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Trending now: Feminism, Postfeminism, Sexism and Misogyny
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Introduction
In the last few years feminism has gained spectacular visibility across media and popular culture. As Sarah Banet-Weiser (2018) observes, "everywhere you turn, there is an expression of feminism – on a T-shirt, in a movie, in the lyrics of a pop song, in an inspirational instagram post, in an acceptance speech". News media have been pivotal to this, not only reporting on feminist campaigns such as slutwalk or metoo, or on feminist demonstrations like the Women's marches, but also centering feminism as a topic of discussion – whether substantively in terms of equal pay or sexual violence, or more broadly as something to be routinely asked of politicians, actresses or pop stars. "The new DO: Calling yourself a feminist" announced Glamour magazine in the US, cementing a wider impression that no interview of a high-profile woman is complete without its subject being asked about their views of or identification with feminism.

For many – including ourselves – this new and heightened visibility of feminism is cause for optimism, particularly coming after a period in the 1990s in early 2000s in which feminist activists struggled hard to achieve <u>any</u> coverage for their causes, and in which the repudiation of feminism was widespread (McRobbie, 2009), even among those who supported gender equality in principle (Scharff, 2012). However, while welcoming the new 'luminosity of feminism' (Gill, 2016) across media, in this chapter we argue that it is important to be cautious of the claim that this new mediated visibility means that media is somehow <u>becoming feminist</u>. We suggest that it is important to think of any period, conjuncture or moment – including our own – as structured by complexities and contradictions, in which new ideas, moods or movements do not necessarily displace other trends, but may co-exist with them.

We will argue that alongside the visibility of feminism in contemporary news media several other currents are equally prominent. First we suggest that a set of circulating ideas, values and framings that have been understood as a postfeminist or neoliberal sensibility still hold sway, and have not been displaced by the new enthusiasm for feminism. Secondly we suggest that much news media remains highly sexist, and that women are still trivialised, subject to offensive judgments of their appearance and competence on a daily basis in mainstream journalism. Thirdly we argue that misogyny has become a terrifying live force, showing how news media 'comments' and vicious trolling against women in the public eye represent a chilling riposte to the idea that news media have become spaces that are safe for feminist ideas. Looking at empirical examples we show the contradictoriness of the current moment, and argue that we need approaches that can hold and think together the co-existence of these different ideas/themes/motifs/ideologies.

Feminism
There seems to be no doubt that feminism is 'having a moment' (Valenti, 2014). The Merriam-Webster Dictionary made 'feminism' their 'word of the year' in 2017 reflecting the dramatic resurgence of interest in the term. The sense of 'gender fatigue' (Kelan,2009) that characterised the first decade of this century, in which the word sexism seemed in danger of

disappearing altogether from critical vocabularies (Williamson, 2003; Gill, 2011), and when feminist campaigns about domestic violence, rape or unequal pay were deemed by news editors 'a yawn' – too dull to make it onto the news agenda (Gill,2016) – has given way to a moment of new energy, excitement and interest. Feminism has become 'sexy'. 'You've read the papers, you've seen the news: feminism is back' announced a British lifestyle site for women in 2015 – as glossy magazines launched 'feminism' issues, and fashion companies rushed out tee shirts declaring 'This is what a feminist looks like'.

Accounts of this surge in interest in feminism tend to identify several key events and developments. Beyonce's performance at the 2014 MTV Video Awards, in which she performed her song 'Flawless' in front of a huge sign emblazoned 'FEMINIST' is regarded by many as a foundational moment in the rise of 'popular feminism' (Banet-Weiser, 2018; Keller & Ryan, 2018; Valenti, 2014). The performance used sampled words from the TED talk (and later book) by Nigerian novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie titled 'We Should All Be Feminists'. Emma Watson's UN talk to launch the HeforShe campaign that same year, telling men 'gender equality is your issue too' is also frequently referenced as key. Watson became the 'face' of the new feminism on Elle's 'feminism issue after the magazine brought in high profile advertising companies to help them with the brief of 'rebranding feminism'. Magazines have become a key site of this feminism in mainstream media (Favaro & Gill, 2018), as have popular TV shows such as Girls and Orange is the New Black as well as female comics such as Amy Schumer and Caitlin Moran. In the same moment 'manifestoes' by high-profile women such as Sheryl Sandberg (Facebook COO) and Ann-Marie Slaughter (xxx) helped to cement persistent gender inequality as a topic for discussion in quality press and news media.

