 2014). Alex and Alice both documented their experiences of the culpability paradigm outlined above: "#BeenRapedNeverReported because... 16 + drunk = consent to the police"; "Because when I did go to the police all they wanted to talk about was my criminal record #beenrapedneverreported" (both November 2014). En masse, these online survivors are, mirroring Doe, refusing to permit the fact of their non-reportage, and the stigma attached thereto, to silence their voices or assuage their agency in asserting inherently political challenges to the environments that structured and supported their abuse.

Sharron and Jillian broadly succeed in epitomising trends of self-defined survivor-autonomy and insurgency. Sharron remarks; "I didn't report to police when my car was broken into and my camera was stolen. Am I bad? Did that not really happen either? #beenrapedneverreported". Jillian succinctly comments "I DIDN'T REPORT BECAUSE FUCK YOU." (October 2014). These survivors are neither displaying feminised performances of exaggerated helplessness, nor permitting regulatory discourses to silence their experiences through punitive notions of blame. This change averts the necessity for choice between retrospective incorporation of their narratives into the framework of 'genuine' rape/victimhood – symbolised here by reporting the attack – or social isolation. An unashamed political voice is instantiated such that victimhood becomes

a function of political praxis and vice versa, regardless of personal circumstance and choice.

Social media thus proffers a space for 'imperfect victims'; the victim role is re-politicised against patriarchy. Women are able to acknowledge the realities of their experiences, whilst also drawing attention to the political realities of rape, as it is instantiated within gendered oppression. The snapshot presented in social media testimony documents a distinct and important phase in the tracing of feminist linguistic and epistemic insurgency. By facilitating the instantiation and permeation of new possibilities for disjuncturing histories of patriarchal hermeneutics, this moment is evidently both novel in its politicisation of these particular cleavages, yet also firmly tied to the historical lineage of insurgent language detailed in Section I of this paper. This relationship and transformational potential can be further established and evidenced in turning attention to the related political agitation of dichotomous understandings of violence and sexuality.

The Sex/Violence Dichotomy:

A wide and varied literature, spanning decades, documents an ongoing bifurcation in feminist opinion as to the primary social function of rape and sexual abuse. A full exegesis of this literature is beyond the scope of this paper, yet theories can be seen to broadly coalesce around two ends of a crucial dichotomy (for a thorough review of this literature see Cahill, 2001). At one pole, rape is taken to function primarily as an act of sexuality; a crime of passion, committed (predominantly) by men, for whom acting upon sexual whims has been socially sanctioned by patriarchal histories and remains broadly permissible. At the opposite pole, rape is taken to operate through a framework of violence, wherein the sexual nature of the physical act is taken to be a primarily incidental by-product in a campaign of violent intimidation of women.

Whilst it is untenable to theorise a cohesive body of thought, it is broadly possible to characterise second wave approaches as appealing to the latter notion of rape. Following Brownmiller's seminal 'Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape', feminist theorists in the 1970s generally echoed and developed the founding assumption that disconnecting rape from its implications of sex and sexuality would

permit a recognition of the crime's political utility in instantiating and maintaining gendered hierarchies (see, for example, Brownmiller 1975; Cahill 2001:22; Morgan 1977:163; Griffin 1977:332). It was also broadly agreed that this distinction would reduce public and institutional reliance upon myths about female incitement of rape through dress or behaviour (Cahill 2001:21). There was thus a concerted effort throughout the 1970s to eradicate sexuality from rape discourses, establishing instead 'sex-neutral' discursive and legal frameworks (*ibid*:31).

This distinction can be seen to have permeated more recent social and ontological contexts (see Anderson 2012). However, this has in many ways failed to instantiate the empowering potential envisioned in the second wave. Instead Anderson demonstrates the pervasion of an ubiquitous social belief that rape is damaging not as an act of violence in and of itself, but rather as an aside to violent attacks which are assumed to surround rape and enable its occurrence. Women have thus been consistently documented as significantly more likely to report sexual crimes where these have been concurrent with visible, external violence. It has also been shown that in these cases law enforcement personnel are appreciably more compassionate, trusting and ultimately productive in terms of securing prosecution (Anderson 2012; Bachman 1993; Du Mont et al. 2003; Gunn & Minch 1988; Howard et al. 2000). Mary, posting on Twitter documents this common experience: "Police say: you weren't hurt/you have no proof #beenrapedneverreported" (October 2014). Where there is an absence of injuries in the sense that we usually conceive of them, there is an ontological void as to the conceivable harm enacted in and through rape. Sexual and emotional harms are not taken as relevant factors for consideration (Anderson 2012).

This pervasive distinction thus rests upon an assumption that the acts we associate with sexuality are inherently and fundamentally separate from conceptions of harm and violence. Das (2008) proposes that, ascribed to the sphere of domesticity, the connection between intimate, consensual sexual acts and acts of sexual assault is obscured and protected, such that certain acts are unnameable in the language of violence. It is necessary to problematise this distinction as it situates survivors in a painful hermeneutical paradox. Whilst the language of violence permits public discussion about rape as an abstract "social phenomenon", identifying and describing personal experience is

hindered by reliance upon language of intimacy and sexuality (Raine 1998:207). Socially protected by separation from the language of violence, use of sexual terminology to discuss rape is frequently conflated with a revelation of a private, intimate moment: "a shameful sexual encounter" (*ibid*). Purohit et al (2016) argue that contributors on social media continue to operate within these frameworks, providing only "socially acceptable" content regarding gender-based violence. Yet the case studies identified in this paper reveal that this is not the case. Social media is, in fact, facilitating an insurgent reclamation of 'intimate' linguistic resources to document personal experiences of sexual assault.

