'It's what Emmeline Pankhurst would have wanted':

Celebrity Big Brother: Year of the Woman (2018, UK) and negotiations of popular feminism(s)

Abstract

Feminist scholarship has invested attention in popular culture as a terrain upon which understandings of feminism are circulated, contested and explored. This is particularly so in the contemporary moment in which feminism appears to have achieved a new ascendency. But whilst popular culture and feminism are recognised as inextricably enmeshed, there remains the implicit or explicit assumption in feminist scholarship that popular media culture could do 'better', and that there is a more 'authentic' form of feminism waiting to find representation. In response to this context, this article undertakes an analysis of Twitter responses to *Celebrity Big Brother: Year of the Woman* (2018) in order to explore the ways in which a popular media text provides an arena for the negotiation of popular feminism. Rather than positioning reality TV and celebrity culture as a site of 'ideological ruin' for feminism, this article explores how *CBB* is discussed in relation to feminism as popular television, and the ways in which this may offer affordances and limitations. The article concludes that feminist media scholars need to give due attention to the complexities of popular feminism as articulated by popular media culture.

Key words: Popular Feminism * Postfeminism * Popular * Reality TV * Television

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feminism(s)

Not gonna lie I'd much prefer a bunch of young trashy reality stars talking about
how many lads they shagged or how many times they pissed their knickers on a
night out than fucking POLITICS! Not for me #CBB (2 January, 2018).

Dapper Laughs, the man that was pulled from TV as result of telling a member of
his audience that she was 'gagging for a rape' is entering the #CBB Year Of The
Woman special. Oh, the sweet, sweet irony (4 January, 2018).

I love all the debates and enlightening conversations we're having about gender
roles and identity #CBB #CBBBOTS #TIMESUP #GenderIdentity (9 January,
2018).

In January 2018, the UK version of *Celebrity Big Brother* (*CBB*) (2001-, UK) was launched
as the 'Year of the Woman', and it began its run with 8 female contestants and an all-female
studio audience. The programme claimed to hinge its theme on the 100th anniversary of
(some)[i] women getting the right to vote, although it was clearly also responding to a media
landscape in which feminism had achieved a 'new luminosity' (Gill, 2016: 614) – especially

in terms of its intersections with celebrity culture (Hamad and Taylor, 2015). Referred to variously as a 'zeitgeist' (Gill, 2016), a fourth wave (Rivers, 2017) or a 'remarkable… surge… in popular feminism' (Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer, 2017: 884), what appears to be the increased visibility of popular feminism has attracted both scholarly and popular attention, although there is a question here about whether the contours of this debate are fundamentally 'new'. Indeed, as the tweets above suggest, *CBB* invoked debates about the perceived relationship(s) between feminism and popular culture which have a long *history,* particularly in terms of their 'compatibility'. The first two tweets imply that *CBB* and feminism are antithetical, either because feminism is too 'boring' and 'political', or because the nature the format is exploitative and unethical (making it entirely inappropriate for this theme). In contrast, the third tweet offers support for *CBB* – and crucially the talk surrounding *CBB* - as a popular forum within which debates about gender politics can be illuminated and worked through.

Over the last decade, feminist research has invested considerable attention in the analysis of popular feminism, and its implications for feminist visibility, activism and scholarship (Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer, 2017: 884; Gill, 2007a; 2016; Waters and Gillis, 2011; Waters and Munford, 2014). This is not least of all because - as Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer observe - 'feminism has always been a useful lens through which to *understand* popular culture. However, we now are living in a moment when feminism has undeniably *become* popular culture [original emphasis]' (2017: 884). But despite this recognition, academic debates can still reproduce the idea that popular manifestations of feminism should be 'measured up against the "real thing"' (Hollows and Moseley, 2006: 10). In this regard, such debates retain the implicit or explicit assumption that 'popular culture could still benefit from a "proper" feminist makeover', and that there is a 'better', or more 'unpopular' form of

feminism just waiting in the wings (Ibid: 10-11). That said, these hierarchies are not easy to disrupt and resolve. Feminist scholarship cannot simply withhold judgement about the discourses on feminism(s) which are alive in popular culture: this would be antithetical to its political project(s) to critique (and intervene in) the material and discursive contexts of gender inequality (Gill, 2007b). But it *is* to suggest that some of the most high-profile work on popular (mediated) feminism (e.g. Gill, 2007a, 2016) continues to endorse these hierarchies in ways which may undervalue change, as well as obfuscate the range and complexity of the discourses at work here.

In response to this context, this article undertakes a qualitative analysis of Twitter responses to *CBB: Year of the Woman,* which we suggest offers a productive insight into the intersection between celebrity culture, social media 'talk' and the current visibility of popular feminism. In recognising the significance of exploring what 'popular culture can tell us about feminism' - rather than simply what 'feminists' thinks about popular culture (Hollows and Moseley, 2006: 1) - this article considers what the Twitter discussion can reveal about conceptions of feminism in the contemporary moment. Rather than positioning reality and/or celebrity culture as a site of 'ideological ruin' for feminism (Wicke, 1994), this involves exploring how *CBB* is discussed in relation to feminism as *television,* and the ways in which this may offer affordances, as well as limitations. In order to do this the article asks: what can Twitter responses to *CBB* suggest about the apparent 'ascendance' of popular feminism in the contemporary cultural moment? What do these responses suggest about how *CBB* functions as a space for debating, rejecting and using 'feminism(s)', and how do users negotiate these discourses in relation to the programme's format and the (perceived) demands of the 'popular'?

Popular feminism

Popular feminism can be conceived of as the representations of feminism within popular culture and the 'popular understanding[s] of "feminism" that [are]… generated through this exchange' (Glitre, 2011: 17). But whilst popular feminism has been seen as enjoying increased visibility and ascendency over the last few years, the extent to which this marks a significant break with the past – particularly with respect to the currency of postfeminism - has been subject to debate. Postfeminism has been variously understood as a form of backlash against feminism (Faludi, 1992); a set of discursive manoeuvres in which feminism is 'taken into account' and rendered passe in relation to neoliberal claims of female success, freedom and individualisation (McRobbie, 2009; Scharff, 2012), or a complex constellation which incorporates the mainstreaming of feminism alongside virulent constructions of misogyny and anti-feminism (Gill, 2007b, Gill, 2016). As such, the apparent contrast between 'then' and 'now' depends on which paradigm of postfeminism is being explored.

