

The Male Glaze

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themaleglaze

The Male Glaze · [meyl] [gleyz]: The perspective of a notionally typical heterosexual man, characterized by the tendency for his eyes to glaze over in response to the objectification and sexualization of women (derived from the male gaze (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Male_gaze), a term originally coined by feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laura_Mulvey) in 1975).



Sheddoesthecity, 2017 (<http://www.sheddoesthecity.com/temper-tantrum-torontos-queer-feminist-art.collective>)



This blog considers the social response to the recent sexual allegations in Dr. Christine Blasey Ford's case against associate justice of the supreme court, Brett Kavanaugh, highlighting the importance of what these responses mean to women in the fight to have an effective voice. Not only is the discourse of the trial another example of the deplorable ways in which women are exploited and persecuted, the trial itself signifies the persisting indoctrination of the societal categorization and discrimination towards women. This trial is strikingly familiar to Anita Hill's case in 1992 against associate justice of supreme court, Clarence Thomas, and while these cases are 26 years apart

the outcomes provide a chilling proclamation of the challenging road ahead. During the early nineties, 3rd wave feminist Rebecca Walker (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQKgJ1PJzBs>) wrote a compelling response to Hill's case, unpacking the real-world implications of the trial and inspiring women to stand together against patriarchy. In vast contrast to Walker's essay, the modern postfeminist's response to Blasey Ford's sexual allegations merit a closer look at the societal implications of these responses and the challenges women face today.



Marica Zottini, 2018

(<https://www.facebook.com/maricazottinoillustration/photos/a.555135154562280/1939018609507254/?type=3&theater>).

“That fury . . . holds centuries of never being able to directly address or express our indignation, our frustration and our rage. When someone thinks they can help themselves to our bodies, it not only ignites the current fury, but it lights up the past.”

Tracee Ellis Ross ([https://twitter.com/TraceeEllisRoss?](https://twitter.com/TraceeEllisRoss?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor)

[ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor](https://twitter.com/TraceeEllisRoss?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor)), Ted2018

(https://www.ted.com/talks/tracee_ellis_ross_a_woman_s_fury_holds_lifetimes_of_wisdom#t-613146).



It's a scary time for girls: feminist fury and the commodification of feminism.

In 2017, Merriam Webster declared *Feminism* their word of the year, the top looked-up word of 2017, followed closely by the word *complicit* (Merriam Webster (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/word-of-the-year-2017-feminism/feminism>), The Gaurdian (<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/dec/13/feminism-merriam-webster-word-of-the-year>)). These two words, seemingly unrelated, are inextricably linked and represent the centuries long battle for justice between the world some think we live in and the world we actually live in. The carefully ignored social injustices against women have yet to falter despite repeated exposure to the hypocrisy of a male-dominant culture. In the age of 4th wave feminism, where the white patriarchs have been called out, no stone left unturned, we find ourselves facing a dangerous mutation of misogyny. Discrimination and complicity have birthed new sycophants, obsequiously preparing the battleground for a new era in the fight for women's rights. Misogyny has found new corners in which to hide, as complicity becomes increasingly more subtle, implicit, and normalized. The modern feminist has new psychological hurdles to overcome while weaving through the world of the postfeminist and the commodification of feminism.



The recent response to yet another sexual allegation case against a white man in power is a profound reminder for women of all class, race, and gender that the fight for equality is far from over. The message is clear: the modern feminist is expected to adopt a well-mannered, millennial, feminist etiquette in order to have an effective voice. The *feminist* has become romanticized, idealized, and commodified, burying the authenticity of the feminist agenda.

Postfeminists, such as, Joanne Williams (<https://twitter.com/jowilliams293/status/964150127559659520?lang=en>), author of *Women vs. Feminism: Why we all need liberating from the gender wars*, and Ephrat Livny (<https://www.thewillkesbeacon.com/opinion/2018/09/18/is-feminism-a-benefit-or-a-detriment-to->

society/), writer and lawyer, use their platforms to voice dangerous implications that feminism is over. They proclaim that the women have 'won', the fight is over, and modern feminists are just perpetuating misandry, aggression, and narcissism. Today, we often see the feminist's fury towards the misogynistic outcome of political disputes and cases used against us in the push to eradicate the feminist movement, disarming women while giving misogyny a cover in which to hide behind.