Looking first to Emily Doe's letter, we can see that she employs language bluntly and without euphemism. She describes in detail how she was found "butt naked all the way down to my boots, legs spread apart, and [I had been] penetrated by a foreign object"; "My ass and vagina", she goes on, "were completely exposed outside, my breasts had been groped, fingers had been jabbed inside me along with pine needles and debris, my bare skin and head had been rubbing against the ground behind a dumpster, while an erect freshman was humping my half naked, unconscious body". She goes onto describe how he pushed his "erect dick" against her body; how he "peeled off" her underwear in order to insert his finger into her vagina. She describes his claim that she had orgasmed during digital penetration. Doe uses this language overtly and uncompromisingly. Although the events she recounts are distinctly sexual, there is no sense that anything remotely sensual or erotic could be taken from the letter. It is not a letter about intimate sex, yet nor is it simply a reflection of a violent assault. Rather, Doe synthesises the two modes of discourse into a non-erotic narration of sexual activities. The language is entirely familiar, yet its context is disruptive to social understandings of the sex/violence distinction and linguistic separation.

Similar reoccupations of this linguistic space were adopted on the #BeenRapedNeverReported thread. Anna, for example, described her assault vividly: "I'm naked and pinned down. I'm sobbing, saying stop and flailing like crazy. He puts his penis up to my face. #beenrapedneverreported". Second and third tweets from Anna read, "Now he rips off my pants and underwear, I'm still sobbing, he still has me pinned down. His mouth is all over my body #beenrapedneverreported", "He tries to shove his penis into my

vagina, but I force my legs together. He manages to pry them apart. #beenrapedneverreported" (November 2014). Again, her testimony demonstrates a refusal to sanitise, depersonalise or desexualise her experiences. Sexuality and violence are demonstrated to coexist within a single linguistic and corporeal space, permitting neither the reader nor the language of intimacy the protection founded in the separation of eroticism from violence.

Any ontology that fails to account for both the violent and sexual dimensions of rape fails to provide the basic linguistic tools required by survivors. By falling short of this recognition, 1970s theories of rape set up distinct barriers to women as we seek to communicate the physical and emotional realities of sexual violence (Cahill 2001). The snapshot captured in this dissertation documents survivors using online accounts of their experiences to disrupt the familiar language of intimacy, problematising the bifurcation of sex and violence and recognising the more complex realities which intertwine these spheres, often in confusing, messy and contradictory systems of interaction. The separation of intimacy and violence is in this sense revealed to hold an inherently political dimension, founded in the concealment of the trauma which creates and sustains patriarchy (Das 1996). Social media is creating a newly politicised cleavage at the linguistic intersect of violence and sex, where language referring to sexual actions or activities is shown not to necessarily infer erotic experience or, as described by Raine, "a shameful sexual encounter" (1998:207).

CONCLUSION

Using process tracing techniques to place social media testimonies in the wider context of feminist hermeneutics has facilitated an understanding of their emergence as part of a historically repetitive cyclical pattern of insurgent discourse. Analysis of survivors' online statements has shown how their experiences are being articulated in ways which disrupt notions of victimhood and the corporeal and linguistic separation of violence and sexuality. The inherent, and traumatic, interplay of these spheres which creates, sustains and instantiates patriarchal systems of oppression is therefore revealed and thus laid open to challenge.

In combining these methodologies, this thesis has been able to capture a snapshot of the present moment of hermeneutic discovery and politicisation. This has important implications for feminist praxis more broadly. By acknowledging and understanding this pattern, there opens a space to explore modes of maintaining insurgent language as a challenge to power; refusing and countering attempts at reincorporation and depoliticisation of survivors' voices. There is scope to look beyond the specific example of trauma and engage in other areas of oppression and marginalisation as sites of hermeneutical empowerment and epistemic legitimisation. The study of trauma however, provides an important basis for this as it represents a paradigmatic example of the inherent violence produced by and productive of patriarchy as crystallised at the intersect of sex, intimacy and power.

In further avenues of research stemming from this dissertation, there is a need for an in-depth exploration of the interplay between empowerment and re-traumatisation. I am conscious that this paper has focused broadly upon the significant and important potential for empowerment of survivors to be found on social media forums. However, this empowerment is accessible largely to those survivors who are in a position - emotionally and circumstantially - to engage with their experiences. Such a position is by no means a prescriptive account of recovery. I consider the time I spent working for a Rape Crisis helpline. As child abuse allegations against Jimmy Saville emerged in the public sphere, we received a sudden and significant increase in calls from distressed women. Many of these survivors were, to varying degrees, experiencing re-traumatisation brought about by the reports and discussions that permeated both news and social media. It is important to consider the emotional impact of very public discussions of sexual trauma upon potentially vulnerable audiences. I hope that further investigation of this cleavage will uncover mechanisms which could limit traumatic effects without losing the insurgency and impact highlighted by this dissertation.

It is nonetheless clear that social media has become a powerful space for engaging with and countering hermeneutical and epistemic challenges. It is also evident that the novelty of online forums does not require that they be viewed as existing separately from, or as disjunctive to, more traditionally held sites of feminist praxis; be these seminal texts or physical communities. As revealed through this study,

there is a distinct shared lineage between these arenas. Social media is able to embody the deindividualisation which was fundamental to Beauvoir; the collective communication facilitated by 1970s collectives; and disruption of gentrification, phallocentrism and secrecy of writing as called for by Cixous' Écriture Féminine. Whilst online platforms have inherited a number of the limitations of traditional feminist spaces as well as developing novel challenges to be addressed, this study has made clear that survivor testimony online forms part of the same trajectory and embodies many of the same functions as pervious paradigms of feminists engagements. The space offers a site of epistemic validation of marginalised experience and politicisation of linguistic practice, and as such offers a potentially insurgent force against patriarchal oppression.

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