Activist campaigns have been central to this too – both on the streets and in online spaces and often moving across and between sites. The SlutWalk movement across multiple cities was significant as an expression of anger against sexual violence and sexual double standards, raising the profile and visibility of feminism. In turn, as many commentators have noted, there has been an extraordinary flourishing of feminist digital activism from the early 2010s onwards (Keller & Ryan, 2018; Ringrose; Banet-Weiser;), with blogs and websites such as EverydaySexism, The Vagenda, Black Girl Dangerous, Feministing, Crunk Feminist Collective and Jezebel, and a proliferation of social media campaigns from NastyWomen to NotOkay to SayHerName. Scholars note that online platforms offer the possibility of 'doing feminism in the network' (Rentschler & Thrift, 2015: 331), enabling emergent feminist (Keller & Ryan, 2018) communities of support, 'peer-to-peer witnessing' (Rentschler, 2014:76) and 'affective solidarities' (Keller, Mendes and Ringrose 2016) such as in relation to BeenRapedNeverReported.

The immense pain and anger felt by many after the Trump victory in November 2016 was a further impetus to feminist action, leading to the Women's Marches and the International Women's Strike involving women in 50 countries. Some months later the story broke of Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein's alleged sexual harassment, coercion and latterly rape, and it is fair to say that feminism has not left the news agenda in the US and UK. Every day brings fresh allegations and revelations from within the entertainment industry and in every sphere of life from politics to academia to the hospitality industry. The energy and vitality of feminist organising around the MeToo and TimesUp hashtags has provoked

unprecedented levels of journalistic interest, underscored by creative and highly visual protests (e.g. female celebrities dressing in black for major awards ceremonies). This is feminism designed for a 24 hour news cycle and a culture dominated by images. It is also feminism that depends upon the logics of platform capitalism and its metrics of likes, shares, and followers. Contemporary mediated feminism circulates in what Sarah Banet-Weiser (2018) calls an 'economy of visibility' which has kept feminism 'trending'.

This account of the renewed visibility of feminism is of course partial. It is largely based on events and movements in the US, and is at risk of becoming hegemonic, of taking on the status of a myth-like origin story. Greater geographical specificity helps to complicate and disrupt this narrative. Even looking at other - in many ways similar - Anglophone countries brings out different dimensions and textures: in Australia anger and activism around DestroyTheJoint - in response to sexism against Prime Minister Julia Gillard was a key moment; in New Zealand the 'Roastbusters' case in 2013 -in which a group of men intoxicated and gang-raped teenage girls- some as young as 13 – and posted images to social media, provoked large demonstrations about rape culture, victim blaming and the lack of support for women's organizations, and was widely reported and discussed in the media; more recently the election of Jacinda Ardern, while pregnant, to become head of state has generated national and international conversations about the perennial feminist issue of combining work and caring or parenting.

In the UK, from where we write, vibrant 'local' campaigns such as 'No More Page Three' to challenge the daily use of topless models in the tabloid press, or 'Lose the Lad Mags' concerned with the sexism of men's magazines, garnered significant media attention (Favaro & Gill, 2016). Indeed it is striking that in the wider context of the resurgent interest in feminism, even a single advert could become a focus point - as was the case when 70 000 people signed a petition against Protein World's now notorious billboard advert that pictured a thin model in a bright yellow bikini with the slogan "Are you beach body ready?" This campaign became the subject of enormous media attention in the UK, focussed on the issues raised by the advert, and diverse feminist responses to it, which culminated in a major demonstration in London's Hyde park.

By late 2017 - and in the wake of MeToo - feminist stories were central to the news agenda in the UK, regularly featuring on prime time news bulletins. When Carrie Gracie resigned from her position as International Editor at the BBC in January 2018 because of gender-based pay discrimination, this became a huge news story, and was followed with statements of support from other high profile female journalists, as well as multiple highly embarrassing (for the BBC) disclosures. The story was rarely off the news agenda, and, at the time of writing, the gender pay gap remains a prominent news topic, as companies and organisations with more than 250 employees became required to audit and publish their gender pay differentials by the start of April 2018. During the same period (in March 2018) the Parole Board of England and Wales reported their intention to release early the notorious convicted rapist John Warboys, whose crime of drugging and raping more than 100 women in his London black cab, had provoked widespread public revulsion. News of his impending release generated immediate protest from women, highlighting the culture of disrespect and disregard towards rape victims within the criminal justice system. The story

was sympathetically reported across the news media, albeit perhaps because it resonated with an enduring focus on 'law and order'.