"postfeminist culture increasingly favours happiness and positive mental attitudes, systematically outlawing other emotional states, including anger and insecurity." (Rosalind Gill, 610 (<https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.macewan.ca/doi/pdf/10.1177/1367549417733003>))

Livny claims that feminism has gone too far, stating that "[feminism], despite its best intentions . . . continues to perpetuate sexism. I'm already equal . . . no need to fight about it now" (<https://qz.com/1210845/the-subconscious-sexism-of-todays-feminist-movement/>). (Livny, Quartz). The postfeminist argument seems to be a biased account resulting from the personal experience of these women, insinuating that the feminist movement is outdated, sexist, exhaustive, victimizes women, making them out to be vulnerable and weak, undermining the privilege equality in opportunity and success now available to them. Rosalind Gill (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosalind_Gill), professor at the University of London, explains that the postfeminist stance "exculpates the institutions of patriarchal capitalism and blames women for their disadvantaged positions" (609 (<https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.macewan.ca/doi/pdf/10.1177/1367549417733003>)), laying the heavy burden of change on the delicacy of feminist discourse.

"there are women who claim to not believe in feminism because they do not experience any type of discrimination, but this is clearly not the situation for the majority of the female population." (Patrick O'Leary, *The Beacon*) (<https://www.thewilkesbeacon.com/opinion/2018/09/18/is-feminism-a-benefit-or-a-detriment-to-society/>)

As far as she claims the feminist movement has gotten us, a recent article written by Joanna Williams, published in *The American Conservative* (<https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/when-feminism-turns-on-women/>), in response to Kavanaugh's confirmation into the supreme court, is glaringly reminiscent of an article written for *Ms. Magazine* (<http://www.msomagazine.com/spring2002/BecomingThirdWaveRebeccaWalker.pdf>) in 1992 by Rebecca Walker (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rebecca_Walker), responding to the Thomas/Hill case. Walker clearly articulates the implications of the case hearings between Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill expressing that the hearings were not about determining whether Thomas did it, "**they were about checking and redefining the extent of women's credibility and power**" (Kolmar and Bartkowski, 458). However, in her article, 'When Feminism Turns on Women' (<https://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/when-feminism-turns-on-women/>), Williams not only speaks dismissively of the implications of Kavanaugh's confirmation, but illicitly focuses on the backlash towards Senator Susan Collins for her support of Kavanaugh. Williams expresses disdain for the feminist fury unleashed as a result of the trial saying "activists have only extended the net of hatred further", and that the 'near miss' resulting from Blasey Ford's claims "suggests the patriarchy is not as entrenched as it once was" (Williams, *The American Conservative*). This egregious statement implies that instead of lashing out against injustice, women should sit back and be grateful for the progress we have already made.

"Williams doesn't think we should be having a 'huge conversation' about modern feminism at the moment. She believes there are now more opportunities for women than ever before." (CBC Radio) (<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/outintheopen/that-f-word-1.4494880/it-concerns-me-greatly-have-metoo-and-modern-feminism-gone-too-far-1.4494938>)

She goes on to explain that “in the #metoo (<https://metoomvmt.org>) era, women are not to be considered rational beings equal to men before the law but as emotional creatures who deserve special treatment” (Williams, *The American Conservative*). What sounds like a decree for women to retreat is a glaringly misguided and myopic approach to the sustained empowerment and equality of women.



From *“F*ck U! In the most loving way.”*
 (<https://sf.funcheap.com/fck-national-feminist-art-exhibition-opening-sf/>). SF’s
 2016 National Feminist Art
 Exhibit

In contrast, Walker veraciously addresses the real-life implications of the trial’s results succinctly stating that **“He was promoted. She was repudiated. Men were assured of the inviolability of their penis/power. Women were admonished to keep their experiences to themselves”** (Kolmar and Bartkowski, 85). 26 years later, her words could be echoed again and again, over history and into the future, dissipating into the horizon. It is this age-old acceptance of blatant misogyny by men in power and their accomplices that, Walker says, “restricts the boundaries of women’s personal and political power” (Kolmar and Bartkowski, 85). Regardless of which wave we’re in, the systemic issues within our political systems remain antiquated and irrelevant. In order to maintain their domination, whenever an opportunity to exercise positive and profound, pro-social statements arise, the patriarchy and it’s accomplices stomp their feet and point fingers of fault at the women.

“How are young women raised on stories of ‘girl power’, ‘choice’ and ‘empowerment’ to make sense of the election of a president who is unashamedly racist, sexist, and anti-choice?” (Rosalind Gill, 609).

