

1: Postfeminism - Genz, Stéphanie/ Brabon, Benjamin A. - | HPB

Detailed analysis in chapters on the Backlash, New Traditionalism and Austerity Nostalgia, New Feminism, Girl Power and Chick-lit, Do-Me Feminism and Raunch Culture, (Neo)liberal Sexism, Postmodern Feminism, Postcolonial Feminism, Queer Feminism, Men and Feminism, Cyberfeminism, Third Wave Feminism, Sexual Micro-/Macro-Politics, Celebrity Brand.

Brabon to be identified as authors of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act Contents Acknowledgements vi Introduction: Postfeminist Possibilities 1 51 64 76 91 Bibliography Index Acknowledgements We would like to thank Alistair McCleery for his encouragement in the early stages of this project and for suggesting Edinburgh University Press. Also, we want to express our gratitude to Edge Hill University for their backing and to Jackie Jones at EUP for her belief in this book and unfailing patience. As always, we are grateful to our families for their support. Postfeminist Contexts Postfeminism is a concept fraught with contradictions. Loathed by some and celebrated by others, it emerged in the late twentieth century in a number of cultural, academic and political contexts, from popular journalism and media to feminist analyses, postmodern theories and neo-liberal rhetoric. This book endeavours to take stock of the postfeminist phenomenon, which has confounded and split contemporary critics with its contradictory meanings and pluralistic outlook. In this introduction, we contextualise postfeminism by considering its position within feminist histories and its emergence in popular culture, academia and politics. The chapters are dedicated to specific postfeminist strands – including new traditionalism, do-me feminism, cyberfeminism and micro-politics – and they follow the structure of the introduction in the way that they progress from popularised conceptions of postfeminism to more theoretical and political notions. It is a founding premise of this book that all articulations of or movements associated with postfeminism are valid and they inform one another. In this sense, we argue against a polarised understanding of postfeminism that separates its theories, texts and contexts into disparate and disconnected postfeminist versions and locations. Perplexing and troubling for some, postfeminism is also a compelling and provocative feature of contemporary culture, society, academia and politics that demands our critical attention and scrutiny. Postfeminist Contexts 3 and ferocity ever since it attached itself to the social and political phenomenon that is feminism. We choose to omit the hyphen in our spelling of postfeminism in order to avoid any predetermined readings of the term that imply a semantic rift between feminism and postfeminism, instantly casting the latter as a negation and sabotage of the former. Also, by forgoing the hyphen, we seek to credit and endow postfeminism with a certain cultural independence that acknowledges its existence as a conceptual entity in its own right. Regardless of our spelling, it is not so much the hyphen as the prefix itself that has been the focus of critical investigations. For example, this is the case in the numerous obituaries for feminism that have appeared in some political and media quarters, announcing if not the death then at least the redundancy of feminism. This awareness of feminist change has resulted in a number of bitter ownership battles and wrangling, often cast in familial terms as mother–daughter conflicts. At best, feminism can be said to have a number of working definitions that are always relative to particular contexts, specific issues and personal practices. It exists on both local and abstract levels, dealing with specific issues and consisting of diverse individuals while promoting a universal politics of equality for women. Feminists are simultaneously united by their investment in a general concept of justice and fractured by the multiple goals and personal practices that delineate the particular conception of justice to which they aspire. From this perspective, the attempt to fix the meaning of postfeminism looks futile and even misguided, as each articulation is by itself a Introduction: Postfeminist Contexts 5 definitional act that re-constructs the meaning of feminism and its own relation to it. There is no original or authentic postfeminism that holds the key to its definition. Nor is there a secure and unified origin from which this genuine postfeminism could be fashioned. Instead, we understand postfeminism in terms of a network of possible relations that allows for a variety of permutations and readings. In particular, we argue that postfeminism is context-specific and has to be assessed dynamically in the relationships and tensions between its various manifestations and contexts. Rather than being tied to a specific contextual and