Feminist ideas, topics, identifications and debates, then, have become a notable focus of news interest in the last few years, the outcome of a combination of different factors. There is always the concern, however, that this will not last, that the media will become weary with stories about gender. As with other struggles and their representation, at any given moment the news agendas may shift: there may be a backlash; the story may simply become 'stale'; or the news media may reach 'peak feminism' – in the way that they discussed 'peak beard' when the hipster phenomenon was at its height. There are questions to be asked too about the extent to which discussion of feminist issues goes beyond the mainstream media targeted at middle class educated audiences. Although discussion of MeToo is extensive in sites like *The Guardian*, *Newsnight or Channel 4* News to what degree is it reaching other audiences? Is it changing the conversation about sexual harassment more generally, or does it remain restricted in its impact?

There are also concerns about about which <u>kinds</u> of feminism achieve visibility in news media- who and what becomes feminism's public face – besides young, beautiful celebrities from the world of film and music (eminently click-able) or heavyweight 'power feminists' for 'think pieces'. It is clear that feminist visibilities are profoundly shaped by class and race and disability – and also by sexuality and age. Reflecting the values of the mainstream news media more generally, it is far easier for white, middle and upper class, able-bodied feminists to command journalists' attention, than for black/women of colour, working class or disabled women to do so. Despite vibrant feminist activism in the UK against austerity, racism, deportations of migrants, and benefits cuts that target disabled people, these protests have received relatively little attention – aside from 'feminist spectaculars' by organisations like Sisters Uncut. Black feminist organisations struggle to achieve news reporting for their campaigns (e.g. Southall Black Sisters or Women Against Fundamentalism), reflecting an ongoing racism and classism within reporting of feminism (Jonsson, 2014). As we have argued elsewhere (Gill, 2016) visibility is also related to the ideological complexion of the politics and the campaign's degree of challenge to the status quo (Rottenberg, 2014). Corporate-focussed and neoliberal feminisms concerned with (say) small changes to the gender balance of the Boards of companies, are more news media-friendly than radical or anti-capitalist or anti-colonial feminisms. Akwugo Emejulu (2017) discusses the urgent need for a 'feminism of the 99%' that pays attention to interlocking intersectional practices of oppression.

Sexism
The revitalised feminist landscape discussed above co-exists with enduring sexism. Indeed, it is striking how much of the current feminist activism focuses on 'cultural sexism' - 'the ugly wallpaper of women's lives – Page Three, lads' mags, music videos, the dearth of women in broadcasting, street harassment. In a world in which women have equality under the law, but not in reality, activists are tackling attitudes and influences.' (Cochrane, 2013) Sexism manifests in 'all its tedious monotony and all its variety' (check quote) in news media.

One area where sexism in news media remains problematic is in relation to the sexual objectification of women. Although there have been some feminist successes in dealing with the most notorious instances of this - for example page 3 of The Sun newspaper no longer shows a

bare-breasted glamour model every day, and many of the 'lad mags' have closed down -the tabloid press relies on 'sexualised' images of women across its pages, often with little or no relation to the story being reported. Some tabloid newspapers boast a 'nipple count' in excess of 100 for each issue of the paper with adverts for sexual services such as phone sex lines or escort agencies as well as editorial content. The problem is not limited to tabloid press. The organisation Women in Journalism found, in two content analytic studies, that both *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph* frequently printed large images of semi-naked women and images of female celebrities in revealing outfits on their front pages, with little news-related reason or relevance. (Carter, Turner and Paton, 2012; Martinson *et al.*, 2012). Such content gives the impression that women's value or worth resides in their sexual attractiveness.