From her seminal book, *The second Sex* (<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/oct/09/ten-best-feminist-political-texts>), Simone de Beauvoir (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simone_de_Beauvoir) once wrote: “if women . . . never become the essential, it is because she herself fails to bring about this change” (Kolmar and Bartkowski, 164), encouraging women in the 1900’s to take agency over their personal and political rights. However, it is apparent that this belief today has been distorted. It has become ammunition used to extort the disadvantages of women to hold them accountable for their own inability to effect a dramatic change in gender asymmetry. The responsibility to expose injustice against women has been bound to the limitations of the marginalization of women.

However, if women take a stand and display outrage towards injustice, they face persecution, are called hostile, antagonistic, and are blamed for abating the momentum of the feminist movement while “runn[ing] a real risk in actually trivializing some of the far more serious offences of rape and sexual abuse” (Williams, CBC Radio). These accusations delimit the effectiveness of the feminist agenda and diminish the central focus of the movement, while allowing patriarchal agenda’s to get away with misogynistic approaches to social and cultural norms.

With the feminist fury stifled by the complicity of the postfeminist counter-movement, women are forced to direct their momentum inwards, towards self-transformation, in order to represent the idealization of the strong independent feminist: in order to have a critical voice that can speak for the whole. This “gendered self-transformation” is “scaffolded . . . by psychologized concepts like ‘empowerment’” (Rutherford, 621 (<https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.macewan.ca/doi/pdf/10.1177/0959354318797194>)).

I'm already equal. So why do today's feminists keep saying I'm oppressed?

Livni, 2018 (<https://lqz.com/1210845/the-subconscious-sexism-of-todays-feminist-movement/>)

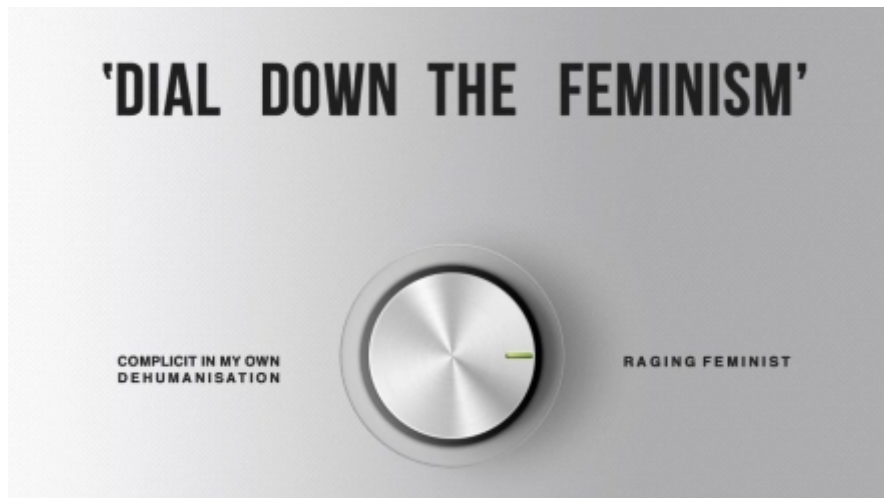
The new postfeminist paradigm tells women they must *embody* freedom and choice. According to Livni, this means a successful feminist must be “**powerful**”, “**adventurous**, **independent**, and **productive**” (Livni, *Quartz*). The problem with these ideas of empowerment is that they target and exploit women, derailing the movement and propelling it towards the commodification of ‘self-transformation’ in order to be taken seriously. “Nowhere are these . . . tropes of ‘freedom and choice’ more on display than in advertising ostensibly celebrating women’s ‘power femininity’ and sexual agency” (Rutherford, 620 (<https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.macewan.ca/doi/pdf/10.1177/0959354318797194>)). These expectations implant ideas in society that if we represent these ideals, we are contributing to the gender empowerment movement, while the raw, messy, authenticity of feminism is subdued.

The underlying issues that emerge, from what Rutherford refers to as “*postfeminist sensibility*” (620 (<https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.macewan.ca/doi/pdf/10.1177/0959354318797194>)), is the radical difference between feeling empowered vs. actual empowerment. If one reads between the lines, what postfeminism actually preaches seems to say that some are easily placated by the *feeling* of empowerment, which in turn, minimizes real world issues that still impact the lives of millions of women today. As Rutherford explains, “empowerment is a central goal, individuals who feel empowered carry the belief that they can control the circumstances of their lives” (623). However in *Stephanie Riger’s* (<http://www.feministvoices.com/stephanie-riger/>). 1993 article on ‘empowerment’, Rutherford points out that what she is saying is that empowerment has become a “device for occluding the material and structural realities that constrain people’s abilities to control the circumstances of their lives” (623).