In 2016 Rosalind Gill revisited the arguments made in her canonical 'Postfeminism as a Sensibility' (2007a), suggesting that claims to the possible redundancy of the concept were premature. Gill argued for the need to interrogate the 'profoundly uneven' visibilities of different constructions of feminism (614), and found that the most visible discourses continued to favour constructions of feminism compatible with 'choice', individualism and neoliberal consumer culture (see also Rottenberg, 2014), as well the promotion of a 'commodity/ style' feminism attached to celebrity culture. These terrains clearly overlap, and some scholars characterise them interchangeably (e.g. Keller and Ringrose, 2015: 132). But Gill's characterisation of commodity feminism refers to the appropriation of feminist discourses and icons 'emptied of their political significance and offered back to the public in a commodified form' (2008). In this regard, 'feminist' identities, discourses and slogans, and

especially the circulation of these by celebrities, have contributed to the construction of a 'hot feminism' which transforms being a feminist from a 'derided and repudiated identity… to [a]… desirable and stylish one' (Gill, 2016: 618). In addition to the promotion of consumption, this strand is notable for its enduring investment in heterosexuality, its 'affect policing' (it is resolutely *no*t angry), as well as its general 'contentlessness' (Ibid). Although Gill acknowledges that celebrity statements about feminism can have significant cultural impact, she suggests that we hold on to the idea that claiming a 'feminist *identity*—without specifying what that means in terms of some kind of *politics*—is problematic' ([original italics]: 2016: 619).

Gill's point here seems incontrovertible, and her analysis is useful, nuanced and sobering when read in relation to the apparent prominence of feminism within the popular media landscape. But it also crystallises long-standing tensions in the perceived relationships between academic and 'popular' feminism, even whilst these spheres are recognised as irrevocably intertwined. In addition, although there is a long history of qualitative work exploring how girls/ women understand feminism as a cultural category (e.g. Budgeon, 2001, Quinn and Radtke, 2006; Riley and Scharff, 2012; Scharff, 2011; 2012), the most visible research on the current moment focuses on *media* discourse, rather than on how such constructions are negotiated or used (for an exception, see Keller and Ringrose, 2015). Given that work on media audiences has long since argued that we cannot assume meaning based on the analysis of the text alone (Gillespie, 2005), this omission is problematic. As such, although analysing popular media constructions of feminism is crucial, we also need to give due attention to the 'active making of meaning and contestation' which is undertaken by media audiences (Hamad and Taylor, 2015: 125).

Twitter, Feminism and Reality TV

Over the last 20 years, feminist research has examined the relationships between gender, feminism and new media technologies, subjecting the apparently 'transformative potential' of online communication to close scrutiny (Kim, 2017; Orgad, 2005). Feminist scholarship has explored the construction and circulation of popular misogyny (Banet-Weiser and Miltner, 2016; Jane, 2014); the risks of speaking out *as* 'feminist' online (Cole, 2015), and how online spaces can afford the possibilities of feminist resistance, critique and collectivity (Keller, Mendes and Ringrose, 2018; Kim, 2017; Rentschler; 2015). Within this context, forms of digital feminist activism have arguably fared better as examples of 'popular' feminism, and are often implicitly/ explicitly positioned as complicating the constructions of feminism typified by postfeminist, neoliberal discourses (Gill, 2016; Keller, Mendes and Ringrose, 2018; Kim, 2017; Rentschler, 2015). Such a focus on activism is clearly important, but it may also miss other everyday exchanges in which the possibilities and uses of contemporary feminism are played out - including the discussion of popular television. This is particularly so given that the scholarly discussion of TV texts which appear to lay claim to ('knowing') relations *with* feminism invariably focus on 'quality' drama (e.g. *Orange is the New Black* (Kalogeropoulos Householder and Trier-Bieniek, 2016); *Girls* (Bell, 2013; Woods, 2015)) rather than on the less prestigious terrain of reality TV.

Aside from judgements of cultural value, this may be indicative of the extent to which reality TV has been seen as having uneasy relations with feminist politics (see Weber, 2014). Indeed, although there are a vast range of formats and sub-types to consider here, reality programmes have often been understood by feminist scholars as reinscribing gender norms (e.g. Johnston, 2009; Sears and Godderis, 2013; Stephens, 2014), and they have been conceptualised as a prime site for articulating neoliberal/postfeminist discourses on individualism, competition and personal responsibility (e.g. Dubrofsky, 2009; Ouellette &

Hay, 2006; Patterson, 2015). Just as crucially, feminist criticism has also observed how reality formats can be inhospitable environments for women, with *female* contestants in particular held up as the spectacular foci of controversy, judgement or ridicule (Holmes and Jermyn, 2014, Skeggs and Wood, 2012; Weber, 2014). At the same time, it is notable that the high profile reality formats in the British context, such as *Big Brother* (2000-, UK)*, CBB* (2001-, UK)*, The X Factor* (2004-, UK), *I'm a Celebrity… Get Me Out of Here!* (2002-, UK) and *Strictly Come Dancing* (2004-, UK)*, have featured comparatively little in feminist scholarship, with feminist scholars more inclined to write about programmes with overtly gendered premises (such as dating, makeover, relationship or birthing shows) (Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer, 2006; Ringrose and Walkerdine, 2008, Sears and Godderis, 2011).

CBB UK began in 2001 as a one-off series capitalising on the success of *Big Brother,* and it has historically included international/ national film, TV and music stars (albeit it those who are past their 'prime'), alongside British and American reality TV contestants (Bleakly, 2016: 421). The programme received a clear spike in academic and popular visibility following the notorious 'race row' in 2007 – when Jade Goody, Danielle Lloyd and Jo O-Meara were widely seen as having expressed racist attitudes toward the Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty (see summary in Palasinski et al, 2011). However, outside of this, and despite the programme's history of igniting debates about misogyny, sexism, racism and homophobia (Lovelock, 2015), there has been little research analysing the programme's significance as a **'**trigger of everyday political talk' (Graham and Hajru, 2011: 24) – an omission that this article seeks to address.