The focus on women's appearance goes beyond images and text that represent women for their sexual value. A focus on appearance frequently becomes a way for news reports to diminish or demean a woman. Appraisals of women's appearance remain common, indeed the clichéd descriptors 'blonde', 'brunette' and 'redhead' show an obduracy despite being so mocked- and are never applied to men. Women in the public eye routinely find their appearance commented upon and picked apart in the news media, with fat-shaming in particularly common (Lindy West/ Roxanne Gay ref?). The bodies of female celebrities are subject to levels of surveillance that are increasingly forensic, with no 'flaw' too trivial to be discussed, perhaps even magnified in a photos taken with telescopic lenses. Even when the beauty and desirability of the women in questions is ostensibily praised or celebrated this kind of content is sexist: it is all about the practice of gendered power. In 2013 a UK working group as part of the United Nations Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) noted that: a 'persistent portrayal of women as sexualised objects in the print based media is clearly discriminatory in nature, it is un-paralleled for men, and it exists without context,' They further obseved that the 'lack of press regulation on the issue is inconsistent with other forms of media, and equality legislation, and it allows for the sexual objectification of women in mainstream media to continue unchecked.'

Sexism directed at female politicians is also ubiquitous (Ross xxxx). This is well-documented in relation to the reporting of Hillary Rodham Clinton's 2016 election campaign (refs). It is also a feature of UK news, from 'Blair's babes' to 'Cameron's cuties' and beyond. The current Prime Minister's taste in shoes is a matter of commentary across the journalistic spectrum. In the run-up to the 2017 General Election in Britain, a hugely important moment politically after the Brexit vote, The Sun presented its week-long 'Heel-ection' coverage in which the underwear toted by their daily glamour model was inspired by a pair of Prime Minister Theresa May's shoes. The accompanying text noted: 'The Sun today launches the first of our Heel-ection Specials — girls in lingerie designs inspired by Theresa May's shoes. Kelly Hall pays homage to the PM's leopard-print heels and reckons the Tory leader will knock spots off her rivals.' The piece was accompanied by a close-up of Theresa May's feet and several images of her in leopard print shoes and stated: 'Mrs May is renowned for her fabulous footwear'. The lingerie designer was quoted as saying: 'I also admire how she makes the tough decisions while dressing with style – as Marilyn Monroe said, "Give a girl the right shoes, and she can conquer the world"'. This reporting followed 'trousergate' – reporting on Theresa May's sartorial choices, and preceded 'Legs-It' in which a *Daily Mail (express??)* front page image of Britain's two female political leaders Nicola Sturgeon and Theresa May, headlined with: 'Never mind Brexit, who won Legs-it!' (The Daily Mail, 2017). What is interesting is the knowingness of this sexism, its deliberate intention to provoke. There have been numerous spoofs or take down's across the mainstream media (as well as beyond) from Have I Got News For You to Mock the Week to Private Eye and the New Statesman but the everyday sexism remains.

Other features of news reporting that remain troublingly sexist include coverage of sexual assaults and rapes. These are still often treated in a salacious or titillating manner, and are premised on a

number of 'rape myths' that uphold racist, classist and sexist assumptions. Sexual double standards are pervasive in news reporting and even during court cases where the media show a strong bias towards the perpetrator's guilt, there will still often be brutal reporting of women's clothing, behaviour, alcohol consumption, etc.

One of the challenges for dealing with sexism in news is the fact that regulation is focussed around a moral right discourse constructed around issues of taste, decency and the likelihood of material tending to 'deprave' the reader or viewer – rather than a political discourse concerned with justice and equality. The Editors Code of Practice has no specific compulsion with regards to discriminatory or sexist material about groups or categories of people, and crucially no recourse to complain about such material, unless an individual was the subject of the material themselves. This is not only an issue in relation to cisgender women. Transphobic media reporting is also common, despite the existence of organisations such as Trans Media Watch and GLAAAAD's Transgender Media Project promoting fair and respectful coverage. Additionally, UK laws on hate speech and hate crime make no reference to sex or gender as categories, making mounting a legal case difficult. The lack of a specific focus on discriminatory representation or depiction constitutes a major stumbling block in legal objections to sexist material.

The UK Government's Inquiry into the phone hacking scandal represented an important intervention. The Inquiry was set up to investigate illegal phone hacking by journalists of the communications of celebrities and others in the public eye – such as the missing schoolgirl Milly Dowler. Chaired by Lord Justice Leveson the Inquiry raised important questions about the conduct of the news media and was notable for taking evidence from a number of feminist organisations (Toms) concerned with how news reporting fed into a wider culture of sexism, sexual objectification and misogyny. Leveson's report, published in 2012, indicted the print media's 'failure to treat women with dignity and respect' and noted that the journalistic practice of 'demeaning and degrading women' was a serious concern.