“an increase in a sense of empowerment does not always reflect an increase in actual power . . . empowerment requires a redistribution in power”
(*Riger, 282 – 284* (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/226515961_What's_wrong_the_empowerment)).

Women should not be held solely responsible for their own liberation, it takes the effort of the whole to overcome systemic oppression. This is why we find feminism shifting into a radically inclusive, intersectional tapestry, interwoven with progressive politics that include the rights of **all** marginalized groups. These postfeminist ideals deflect any responsibility towards those that hold power to join the cause, and by example, enable society to become complacent towards the demarcation of these groups. A *sense* of Empowerment is an illusive concept that can “increase people’s power to act . . . but [does] little to affect their power over resources or policies” (Riger, 282): a ruse that allows us to feel as though we are accomplishing something meaningful. **Now is not the time to sugarcoat our fury.** In the words of Rebecca Walker: “join in sisterhood with women when often we are divided, to understand power structures with the intention of challenging them” (Kolmar and Bartkowski 459-460).





@alexbertanades, 2017

(<https://twitter.com/alexbertanades/status/961318001743147008>)

"Let ~~Thomas~~ [Kavanaugh's] confirmation serve to remind you, as it did me, that the fight is far from over. Let the dismissal of a women's experience move you to anger. Turn that outrage into political power."

-Rebecca Walker, 1992

(<http://www.msmagazine.com/spring2002/BecomingThirdWaveRebeccaWalker.pdf>)

♥♥♥

November 10, 2018November

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Fig. 1: Keight. *Sheddoesthecity*, 9 July 2017, <http://www.sheddoesthecity.com/temper-tantrum-torontos-queer-feminist-art.collective> (<http://www.sheddoesthecity.com/temper-tantrum-torontos-queer-feminist-art.collective>).



Fig. 2: Zottino, Marica. "Katie Couric – You Can Watch #GenderRevolution Right Here." *Facebook*, 15 Nov. 2018, www.facebook.com/maricazottinoillustration/photos/a.555135154562280/1939018609507254/?type=3&theater. (<https://www.facebook.com/maricazottinoillustration/photos/a.555135154562280/1939018609507254/?type=3&theater>)



Fig. 3: National Feminist Art Exhibition SF. "F*Ck U." *FunCheapSF.com*, 10 Dec. 2016, sf.funcheap.com/fck-national-feminist-art-exhibition-opening-sf/. (<https://sf.funcheap.com/fck-national-feminist-art-exhibition-opening-sf/>)



Fig. 4: Bertulis-Fernande, Alex. "Last Week One of My Art Teachers Suggested I 'Dial down the Feminism.' Today I Showed Him My Newest Piece." *Twitter*, 7 Feb. 2018, twitter.com/alexbertanades/status/961318001743147008?. (<http://twitter.com/alexbertanades/status/961318001743147008?>)



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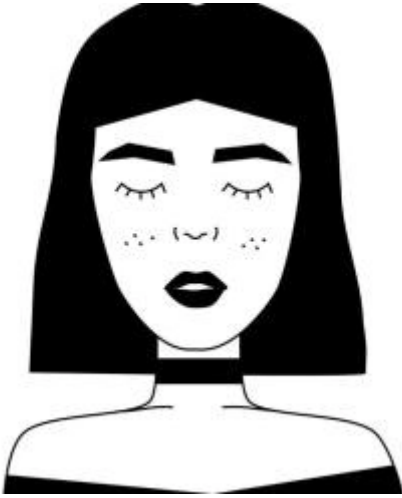
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About Me



Andréa is currently studying Feminist Theories at Macewan University.

‘The Male Glaze’ is an un-essay project in response to the topic of companion texts in feminism and how they create meaning for their readers via intertextual relationships.

This projects identifies intertextual features in feminist texts that explore the importance of those features for our understanding of the texts and the issues they address.

This blog juxtaposes Rebecca Walker’s 1992 article in *Ms. Magazine* (<http://www.msmagazine.com>), with Joanna Williams’ 2018 article in *The American Conservative* (<https://www.theamericanconservative.com>), and considers the dynamic of the social reactions surrounding the events in which these texts respond to. These works were written in response to the

trials resulting from the sexual allegations of Anita Hill against Clarence Thomas of the Supreme Court, and more recently, Christine Blasey Ford’s sexual allegations against Brett Kavanaugh of the Supreme Court.

These texts signify the cultural discordance between oppression and privilege, and the challenges we face on the long road towards a radical upheaval of misguided societal values.