Methodology

The use of Twitter to explore interactions with television programmes has expanded rapidly within TV Studies (Deller, 2011; Wood and Baughman, 2012). As an online micro-blogging, social networking, marketing and news site, Twitter enables users to communicate in short messages (tweets) of 280 characters or less (a recent development after the 140 character limited was doubled). In the programme and online, *CBB* uses the hashtag #CBB to encourage conversation about the series. Although this was clearly not the only hashtag used to tweet about *CBB,* it was adopted by the authors as a means of narrowing down a vast pool of Twitter data. Searches for #CBB were undertaken within the date range of the programme's run (2 January-3 February), and following a preliminary scoping exercise to identify suitable key words, the hashtag was combined with keywords/ phrases including 'Year of the woman', 'gender', 'girl power', 'feminism', 'feminist', 'empowerment' and 'misogyny'. This generated a total of 1042 tweets, which were then extracted and placed in a spreadsheet before being analysed via thematic discourse analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Thematic discourse analysis is an approach that seeks to identify, analyse and report patterns within qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Discourse analysis covers a range of language-orientated approaches, but is particularly concerned with how language constructs 'reality' within wider relations of power (Weedon, 1987). This study is interested in how the potential relations between feminism and *CBB* are constructed discursively, rather than seeking to 'measure' such responses in relation to a pre-given definition of what feminism 'actually' is (see also Scharff, 2011). As such, and in recognising feminism as a cultural category, it is understood that negotiations of feminism are contradictory and contingent, as well as shaped by the particular context(s) of their articulation (Quinn and Radtke, 2006).

The data was approached using the process for thematic analysis defined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first stage involved the authors familiarizing themselves with the Twitter data, so the tweets were read and re-read independently to produce separate notes on preliminary observations. Second, this process was used by each author to generate initial codes across the full data set. Third, these initial codes were then checked and cross-checked between the authors so as to generate broader thematic categories, with the key criteria being the prevalence of such themes within the sample. Examples of thematic categories identified by the authors were perceptions of *CBB* as 'sexist toward men', *CBB* as 'anti-feminist' (and perpetuating sexism and misogyny), the format of *CBB* as antithetical/ conducive to the exploration of gender and power; perceptions of *CBB* as 'boring television'/ 'brilliant television', debate over 'who might win' (and what this would say about British society), and discussions of 'victim-blaming' in relation to rape culture. The thematic categories were then analysed in detail and data extracts which represented these themes (as well as the complexities and contradictions within them) were selected for inclusion. The writing stage then involved placing these themes in relation to the research questions and the literature on popular feminism and popular culture.

Although Twitter represents a readily accessible form of audience research data, it clearly also has its limitations as a source of evidence (Deller, 2011). Aside from posts being restricted in length, Twitter doesn't represent 'what the audience of a particular programme… are thinking' (Deller, 2011), nor is it an 'objective' and generalizable terrain for gauging attitudes toward popular feminism. As feminist research has explored, whilst Twitter may offer particular affordances in terms of feminist discussion and activism (Keller et al, 2018; Kim 2017, Rentschler, 2015), it is also an arena – along with other online spaces – which may facilitate heightened forms of misogyny (Cole, 2015; Banet-Weiser and Miltner, 2016).

In addition, and as with many forms of online data, tweets offer little clue as to demographic background of participants, and although Twitter handles often contain indications of gender, these should be used with caution in terms of their 'authenticity' and verifiability. It is also recognised here that here are ethical issues at stake in conducting social media research (Williams, Burnap and Sloan, 2017), and although often treated as 'public data' (and Twitter's terms of service support this definition (Twitter, 2018)), concern has been expressed that the use of Tweets in academic research may exceed users' expectations in potentially problematic ways (Ibid). Although the authors sought ethical approval from the University ethics committee for this research (approved by [anonymised for review purposes] 24/04/18) rather than informed consent from the users, they acknowledge these concerns, and do not provide details of Twitter handles (usernames) for the tweets in this study.

CBB: 'Year of the Woman'

On the opening night of *CBB*, the programme greeted eight female housemates including: former Tory MP Anne Widdecombe, *Daily Mail* journalist Rachel Johnson; the UK's 'first transgender newsreader' India Willoughby, US reality star Malika Haaq (*Keeping up with the Kardashians* (2007-, US), veteran soap actress Amanda Barrie, DJ and social media 'influencer' Ashley James, reality star and glamour model Jess Impiazzi, and former police officer (and 'whistle-blower' in the Rochdale child-grooming scandal), Maggie Oliver. The female housemates were then joined by eight men (four days into the series) including ex-footballer and TV presenter John Barnes, ex-ballet dancer Wayne Sleep, Boyzone singer Shane Lynch, American hip-hop star 'Ginuwine', reality TV contestants Jonny Mitchell and Andrew Brady, comedian Dapper Laughs (Daniel O'Reilly), and Australian TV personality/ drag queen Shane Jenek, better known under the stage name of 'Courtney Act' (from his time as a contestant on season 6 of *Ru Paul's Drag Race* (2014, US)).

In terms of the programme's theme, *CBB* included a series of tasks intended to explore questions of gender and it was often constructed in terms of a 'battle of the sexes' discourse. The tasks included the women competing to showcase traditionally 'masculine' skills such as connecting circuit boards or changing car tyres, as well as the housemates competing in gender segregated teams to explore skills that have historically been constructed in gendered ways. Other tasks involved the housemates participating in a mock TV panel show entitled *Year of the Woman* which debated such topics as equal pay, sexual double standards and female role models. The theme of the programme also prompted a number of discussions about gender politics which were not linked to particular tasks ranging across such topics as working mothers; glamour modelling; gender discrimination in the workplace; transgender identity and gendered pronouns, and the sexual harassment scandals involving Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein. Rather than the set tasks (which were widely panned as trading in normative gender stereotypes), it was these conversations which elicited the most substantial debate about gender on the *CBB* Twitter feeds.

In terms of how the programme's theme was framed, it was never suggested by *CBB* that all the women entering the house identified as 'feminist.' In the vignettes which introduced the women, only Rachel Johnson and Ashley James openly identified as feminist, whilst others, such as Anne Widdecombe, made clear that they did *not* (and this range of perspectives was also mirrored in the introduction of the male celebrities). In this regard, and unlike the 'self-professed' feminist celebrities analysed in other academic studies (Hamad and Taylor, 2015), the participants did not all claim to identify as feminist, either prior to entering the house, or during the series run. Rather, in drawing upon the well-established reality TV practice of casting clashing personalities (Kavka, 2012), *CBB* offered a space which was set up to *debate*

and explore issues of gender, from which discussions of 'feminism' could (and would) emerge.

'Sexist' and 'Boring' (or '*Loose Women* on steroids')

It is important to stress at the outset that there was a range of different responses to the programme's theme. Some users were against the programme's premise and saw it as sexist and exclusionary; some supported it but did not like how it was 'done' (suggesting that the popular format of *CBB* was an inappropriate context for such discussions); and some positioned it as a timely and illuminating intervention into discussions of gender and sexual politics. But whilst acknowledging this range, the Twitter sample certainly problematizes the idea that feminism now has an uncontested 'mainstream' acceptance.