The Leveson Inquiry – in taking evidence from many interested parties, including newspaper editors – was also instructive in highlighting the kinds of defences that the news media use to defend against accusations of sexism. In our analysis (see Toms 201x) we have examined the oral evidence presented by Dominic Mohan, then editor of The Sun, to justify the paper's continued presentation of semi-naked women on a daily basis. One notable point is the sheer variety of the justifications used. In all we identified 10 different arguments used by Dominic Mohan in addition to a generic 'free speech' argument:

1. Heritage – it has always happened therefore it is harmless, indeed it is 'an innocuous British institution'
2. Humour- 'it's a bit of banter'; 'The Sun's humor and its light-hearted nature has really been key to its success'; critics have no sense of humour
3. Female agency- the models choose to do it and some 'have made quite a good living out of wearing not too many clothes'
4. Women support it so it can't be sexist-for example when asked about a piece trialling Debenham's shape-enhancing knickers 'by testing men's reaction to a woman's bottom when she stands at the bar and bends down at work', Mohan focuses on the fact that it was tested by 'a female', with the implication that its therefore ok.
5. Men are objectified too – David Beckham, Cristiano Ronaldo: 'we've carried their photographs also'

6. Corporate social responsibility- The Sun does a lot of work in support of women so its wrong to 'look at Page 3 in isolation'
7. It's a celebration of women's bodies – unlike contrasting 'unhealthy' images. 'They're good role models'
8. It's up to the reader/ audience responsibility – no one is 'compelled to buy the newspaper'
9. It's all about context- these problematic images and stories 'represent quite a small percentage'
10. Other media are worse perpetrators – e.g. social media 'As a parent myself I'm more concerned about the images that my children might come across on the Internet'

This analysis is important for feminists concerned with challenging media sexism because it illuminates the nature – and variety - of the argumentation used to justify sexist content. We anticipate that many of these arguments would be recognisable both across media, platforms and national contexts as justifications or defences of sexist content.

Misogyny
In addition to the sexism documented above, virulent misogyny is a growing problem, both on news sites (via the comments sections) and in relation to news stories (where women who become subjects of news reporting are targeted for attack) (Favaro & Gill, 2015). According to one study, online misogyny is so widespread that it is 'at risk of becoming an established norm in our society' (Norton, 2016: xx) In the US, the Women's Media Center (2015) identifies multiple different forms of online harassment targeted at girls and women: gender-based slurs and harassment, non-consensual photography, exploitation, doxing (ie publishing personal details), defamation, death or rape threats, mob attacks, hate speech, stalking, unsolicited pornography, online impersonation, spying and sexual surveillance, slut-shaming, swatting (e.g.filing false emergency service reports) and grief trolling. The goal is to 'embarrass, humiliate, scare, threaten, silence, extort, or in some instances encourage mob attacks of malevolent engagements' (WMC, 2015b). An important body of work in media studies attempts to catalogue and label the diverse forms of online misogyny including 'gendertrolling' (Mantilla, 2015), online sexual harassment' (Megarry, 2014), ' disciplinary rhetoric' (Cole, 2015) and 'e-bile' (Jane, 2014).

Emma Jane (2014: 558) argues that 'gendered vitriol' has become so prolific online that 'issuing graphic rape and death threats [against women] has become a standard discursive move…when Internet users wish to register their disagreement with and/or disapproval of women'. Jane notes that such threats often involve what she dubs 'lascivious contempt' in which posts threaten brutal forms of sexual assault and torture, at the same time as contemptuously denigrating the victim e.g. 'She's so fugly, I wouldn't even bother raping her from behind with a box cutter' (Jane, 2014:562). Cole (2015) develops this, arguing that such brutal and violent threats are often unexpectedly paired with humour – e.g. will be followed by 'LOL' or a laughing emoji. Cole argues (2015:357) that online misogyny seeks to 'discipline feminists into silence while simultaneously proclaiming that their version of rape is somehow funny…The use of humour to qualify rape does not disarm the threat; rather it highlights the social acceptability of rape as a tool to discipline women'

Examples are – unfortunately – legion. In the US by now well-known examples such as Gamergate and The Fappening have been extensively discussed as examples of 'toxic technocultures' (Massanari, 2017), the 'networked misogyny' (Banet-Weiser, 2019) of Men's Rights Organizations and the alt right (Vickerey & Everbach, 2018). Particular platforms have also been identified as central to the abuse – with Reddit and 4Chan most discussed. Twitter is also a forum for vicious attack. Milo Yiannopoulos was forced to leave Twitter in 2016 for online harassment of Ghostbusters actor Leslie Jones. His response was to assert: 'I, Donald Trump and the rest of the alpha males will continue to dominate the Internet without feminist whining. It will be fun! (quoted in Vickerey & Everbach, 2018)