epistemological framework, postfeminism emerges in the intersections and hybridisation of mainstream media, consumer culture, neo-liberal politics, postmodern theory and, significantly, feminism. It has been denounced – particularly by feminist critics – as a contaminating presence, a parasite charged with infiltration and appropriation. In the most denunciatory accounts, this leads to a perception of postfeminism as a retrogressive, anti-feminist backlash that retracts and invalidates the gains and social transformations brought on by or through the feminist movement. Can feminism be political and popular at the same time? Once feminism has become a commodity, does it still have the power to enforce social change? Postfeminist Contexts 7 even a substitute for – feminism; its origins are much more varied and even incongruous, addressing the paradoxes of a late twentieth- and early twentyfirst-century setting in which feminist concerns have entered the mainstream and are articulated in politically contradictory ways. In what follows, we seek to locate postfeminism contextually in order to circumscribe a postfeminist landscape made up of an array of relationships and connections within social, cultural, academic and political arenas. Within these contexts, postfeminism acquires diverse and sometimes contradictory meanings – for example, it is often assumed that postfeminism as a descriptive popular category is conceptually inferior to and more conservative than theoretical versions associated with a postmodern challenge to identity politics. The fact that postfeminism cannot be delimited in this way and defined with a clear sense of finality and certainty points towards its interdiscursivity and intercontextuality, which inevitably take the form of boundary-crossing. We believe that postfeminism is a more complex and productive concept than many of its common usages suggest. Postfeminism is both retro- and neo- in its outlook and hence irrevocably post-. It is neither a simple rebirth of feminism nor a straightforward abortion excuse the imagery but a complex resignification that harbours within itself the threat of backlash as well as the potential for innovation. It is important for us to avoid this definitional trap, which might supply us with some appealing conclusions and neat answers at the expense of more complex and thought-provoking questions. Most postfeminist expressions that we address in this book undoubtedly arise in a late twentieth-century Western context characterised by the proliferation of media images and communication technologies and a neo-liberal, consumerist ideology that replaces collective, activist politics with more individualistic assertions of consumer choice and self-rule. Moreover, postfeminism has also been criticised for its exclusions in terms of class, age, race and to some extent sexuality, whereby the ideal postfeminist subject is seen to be a white, middle-class, heterosexual girl. Postfeminist Contexts 9 and middle-class femininity. We are equally interested in the yet unexplored categories of the postfeminist man and cyborg, queer and ethnic variations of postfeminism and politicised interpretations of it. However, we do not presume that this examination of postfeminist facets is all-encompassing and we do not at any rate expect to deliver the final answer and solution to the contemporary postfeminist conundrum. Some of the postfeminist texts and theories that we discuss can undeniably be considered conservative, retrogressive and even anti-feminist, while others hold the potential for innovation and progress. What makes the postfeminist phenomenon so conflict-ridden but also exciting and compelling is precisely that it does not conform to our definitional frameworks and our preconceptions of where the boundaries of academia, politics and popular culture should lie. We want to go a step further by not just positioning postfeminism in relation to and against feminism but also contextualising it in popular culture, academia and politics. In this way, we hope to trace a genealogy of postfeminism that explores its pluralistic constructions, locations and meanings, its overlapping understandings and paradoxical critical practice. At the same time, the postfeminist 10 Postfeminism phenomenon also demands that we interrogate and possibly re-imagine how we carry out critique, apply analytical frameworks and draw conclusions in a contemporary context that defies the logic of non-contradiction. The relationships between feminist and postfeminist discourses are multiple and varied. Confusion rules as postfeminism is variously identified or associated with an anti-feminist backlash, pro-feminist third wave, Girl Power dismissive of feminist politics, trendy me-first power feminism and academic postmodern feminism. There seems to be a simultaneous denial, use and misuse of feminism, an unscrupulous embrace of contradiction and ambiguity that negotiates areas of tension that, we maintain, can be used productively within postfeminist practice and theory. Already in a group of female literary radicals in Greenwich Village. This time, it was the popular press that brought back postfeminism into the cultural