For example, on the opening night, there was vociferous critique of the programme as 'sexist' toward men – as articulated by users with both male and female Twitter handles:

> You're celebrating a historical act of equality by segregating and removing men? Pankhurst et al would be proud. #cbb (2 January, 2018).

> Im all for girl power and that but if it was a male only house the feminists of the land would have a shit fest!! #cbb (2 January, 2018).

> I'm almost semi offended by such a feminist theme on #CBB ... we're not victims, we don't need such a fan fare.... such a drama over our sex isn't sitting well with me .. IMAGINE if it was 'year of the man' - there would be hell!!! #cbb (2 January, 2018).

The idea of 'equality' functions as a 'rhetorical centrepiece' here (Edley and Wetherell, 2001), and is positioned in such a way as to frame feminism as outdated (there is no need for it as gender equality has been achieved), as well as 'unreasonable' and 'excessive' (clearly wanting *more* than 'just' equality) (Calder-Dawe and Gavey, 2016). In this regard, these tweets attest to the tenacity of anti-feminist ideas, as well as the continued investment in the postfeminist rhetoric that equality has *already* been secured (Anderson, 2015; Gill, 2016, McRobbie, 2009; Scharff, 2012).

Such responses were often consolidated by idea that, as well as being politically problematic, *CBB* was deficient as an entertaining television programme. Referring to an episode in which the older female housemates discussed some of the gendered inequalities they had encountered as younger women (such as being unable to rent a property as a single, unmarried woman, or openly differentiated salary scales for men and women), users on Twitter made such comments as:

> #CBB …is focusing too much on the empowerment of women aspect and that's what's making the show boring. BB shouldn't be empowering it should be entertaining (2 January, 2018).

> Well no point watching Big Brother this Year if unless i just want to hear women go on about their problems and moan #cbb (2 January, 2018).

> Anyone else fed up already off all this woman power talk… A group of woman preaching girl power for the next few days is going to get very boring #CelebrityBigBrother #CBB (2 January, 2018).

So basically this #CBB is gonna be like an episode of Loose women on steroids

(2 January, 2018).

Academic work has questioned the idea that 'politics' and 'entertainment' are necessarily antithetical (Gray, 2008; van Zoonen, 2005) and as discussed, *CBB* has a longer history of engaging popular debate about identity politics and power (Lovelock, 2015). Yet it is clear that these users did *not* see these discourses as primary to the programme's identity, and the 2018 series evidently confounded their viewing expectations. On one hand, the programme was dismissed by users as too 'political', and it was in fact often compared to more 'masculinised' television referents such as political debate programmes, Channel 4 News, or documentaries from 'BBC Four'. On the other hand, it was denigrated by reference to feminised spaces of 'low' television culture, and mentions of the ITV1 daytime talk show *Loose Women* (1999-, UK), appeared frequently here. As Jilly Kaye has explored, female speech on television - and in culture more widely - is often dismissed by recourse to denigrated female speech genres such as 'gossiping', 'nagging', 'scolding' and 'ranting'. In this regard, the tweets above, and those in the wider sample, recognise the women's talk as political, but in referring to it as 'moaning' or 'preaching', they delegitimise its status, whilst suggesting that it has no place within *CBB* as reality *entertainment.*

There is a longer historical perception that positions feminist critical practice as inhibiting the viewer's pleasure in a text (Ahmed, 2010; Loreck, 2018). Although in terms of *CBB,* the references to boredom and tedium circle around the idea of 'watching' feminism (rather than understanding it as a way of engaging *with* a text), a concern over the loss of the 'usual' viewing pleasures is clear here. As the concept of entertainment is a cultural construction (Gray, 2008, van Zoonen, 2005), its meaning(s) shift across different debates in the *CBB* Twitter sample. But in terms of how the dearth of 'entertainment' is discussed on the opening night, there appears to be concern that a 'feminist' series - and one that was often critiqued in

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ageist terms as featuring too many 'oldies' - may disrupt particular gendered pleasures usually associated with the programme.

Instead of women 'moaning' or 'preaching', users were apparently anticipating 'trashy reality stars who will piss their pants' (2 January, 2018), or more talk about 'who fancies who, favourite sexual positions and the like' (2 January, 2012). In fact, even those that praised the programme's premise did so because there's 'only so much chavvy tramp behaviour anyone can cope with' (2 January 2018). In this regard, the usual 'pleasures' bemoaned by users were implicitly associated with the inclusion of young, working class, female reality celebrities – whose bodies and identities were anticipated as the site of 'entertainment' *and* judgement within reality TV (Skeggs and Wood, 2012; Walkerdine, 2011). In this regard, and if linked back to the perception of *CBB* as a 'feminist' series, the young working-class woman is implicitly positioned as antithetical to 'feminism', which is conversely imagined as 'intelligent', 'middle-class', 'boring' and 'old'. This contributes to the idea of feminism as outdated and outmoded (something relevant only to previous generations), whilst – in class terms - it also points to historical perceptions of feminism as elite and exclusionary (see Budgeon, 2011; Skeggs, 1997).

'Brilliant' television: **entertaining politics**

Yet as discussed earlier on, even if the discourses of sexism and 'boredom' were particularly apparent on the opening night, the programme's theme garnered a range of different responses on Twitter. For example, there was also a persistent pushback against the dismissal of the programme's premise, and thus the dismissal of feminism more widely. Some tweets

questioned the idea that *CBB* was the 'wrong' place to explore contemporary gender politics, *or* that such a theme necessarily made for 'poor' television:

This season is responsible for some of the most real, important convo in recent #cbb history (16 January, 2018).

This series is BRILLIANT… ! Best one in ages! Reminds me of the old BB's where it's thoughtful discussion and not petty arguments 24/7 #cbb (3 January 2018).

Hope the footage from these interesting conversations is used well. The backlash on here is telling... #CBB (2 January, 2018).

These users above challenge the idea that entertaining or indeed 'brilliant' television is antithetical to the exploration of gender politics, and there is a reframing of the women's talk that was elsewhere dismissed on the Twitter feeds ('thoughtful discussion', 'interesting conversation', 'important convo'). In the last tweet, the user also foregrounds the discussion on Twitter as *part* of the discursive insights into gender offered by the programme, reframing the objections to its 'sexist' premise as less reasonable responses than evidence of a (patriarchal) 'backlash'.