In the UK Jess Phillips, a female Labour MP known for her progressive gender politics, spoke out after receiving 600 rape and death threats *in just one day* in 2017. Other well-documented cases of this kind of abuse include Caroline Criado-Perez, Mary Beard, and Gina Miller. Criado-Perez successfully lobbied the Bank of England to put a woman – Jane Austen – on the new £10 rather than Winston Churchill – whose inclusion would have meant that British currency was entirely male in its depictions of key figures. At the height of her campaign she was receiving 50 death and rape threats per hour on social media, often itemizing in cruel and chilling detail the way these threats would be carried out. Academic classicist Mary Beard faced similar abuse after taking part on the BBC's Question Time debate. Gina Miller is a private citizen who set up a campaign to promote integrity and high standards in public life in 2009, and came to fame in 2016 for her opposition to Brexit. In November of that year she won a legal battle in the High Court that made it a requirement for any Brexit 'deal' to be approved by Parliament. However her personal safety – and that of her children – continues to be gravely and repeatedly threatened. A man who used Facebook to promise money to anyone who would kill her has been imprisoned for 3 months, and numerous other 'cease and desist' notices have been issued against others threatening her. She has shown extraordinary courage throughout this ordeal, but has at times been reported as too fearful to leave her home after being threatened with acid attacks.

Attacks on Gina Miller, a British citizen of Indian and Guyanese heritage, highlight the racism as well as the misogyny that underpin these attacks, something also clear in relation to Diane Abbott, the shadow Home Secretary. Abbott was elected as Britain's first black, female MP in 1987 and receives on a daily basis vicious attacks that are both racist and sexist. In a piece written for *The Guardian* Abbott detailed this shocking abuse, stating: 'suppose that someone had told me back then that 30 years on I would be receiving stuff like this: "Pathetic useless fat black piece of shit Abbott. Just a piece of pig shit pond slime who should be fucking hung (if they could find a tree big enough to take the fat bitch's weight"). I think that even the young, fearless Diane Abbott might have paused for thought.' (Abbott, 2017) Abbott expressed concern about the message racist and sexist abuse online sends to women about being involved in politics and public life: 'Not only does it tend to marginalise the female "offender", but other women look at how those of us in the public space are treated and think twice about speaking up publicly, let alone getting involved in political activity. Who needs their intelligence, motivation and personal appearance to be savaged in the tabloids and online? Better to stay silent or say whatever the men are saying.' (Abbott, 2017)

The academic scholarship reflects on the way that mediated forms of harassment are an extension of – not a departure from off-line cultural and historical roots of discrimination, sexism, racism, homophobia and misogyny (Vickerey & Everbach, 2018). Not all women experience misogyny and harassment in the same ways. Women of colour, queer and trans-women, Muslim women, immigrant women are disproportionately targeted and experience harassment in different ways from white, heterosexual, non-disabled women and other women from dominant cultural groups. Lucy Hackworth (2018) argues that we need to reframe scholarly discourse about harassment so that it does not homogenise it in ways that highlight only the experiences of white, heterosexual, middle-class, able-bodied women – including through notions that elevate gender above other aspects of identity. Hackworth argues that 'just gender' usually means 'just white women' she discusses how the hashtag SolidarityIsForWhite women took action against the fact that white feminists had contributed to and being complicit in the silencing of black women online. To address the implicit exclusions of notions like gendertrolling, the term misogynoir was coined by Moya Bailey to describe antiblack misogyny. Bailey argued (2013:341) that the concept was needed to 'give intersectionality a break from doing a lot of the heavy lifting the black feminist thought'. This is vital, as Cross has argued, because identities are not readily separable:

'The racism and trans phobia of abuse directed at some women is not mere flavouring of the abuse, but rather it's very content, and that remains thoroughly unanalysed. It is not so easy, after all, to say where abuse of a black trans woman becomes specifically gender trolling as opposed to race trolling or trans rolling. They are inseparable and that's rather the point, from the perspective of the abuser: every part of you is available for them to attack' (cited in Hackworth, 2018)