limelight, where it was mostly discussed Introduction: Postfeminist Contexts 11 as exemplary of a reaction against second wave feminism and its collective, activist politics. These intergenerational relations are characterised by connection but also, necessarily, by discontinuity and discrepancy, as young women becoming conscious of feminism in the s and s are embedded in an altered social, cultural and political context and climate. In our opinion, this definition of postfeminism as a self-critical, evaluative mode is simply too optimistic, as in the end postfeminism is always more than a straightforward criticism of a specific feminist phase. In its various manifestations, postfeminism exhibits a number of relations to feminism ranging from complacency to hostility, admiration to repudiation. In its most denunciatory expressions, postfeminism clearly misreads and classifies feminism as a monolithic movement that is archaic, binaristic and unproductive for the experiences of contemporary women. In order to position themselves against a supposedly unified and old-fashioned feminist entity, some postfeminists end up distorting and reducing Introduction: In our understanding, feminist and postfeminist stances are allied and entwined, creating a dynamic and multifaceted context that is made up of various standpoints and theories. The rhetoric of opposition thus takes the form of both anti- and pro-postfeminism, either rejecting the term as an opportunistic move on the part of patriarchy or embracing it and thereby denouncing earlier feminist movements. On the pro-postfeminist side of the debate, there is a group of young women who appear to speak from somewhere outside and above feminism. The most prominent advocates of this standpoint “Naomi Wolf, Katie Roiphe, Natasha Walter and Rene Denfeld” support an individualistic and liberal agenda that relies on a mantra of choice and assumes 14 Postfeminism that the political demands of first and second wave feminism have now been met enfranchisement, equal pay, sexual liberation etc. We know what it is to live without excessive confinement. The implicit assumption is that feminism no longer needs to be enforced politically as it is now up to individual women and their personal choices to reinforce those fundamental societal changes. Telling the Truth and Changing the Face of Feminism We fear that the identity will dictate and regulate our lives, instantaneously pitting us against someone, forcing us to choose inflexible and unchanging sides, female against male, black against white, oppressed against oppressor, good against bad. As Imelda Whelehan explains this generational conflict: These anti-postfeminist critics define postfeminism as a sexist, politically conservative and media-inspired ploy that guts the underlying principles of the feminist movement. In line with this viewpoint, the advent of postfeminism has engendered not the eradication of sexism but its transformation into a more indirect and insidious form. This stance has notably been taken up and examined by the American journalist Susan Faludi, who portrays postfeminism as a devastating reaction against the ground gained by the second wave, and implicates the work of younger feminists Wolf, Roiphe, etc. Any movement or philosophy which defines itself as post whatever came before is bound to be reactive. In what follows, we will discuss in more detail these notions of appropriation, incorporation and commoditisation that underlie many articulations and assessments of mostly popular forms of postfeminism. What interests us at this stage is the rhetoric of opposition deployed by both pro- and antipostfeminist camps that presents the relationship between feminism and postfeminism as mutually exclusive and incompatible. The rhetoric of inclusion displaces the polarisations from within the post feminist coupling to the relationships of post feminism and other discursive frameworks. The critical tension between feminism and postfeminism is defused in this way as the two terms are conflated into one and incorporated into another discursive project. The absorption of postfeminism into postmodernist cultural critique runs the risk of repressing its importance in other domains, specifically its place in the public debate on feminism and the modern woman. We argue against a bifurcation of postfeminism that splits it into a number of distinct, disconnected and competing strands “almost as if it were leading separate lives in popular culture, academia and politics. In the following sections, we will situate postfeminism contextually in order to avoid the pitfalls of reductive strategies of definition, and we will investigate the emergence of late twentieth-century postfeminism in a number of cultural, theoretical and political sites. Yet the resolutely popular character of postfeminism has often been criticised for somehow lessening its analytical potential and undermining more thorough and systematic social and academic movements. Several points are noteworthy here: Tasker and Negra not only locate postfeminism within the popular realm but also infer a value judgement that belies both the complexities of postfeminism and popular culture; they uphold a dualistic

conception of feminism and academia on the one hand” as Introduction: This perception of postfeminism is common among a number of mostly feminist critics who view the exchanges of feminism and popular culture not only with scepticism but sometimes even with hostility. In this process of co-option, feminism has supposedly been made safe while its more attractive elements and terminology of liberation and emancipation have been preserved and accommodated. As many contemporary commentators have acknowledged, feminism is now part of the cultural field and its meanings are increasingly mediated. As a result, feminist discourses cannot be comprehended as simply being outside and independent critical voices, as they are now part of a global-based media landscape. In other words, popular culture comes to be seen as a critical location for the constitution of the meanings of feminism, a site on, through and against which the contents and significations of feminism are produced and understood Moseley and Read; Brunsdon. Postfeminist Contexts 21 be the crucial first step to a wider social revolution, facilitating an awakening of previously brainwashed women. As Imelda Whelehan advocates, the only way out of this media absorption is to separate fact from fiction: Second wave feminists also raised other objections with regard to the media which related not only to the misrepresentation of women as a whole but specifically to the depictions of feminism and feminists in popular culture. Paradoxically, the image of the bra-burner was also the inadvertent outcome of one of the earliest and most iconic events that brought second wave feminist activism to public awareness: It was also a carefully planned publicity stunt and an attempt at collective consciousness-raising: However, media reports of the event were less than favourable, as much of the national press coverage depicted the demonstration in ways that made the emerging movement seem ludicrous. While the view of feminism as a defeminising force can clearly be identified as a distorted media refraction and propaganda, it is important to note that the sense of incongruity between feminism and femininity was not only publicised by the contemporary media but was also present in many feminist writings of the time. In *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture*, Joanne Hollows describes how the notion of a feminist movement and the assertion of a feminist identity are often predicated on a rejection of femininity: In years to come, new post feminist voices would emerge to support a re-articulation of femininity and popular culture that takes into account their complex interactions with feminism.

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1 Backlash and New Traditionalism (pp.) In this chapter we examine one of the key strands of postfeminism, a largely pessimistic position that equates postfeminism with an anti-feminist and media-driven backlash characterised by a rejection of feminist goals and an attempt to turn the clock back to pre-feminist times.

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6: Postfeminism - Paperback - StÃ©phanie Genz; Benjamin Brabon - Oxford University Press

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9: Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories - PDF Free Download

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