As indicated above, the users expressing support for the theme were also those likely to question the redundancy of feminism as a concept or movement. In response to the question 'Why is it socially acceptable to be so outrightly sexist against males?!' (2 January, 2018), one user replied:

I don't know. Maybe go back in time and ask all your female family members

who never got to vote. Never got equal pay. Never able to find Work because

they also wanted children. Never able to be doctors. Never able to be politicians.

Never got credit for the work they did (2 January, 2018).

Although the reference to going 'back in time' might be read as suggesting that all is now

equal (again positioning feminism as 'past' and redundant), such conversations frequently led

to debates about existing gender inequalities on a number of different levels. Indeed,

discussion on the *CBB* Twitter feeds ranged across a number of issues pertinent to feminism,

taking in the gender pay gap, working mothers and victim-blaming in relation to rape culture

(see below). These conversations repeatedly framed feminism as entirely 'necessary', and a

critical practice that seeks to tackle the gendered disparities which *continue* to affect women

and girls in disproportionate ways (Calder-Dawe and Gavey, 2016).

For example, when housemate Jonny Mitchell suggested that feminism had gone 'too far' and

that gendered inequalities no longer existed in the UK, there were heated debates on Twitter

about the validity of his statement. As one user asked in an incredulous tone:'[H]ang on for

one little moment…. he said he thinks women have more opportunities than men [?]' (5

January, 2018). After being challenged to explain 'what disadvantages [do] women as a

group have in the UK just because they are women?' (5 January, 2018), the user entered into

a lively debate about gender inequalities (which took in the gender pay gap, as well as the

representation of women in political office). But when unable to convince the other user of

the validity of her claims she declared:

Won't be provoking anything here babe, instead of purposely acting illiterate google 'female disadvantages in the uk' and pick your choice from the workplace to ideological expectations, happy new year xxxx (5 January, 2018).

In calling attention to structural inequalities of gender, it would be difficult to describe such discussions, and those that we explore below, as operating solely in terms of the individualising rhetoric of neoliberal feminism or the 'contentlessness' of commodity feminism (Gill, 2016; Rottenberg, 2014). These debates do *not* necessarily draw upon conceptions of feminism which disavow the structural roots of gender inequality 'in favour of the neoliberal ethos of individual action, personal responsibility, and unencumbered choice' (Keller and Ringrose, 2015: 132). Rather, they arguably draw attention to the multiple sites of gendered inequity and disadvantage which remain pervasive in the UK, and they remain firm and confident in their pronouncement.

At the same time, we might note how the user is effectively 'bowing' out of the conversation in her tweet above. Research on speaking out *as* feminist online has drawn attention to the bid to 'discipline feminists into silence', including violent expressions of anti-feminist engagement (Cole, 2015: 357). Although the user is not threatened here - and they clearly speak *back* - there is a sense in which their views are challenged to the point at which they leave the thread (and the phrase 'won't be provoking anything here babe' might be read as suggesting weariness and familiarity with such resistance, and an acknowledgement that she will not change the other user's mind). In this regard, although there was a persistent strain of voices speaking out *as* feminist on the *CBB* threads, this clearly carried risk and attracted scrutiny, whilst also garnering accusations of being overly 'PC' or a 'feminist killjoy' (Ahmed, 2010). As one user retorted, 'I was making a joke are you are still burning your bra [?]'. Self-identified feminists were tweeting about *CBB* - critiquing the dismissal of

feminism, and talking about the persistence of structural gender inequalities in the current climate. But these discourses were also policed with a disdain for being 'angry', 'difficult' or 'humourless' (Gill, 2016: 618), and 'feminist' tweets were arguably subject to *more* scrutiny and debate than those containing racist, misogynist or transphobic comments.

'Was Harvey Weinstein too expensive?': formatting feminism

In addition to those who dismissed the premise of the programme (and the need for feminism) and those who strongly supported it, there were others who were concerned about *CBB* as a *popular context for the theme* – thus referencing familiar debates about 'what happens to feminism within popular culture' (Hollows and Moseley, 2006: 2). In its invocation of the centenary of women's suffrage for example, *CBB* attracted unfavourable comparisons with this historical anchor, and a perceived 'mismatch' between feminism and *CBB* was made clear in such comments as:

> I don't think voting for who gets evicted into an Elstree car park was what the suffragettes were fighting for #cbb (2 January, 2018).

Others questioned whether the female celebrities in the programme were the appropriate conduits for the theme. Judgements around the 'authenticity' of the self shape audience engagement with celebrities (Dyer, 1979; Turner, 2004) and reality contestants, and both beckon a search for the 'real' (self) within what are understood as highly performative environments (Hill, 2005). The authenticity' of the women's relations with feminism were often subject to dispute and challenge:

Every housemate this year - I'm so glad I can use female **empowerment** as a

reason for doing this show. That way nobody will think it's about the money. It's

about **feminism** **#CBB** [original emphasis] (2 January, 2018).

Critiques of the commodification/ celebritsation of feminism also concern the privileging of

white, middle-class female voices (Hollows and Moseley 2006; Butler, 2013), and the

perceived lack of intersectionality in the series was raised frequently in the sample:

@bbuk I mean only one black women and not on disabled woman in this line up

that's meant to represent the empowerment of women? Feminism isn't just about

the middle class white woman #cbb (2 January, 2018).

The lack of ethnic diversity was often mentioned in this regard, and was linked to what was

seen as the continued media dominance of 'peak white feminism' - a critique which has

gathered increasing visibility since the second wave (see Budgeon, 2011, Butler, 2013). In

this respect, although in a different way to the users who wanted to see 'trashy reality stars

piss their pants', there is again a perception here that 'feminism' on *CBB* is the province of

privilege, power and exclusion.

 But in this respect it was clear that some inequalities were more visible (and 'acceptable')

than others. For example, although much debate on Twitter was prompted by the inclusion of

the transgender newsreader India Willoughby, she was *not* generally talked about in the

sample (nor welcomed) as an example of intersectionality. Attesting to the apparently

'acceptable' face of transphobia on these Twitter feeds, as well as the fraught and contested

relations between trans identity and contemporary feminist theory, activism and discourse

(see Hines, 2017), the conversation simply circulated around India's right to 'be' a woman, and thus the extent to which she 'qualified' to be in the house *at all.*

The housemates were specifically asked to discuss what 'it meant to be a woman in 2018', with the anticipation that Willoughby would clash with the views of other housemates, such as those of traditionalist Anne Widdecombe. Accused both inside and outside the house of anti-feminist views, homophobia and transphobia, it was Widdecombe, along with Dapper Laughs, who was critiqued as the most problematic 'casting' choice in relation to the programme's theme. Whilst tweets complained that Anne 'rolled her eyes at the sheer mention of feminism' (2 February, 2018) and frequently insisted that feminism had gone 'too far', others foregrounded the mismatch between the history of her political views and the theme of this year's *CBB*:

> Let's kick off this empowering women's edition of #cbb by getting Anne Widdecombe in the diary room to ask her why she defended the Government's policy to shackle pregnant prisoners with handcuffs and chains when in hospital receiving ante-natal care #cbb (2 January, 2018).