Misogyny is frequently studied as an 'online' phenomenon, and as primarily seen on social media. However, the 'comments' sections of newspapers and broadcasters are also a location for this hateful discourse. *The Guardian* recently analysed 70 million comments left on its website over a ten year period and discovered that of the 10 most abused writers, eight are women, and the other two are men of colour. (Gardiner *et al.*, 2016). In our own research analysing more than five thousand analysing comments left on sites such as BBC News and the Huffington Post in response to news stories about 'lad mags', we found disturbing patterns of misogyny, homophobia and Islamophobia (Favaro & Gill, 2016). This was all the more striking given that the sites we examined were <u>moderated</u> sites, and the data corpus thus excluded all those comments which had been deemed hate speech, offensive, or in other ways inappropriate. We noted escalating sexism and misogyny organised around claims that(i) there are gendered double standards that disadvantage men; (ii) male (hetero)sexuality is under threat; (iii) women and wider society are at war with the "normal bloke"; and (iv) the notion of feminism as unconcerned with equality but rather "out to get men" thus men must be understood as fighting for their very survival. It was striking to note the use of war metaphors to construct women as attackers and men as victims. This resonates with the men's rights movements and toxic geek masculinity discussed by others (e.g. Massanari, 2017)

Undoubtedly misogynistic and racist culture has been fuelled and exacerbated by the election of Donald Trump in the US – as well as by the rise of the Right in other countries

including Italy, the Netherlands, Germany and the UK. As Sarah Banet-Weiser (2019) argues 'when US President Donald Trump can attack women in politics and in the press with misogynistic and racist insults as a matter of course, indeed can casually suggest grabbing women "by the pussy" and just as casually dismiss it as "locker room talk"; when many young women come to expect hateful and violent comments that shame and judge their bodies on the videos they post on social media; when rape culture has been named as a common feature of most college campuses in the US, misogyny has shifted from a set of questionable expressions and practices to structuring, often invisible context for our everyday lives and routines'

Postfeminism
The final feature of the current moment we want to consider is postfeminism. The term came to prominence in the 1990s and has been characterised in various different ways: as a backlash against feminism, to refer to an historical shift – a time "after" (second wave) feminism; to capture a sense of an epistemological break within feminism, suggesting an alignment with other "post" movements (poststructuralism, postmodernism and postcoloniality); and to propose connections to Third Wave. In two formulations that have been influential within feminist media and cultural studies, postfeminism has been characterised as a "gender regime" (McRobbie, 2009) and as a "sensibility" (Gill, 2007), deeply enmeshed with neoliberalism. From this perspective, postfeminism is a critical analytical term that refers to empirical regularities or patterns in contemporary cultural life, which include the emphasis on individualism, choice and agency as dominant modes of accounting; the disappearance – or at least muting – of vocabularies for talking about both structural inequalities and cultural influence ; the "deterritorialisation" of patriarchal power and its "reterritorialisation" (McRobbie, 2009) in women's bodies and the beauty-industrial complex (Elias et al, 2016); the intensification and extensification of forms of surveillance, monitoring and disciplining of women's bodies (Gill, 2007); and the influence of a "makeover paradigm" that extends beyond the body to constitute a remaking of subjectivity – what has been characterised the "psychic life of postfeminism" (Gill, 2017).

It may seem paradoxical to highlight the continued force of postfeminism in a moment characterised by the resurgence of feminism and its unprecedented visibility in the media. Nevertheless, it is our contention that a postfeminist sensibility remains a powerful force in contemporary media, with key postfeminist themes and motifs animating news stories and popular journalism. Indeed, in an analysis of an Evening Standard magazine celebrating 'New Gen Fem', Gill (2016) noted that the warm embrace of feminism as an identity had not displaced the postfeminist sensibility. A postfeminist logic that underpinned and structured the magazine. First she highlighted the curiously <u>contentless</u> celebration of feminism, in which 'journalists and the women they are interviewing seem not only uninterested in specifying what being a feminist means to them, but actively resistant' (Gill, 2016: xx). Instead, feminism was conveyed through a celebration of all things female and through a defiant pose that asserted 'you go girls!' and 'I'm not afraid to call myself a feminist', alongside the use of feminist symbols and icons, remade for a new moment- e.g. the feminist fist but with long varnished fingernails. Second she noted the use of a lexicon of 'struggles' and 'battles' yet the individuals highlighted as 'gender warriors' turned out to be celebrity journalists/media moguls such as Tina Brown, and liberal politicians. The journalism focussed upon the worlds of corporate and celebrity culture – models, actresses, high-level women in commercial companies.