Users often had even stronger views on the inclusion of Dapper Laughs – who had a controversial history of sexist and misogynist humour:

> I think @channel5_tv should be utterly ashamed … announcing an all-female #CBB and then 'spicing it up' by sending in a rape apologist #cbb (4 January, 2018).

> I gather the theme of this year's "Celebrity" Big Brother is 'Year of the Woman' - and then they decide to throw Dapper Laughs into the mix. Was Harvey Weinstein too expensive? #CBB (4 January, 2018).

The casting of 'intimate strangers' (Kavka, 2012) and clashing personalities is clearly an established trope of reality TV, and it enables producers to have *some* control over the narrative world before filming begins (Deery, 2015; Kavka, 2012: 81). These 'pre-coded conflicts' often emerge from social and ideological differences, and provide volatile terrains for narrative action (Kavka, 2012: 82). But as Kavka observes, in setting up 'racial, sexual and socio-political flashpoints by casting participants as the raw material for dramatic narratives', these scenarios involve *ethical* as well as political considerations (2012: 82) – as the tweets above clearly suggest.

Others suggested that the moral and ethical responsibilities of the programme went considerably further than casting decisions, and insisted that *CBB* was actively perpetuating misogyny:

> #CBB should shine a light on misogyny (and add drama) by playing the house the #cbbdaniel [Dapper Laughs] sexist 'lad' conversations with the boys and allow the women to speak their minds. Hiding his behavior while [the female housemates vote to] … save him is complicit and goes against the point of the season #cbbuk (22 January, 2018).

> Really tired of the entire crew of @bbuk glorifying ann. yes, she's providing some comical moments but that doesn't excuse the awful views and her complete self righteousness. her winning 'year of the woman' would be a JOKE considering her views on feminism & abuse. #CBB #CBBBOTS [12 January, 2018)

The first tweet does not position entertainment and politics as antithetical (it can both 'shine a light' *and* 'add drama'). But it does suggest that, in this instance, the aesthetic and narrative

construction of *CBB* is 'complicit' in the endorsement of misogyny. In terms of Widdecombe, it is difficult to know precisely what the user is referring to as 'glorification'. But as well as featuring her attitudes toward gay marriage and her views on feminism, the programme certainly included a number of conversations in which housemates expressed *respect* for her apparently congruent and 'transparent' self – offering a model of 'authentic' personhood that has historically been praised by reality TV (Holmes, 2004).

Yet although it would be problematic to conceive of *CBB* as simply offering the '"raw material" from which a range of conclusions could be drawn and a variety of narratives constructed' (to echo claims historically made by the production team) (Tincknell and Raghuram, 2004: 257), there were clearly divergent responses on Twitter to what the programme was 'doing' with gender here:

> The great thing about #CBB Year of the Woman, is that it's clearly demonstrating that women are NOT a monolith. Women can perpetuate misogyny. Women can harm other women. Women come in all shapes, sizes, and have every opinion under the sun. Brilliant television (28 January, 2018).

> I've been watching this season of #cbb, it's been quite fascinating re: gender issues. The absolute glut of misogyny, the depressing … attitudes of Widdecombe, and the frankly remarkable patience of @courtneyact (1 February, 2018).

In these responses, the programme is seen less as condoning or perpetuating misogyny than actively highlighting and exploring it. But whether the programme was seen as perpetuating or exposing misogyny, *CBB* appeared to provide a terrain upon which viewers could debate and *critiqu*e such attitudes (see also Kavka, 2012: 83) – often linking the discourses to real-world contexts and experiences.

CBB, feminism, citizenship

For example, early on in the series before the male housemates arrived, some of the celebrities discussed the sexual harassment/ assault charges levied at Harvey Weinstein – the figure invoked above to attest to the programme's questionable moral code. Two of the older housemates in particular – Anne Widdecombe and Amanda Barrie – questioned the basis of the allegations, suggesting that women had the choice to decline his advances and walk away. This then generated a slew of angry responses on Twitter which specifically situated and critiqued the conversation as an example of victim-blaming discourse:

> Amanda and Ann's comments on Harvey Weinstein's VICTIMS were an absolute disgrace! He is accused of sexually assaulting & raping women. Ann said they had a choice?! She should be ejected from the house immediately… #cbb #Victimshaming #metoo (3 January, 2018).

> Why is nobody saying that actresses should never have been put in a position in the first place where they had to choose between giving up a part they were worthy of or having sex with Weinstein?! What is Anne taking about? #CelebrityBigBrother #cbb (3 January, 2018).

> What choice did the victims have when he whacked his dick out in front of them and started masturbating? Haven't you heard the recording of the victim repeatedly saying no? Do your research! (3 January, 2018).

These tweets were responding to the on-screen conversation, as well as the ensuing debate on the Twitter feeds, in which a minority of users made distinctions between 'real' sexual assault

and the 'normative' expectations of the 'casting couch'. In response, the tweets above clearly name the acts *as* assault and rape, question the rhetoric of choice, and invoke the online movement #MeToo - the hashtag used to demonstrate the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault shortly after the allegations surrounding Weinstein emerged (see Cobb and Horeck, 2018). Although the bid to push back against victim-blaming is far from new within feminist discourse and activism (see Anderson, 2015), such resistance has gained increasing visibility via the SlutWalk campaigns (2011-) (Mendes, 2015), and the media visibility of #MeToo.[ii] Rather than simply insisting that victim-blaming is unacceptable and 'wrong' (see Mendes, 2015: 94), the tweets lay the blame squarely with the perpetrator, and they 'revisit' the dynamics of the assault in order to refute claims to agency and 'choice'. Indeed, the last tweet in particular seeks to challenge victim-blaming discourse by invoking a scenario of sexual assault– its evocative and shocking imagery foreclosing the idea that agency should *even* be debated here. As such, in extending the purchase of the #MeToo debate in relation to particular conversations in *CBB*, these discourses do not collude with the feminist neoliberal discourse of 'individual action, personal responsibility, and unencumbered choice as the best strategy to produce gender equality' (Keller and Ringrose, 2016: 132).

Emerging feminist scholarship on the 'post-Weinstein' era (Cobb and Horeck, 2018) is seeking to address the new visibility of long-standing feminist arguments about gender inequalities in the workplace and the patriarchal dynamics of rape culture, *as well as* explore the limitations of these discourses, and the degree to which they will engender any long-term change (see Ibid). Such interrogation is clearly vital, but as discussed in the framing of this article, it remains important to look at what changes we *have* seen in popular feminism, rather focusing primarily on what is 'missing' or not there. In relation to the tweets about *CBB*, viewers were using the programme to engage in debate about the patriarchal dynamics of

rape culture and crucially, what have passed as 'acceptable' attitudes toward such abuses of power.

Just as the #MeToo movement traversed the boundary between the celebrity and the 'ordinary', the spectacular and the everyday, so these debates were frequently positioned on a continuum with 'everyday' actions unfolding in the house. For example, in questioning a series of comments which defended the 'laddish' and sexist behaviour of the younger male housemates, one user commented:

> Lads if you think Andrew, Jonny and Daniel's discourse about women is ok then you are part of the problem. It's not OK #cbb (17 January, 2018).

In examining the ways in which reality TV can become a trigger for political talk, Graham and Hajru observe how reality TV forums are 'an important object for research since they address us … as participants of debate, as users of social media, as audiences of television programmes and as citizens … (2011: 29). Existing research has indeed explored how reality TV works over questions of cultural citizenship (e.g. Coleman, 2006; Gray, 2008; Ouellette and Hay, 2008; van Zoonen, 2005). In particular, although popular conceptions of reality programmes (especially those with participatory mechanisms) may invoke 'caricature[s] of the dumbed-down … viewer, distracted by the trivia of televized reality from any engagement with the real world' (Coleman, 2006: 459), scholarship has questioned this traditional binary of the 'citizen'/ 'consumer', and explored how mediated experiences can offer forms of civic participation (Ibid). Indeed, as *CBB* progressed and viewers began to debate who might go on to win, there was repeated recourse to the audience as 'public', both in terms of the programme's outcome *and* the specificity of its theme. With Widdecombe and Shane Jenek/ Courtney Act emerging as the final two housemates, users tweeted such comments as:

Oh god, so [it]… comes down to a finale which includes a woman who doesn't believe in feminism, gay marriage and women priests, please, please let's see Shane/Courtney triumph - I can't bear it, I'm going to bed, it's like brexit all over again #cbb (2 February, 2018).

In the Year of the Woman, let's not vote for someone who would throw women under the bus by putting up a defence for Harvey Weinstein within hours of entering the #CBB house! #CBBFinal (2 February, 2018).

These tweets specifically seek to appeal to viewers *as* citizens to make the 'right' voting choice, questioning the idea that – when compared to formal politics – the audience has a 'relaxed and obligation-free relationship' with *CBB* (Coleman, 2006: 460). In this regard, the tweets call out what are framed as the 'antidemocratic tendencies' of misogyny and homophobia (van Zoonen, 2005: 150), and they effectively remind viewers of their civic 'duty' to make the 'right' choice when voting (Ibid: 56). In this regard, although Widdecombe did not go on to win *CBB,* there were many tweets that sought to 'shame' those 'out there' who *had* voted for her to remain, specifically in relation to her expressed opinions about gender, feminism and LGBT rights:

Apparently 'entertainment' is winning over decency. Apparently homophobia, victim blaming rape victims and sexism is funny to watch!! #cbb (2 February, 2018).

Yup! I think we've basically found out that #homophobia and #misogyny are real crowd pleasers for some #cbb viewers! (2 February, 2018).

Questions again arise here about the 'appropriate' relationship between *CBB,* 'entertainment', and politics. In this instance, the tweets imply that viewers have gleaned misguided pleasures from the text and that they have effectively 'misunderstood' what the appropriate response should have been to Widdecombe's views (a disparity which returns to the uncertainty about whether the programme is highlighting, endorsing or critiquing inequalities). In fact, in conflating 'good citizenship' with 'good taste' (see van Zoonen, 2005: 15)), there is something of a contradictory invocation of *CBB* as a site for popular feminism(s) here. On one level, the programme is positioned as raising issues of civic importance upon which 'feminism' should intervene (and the extent to which a 'feminist' point of view is situated as 'common sense' here clearly contrasts with the *lack* of legitimacy afforded to feminism in the tweets on the opening night). On the other hand, there is again the implication that *CBB* has not been a 'safe' or appropriate terrain upon which to explore such important issues, with its imagined popular 'pleasures' steering the result 'out of control' to the point at which online intervention is necessary.

Shane Jenek/ Courtney Act ultimately went on to win the series, and although there was some complaint on Twitter that a female contestant should have won 'Year of the Woman', the outcome was eagerly praised by many:

> There couldn't be a better winner of year of the woman than a polyamorous genderqueer drag queen tbh. #CBB (2 February, 2018).

> I personally think the perfect ending to #CBB 'year of the woman' is the fact that Courtney has won! A celebration of how wonderfully accepting our country is to everyone - man, woman, trans, gay, straight or bi! high five public! Great choice! @bbuk (2 February, 2018).

It is clearly problematic to suggest a neat equation between the outcome of a reality programme and the existence of a tolerant and 'progressive' society: the sample of tweets analysed here would question the idea of a 'wonderfully accepting' public (and the early ejection and treatment of Willoughby as a trans woman is effectively written out of this narrative). Nevertheless, within the programme itself, the winner had openly identified as feminist, raised questions about intersectionality, discussed the nuances of transvestitism and transgender identification, and challenged Widdecombe's pronouncements that gender equality had been achieved. As such, there was a sense in which Jenek/ Act emerged as a worthy winner in relation to the programme's theme. At the same time, it is important to recognise how this 'acceptance' still assumed constructions of 'fair' and 'reasonable' feminism which pivoted on the idea of 'equality for all' – a discourse which simultaneously activates the perception of feminism as (otherwise) inegalitarian and selfishly 'women focussed' (Tyler, 2007, cited in Calder-Dawe and Gavey, 2016: 493). This is particularly so given that the two women to openly identify as feminist (and who invoked discussion of the inequalities faced by women), received a far less accepting reaction. Rachel Johnston was evicted early on - second only to Willoughby – and Ashley James' feminist identity was repeatedly subject to challenge and criticism when the series was on air:

> Anyone else clock the irony that after Ashley came in all guns blazing about
> feminism and the year of the woman she has spent her entire time in the house
> OBSESSING about a MAN? #CBB) (15 January, 2018).