More generally this celebration of feminism was suffused with individualistic discourses of meritocracy. A black model replayed a familiar script of 'rags to riches' briefly noting the racism of the fashion industry but reframing this in terms of a distinctly postfeminist aspiration: to be the first British Indian model to do a Victoria Secrets show. At its best sexism is reversed rather than challenged – viz an article about 'boyeurism' which celebrates the fact that 'forward thinking women are now indulging in objectification too' and articles that seize on rare examples of women earning more than men to suggest that tedious problems like the gender pay gap are a thing of the past. 'Choice' and 'empowerment' – part of the key lexicon of postfeminism – are endlessly recycled and used to demand 'rights' such as lipstick and high heels. Such discourses caused feminist Breanne Fahs to remark: 'of all the dangerous patterns I have observed… the one that seems most problematic and troubling… is the cultural tendency to twist and corrupt empowerment discourses so they become clichéd, commodified, detrimental and ultimately disempowering". Rather than being positioned to challenge a sexist or misogynist culture, much of the copy seemed directed at older feminists – depicted as censorious and as instilling what journalist Polly Vernon calls a 'feminist fear of getting it wrong' (FFGW). In fact, Vernon's (2015) book *Hot Feminist* is a prime example of postfeminist discourse. Like a myriad of magazines and newspaper columnists she calls her feminism 'rebranded': "What kind of feminist does that make me? The shavey-leggy, fashion-fixated, wrinkle averse, weight-conscious kind of feminist. The kind who likes hot pink and boys; oh, I like boys! I like boys so much…" (Vernon, 2015, 13) She goes on to elucidate her position on feminism which means – conveniently- anything you want it to 'modern feminism with style, without judgement'.

We are not suggesting that the themes brought out in this analysis are typical of contemporary feminisms themselves ; what we are interested in is how feminism materialises and is made visible and intelligible <u>in news media</u>. We are arguing that postfeminist tropes and themes – such as the ones highlighted above - remain central to discussions of gender and feminism in news. They are seen even in liberal and intelligent news sites for example in endless pieces about whether you can be a feminist and get married/shave your legs/go on a diet; they are seen too in the reductive individualistic framing of decision-making about work and parenting; and in the way that 'feminist' issues are framed. Rather than displacing postfeminism, we contend, a resurgent feminism co-exists with a dominant postfeminist and neoliberal sensibility.

Conclusion
In this chapter we have examined a number of different forces that might be said to be shaping contemporary news in relation to gender right now. We started off by discussing the reanimated interest in and visibility of feminism both in news media and across society more generally, highlighting the key surge in interest in feminism from the early 2010s onwards. We noted some critical questions about the diffusion of feminist ideas beyond an educated middle class audience, as well asking about the kinds of feminism and feminists that gain greatest visibility in news media. Alongside feminism we suggested there are also several other notable – and troubling – trends. We looked at the persistence of sexism as a force structuring news, and then went on to look at the rise of popular misogyny, including in news spaces (e.g.comments sections) and often in direct response to news stories. If feminism is trending, we argued, then so too are sexism and misogyny in all their class-based, racist, disablist, fat-shaming and homophobic variants. Finally we argued that postfeminism also remains a live force, a dominant sensibility that shapes media coverage, channelling it through individualist discourses and foci that downplay the need for social transformation.

As well as highlighting the variety of opposing forces that shape news about gender – which has been the main empirical aim of the chapter – we also want to draw attention to an important theoretical point about how we as feminist media scholars think about continuity and change. We want to argue for the importance of moving beyond a taken-for-granted and unquestioned assumption of displacement – the idea that new ideas or trends automatically displace older ones – to a more complicated but realistic understanding of the way that multiple and contradictory ideas can <u>co-exist</u> at the same moment, field, plane. A major challenge for feminist media analysts is how to attend to the new, the seemingly novel, changed aspects of a situation – such as the sudden visibility of feminism as a topic of news - whilst not becoming mesmerised by them, and always holding on to a sense of continuities too. Attention to the <u>contradiction</u>s of media culture seems an important part of being a feminist media scholar. There may be a 'feminist zeitgeist' yet the tenacity of anti-feminist ideas remains striking, even in this new moment, and postfeminism, sexism and misogyny are also trending now.