 In terms of judgements about the 'authenticity' and 'validity' of popular feminism(s), this returns us to where we began – with the tweets hedging around the issue of what 'counts' as feminism, and thus who has the right to 'speak' as feminist, or claim a feminist identity *at all*.

Conclusion

This article has aimed to examine what a sample of *CBB* Twitter discourse can tell us about the apparent 'luminosity' (Gill, 2016) of feminism in the contemporary cultural moment, *and* the ways in which *CBB* might function as a terrain for the negotiation of popular feminism(s). In particular, this article has sought to respond to continued tensions between 'academic' and 'popular' feminism, even whilst these discourses are recognised as irrevocably intertwined. In doing so, it has aimed to take into account some of the specificities of the programme context, and how this shaped the mobilisation of feminism(s) as a cultural category here (Quinn and Radtke, 2006). In this regard, it is crucial that these debates emerged from the arenas of reality TV and celebrity culture, both of which have been positioned - in popular and academic discourse - as having uneasy relationships with feminism (Wicke, 1994, Holmes and Jermyn, 2014).

First, the idea that we have moved 'beyond' postfeminism would indeed seem to be premature, and the data attests to the continued currency of 'pre-feminist or anti-feminist ideas' in the contemporary cultural moment (Gill, 2016: 622). Particularly in the early days of the series, there was a dominant - even 'common sense' - discourse that feminism was extreme, unfair and sexist, essentially because it was now *obsolete* (Calder-Dawe and Gavey, 2016, Scharff, 2011). Although seemingly progressive, the discourse around the outcome of the programme also implicitly confirmed the perception of 'traditional' feminism (and the focus on women's rights), as 'unreasonable', 'unfair' and 'excessive', and thus something that we should now move beyond.

However, from the start of the series there was also significant pushback against efforts to marginalise or silence feminism, and an emphasis on its continued use value in tackling structural gendered disparities which effect women and girls in disproportionate ways (Calder-Dawe and Gavey, 2016). To suggest that this simply echoed the individualist rhetorical of neoliberal feminism, or the 'empty' rhetoric of celebrity/ commodity feminism (Gill, 2016), is to simplify and generalise about the nuanced and complex ways in which feminism was mobilised here. The talk *did*, at times, call attention to structural gender inequalities, with the Twitter feeds emerging as a way of amplifying, extending and deepening issues that were spoken about on screen. Although these were necessarily limited in scope and depth (and the character limit on Twitter is certainly a structuring context here), they did not simply perpetuate versions of neoliberal feminism in which 'individual action, personal responsibility, and unencumbered choice [are presented] as the best strategy to produce gender equality' (Keller and Ringrose, 2016: 132). In fact, many of the debates discussed here push against this prevailing idea of 'choice', asking us to think about the ways in which women's agency has been compromised by historical, economic and cultural inequities that have been beyond their control.

It is also clear that the Twitter discourse included significant *critique* of the programme as a space for debates about gender politics, suggesting that audiences do not uncritically accept the representations of feminism they encounter on screen (see also Keller and Ringrose, 2015). Such debates can be valuable in themselves given that, as Hollows and Moseley observe, '[s]truggles in popular culture over the meaning of feminism … may offer a way of understanding the limitations of feminism' (2006: 3). If this is the case here then there remains the suggestion that feminism reproduces 'hierarchies of difference and dominance' (Butler, 2013: 49), particularly in terms of race and class. Equally, the perception that, as a

popular reality format, *CBB* might not be the most conducive environment for debates about contemporary gender politics was also a persistent theme in the sample. Such discussions of course still demonstrated the significance of the programme as a site for generating popular debate *about* (and understandings of) feminism. But it is clear that some Twitter users echoed concern about whether popular culture may 'tame' or 'corrupt' what is still often presented as feminism *proper* – suggesting that such hierarchies are not simply the preserve of academic discourse. If *critiques* of popular feminism are now an established part of feminism's popular circulation (Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer, 2017: 885), this in itself raises interesting questions about how we approach these discourses as feminist media scholars. If the traditional dichotomy was between 'academic' and 'popular' feminism (hierarchies which, as argued, still retain a currency), then what do we do when popular culture making claims to feminism comes to us 'pre-judged', with concerns already articulated over commodification, ethics or intersectionality?

Banet-Weiser and Portwood-Stacer observe of popular feminism that it seems to 'explicitly recognize that inequality exists while stopping short of recognizing, naming, or disrupting the political economic conditions that allow that inequality to be profitable' (2017: 885). It is possible to read the Twitter debates explored here as 'recognising' and 'naming' inequality, even if they do not 'disrupt' the mechanisms that enable such disparities to flourish. But given that feminist media scholarship has also struggled to intervene in these structures, it is worth reflecting on whether we may be placing unreasonable expectations on the popular here.

The case of *CBB* suggests the need to look closely at how we can 'think together' (Gill, 2016: 610), the particular structures of a popular cultural text *with* constructions, understandings

and uses of feminism as a cultural category. In this regard, popular media constructions of feminism cannot be considered outside the contexts of their *reception* (which are not always predictable nor homogenous). As feminism achieves more mainstream visibility (even if such visibility is 'uneven' and contradictory) (Gill, 2016, Hollows and Moseley, 2006), we are faced with popular media texts making *more* explicit claims to connections with feminism, as is the case with *CBB*. In this regard, we need to think about how to approach these intersections with nuance and complexity - to keep a keen eye on strategies of incorporation and limitation, as well as remain alive to the *range* of ways in which popular feminism can be used and understood. This involves considering how feminism, popular media and celebrity culture 'intersect in ways that may be at once productive and unproductive, with constraints *and* possibilities [our emphasis]' (Hamad and Taylor, 2015; 125). In spotlighting these dynamics, *CBB* is a illustrative example of the complexities of contemporary feminism(s), and the problems inherent in simplifying the popular.

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[i] The Representation of the People Act was passed in 1918, enabling women over the age of 30 (who met minimum property qualifications) to vote. The Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act (1928) extended the right to vote to all women over the age of 21 In Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

[ii] Although it is important to observe here that the Me Too movement had a longer dating back to 2006 and the work of activist Tarana Burke (see Rodino-Colocino, 2018).