RESEARCH PAPER

Feminist Outrage on Social Media and other Electronic Media Platforms Post US-Elections: Digital Feminism is the Last Recourse of the Left

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to identify the hurdles modern feminist theory has to deal with in terms of its political relevance. The paper attempts to examine how the feminist movement and the political concerns of the left echo in an abyss, failing to build any narrative or discourse. It demonstrates the creation of blurred lines by the manipulation of the feminist movement with regard to political victimization. This study incorporates the framework of power and politics offered by Michel Foucault and the idea of sovereignty by Nietzsche in order to evaluate the harms to the feminist movement has to cater to in the modern context of political paradigm shifts. This paper necessitates the left movement and feminism to utilize digital platforms to radicalize itself in the contemporary period.

Introduction

In an attempt to understand why so many American women who support feminist goals do not wish to be labeled feminists, sociologist Beth Schneider collected impressions of feminism from a diverse group of women whose ages ranged from nineteen to sixty-six. Schneider concluded that the hostility was directed at the feminist definition of and attitudes toward "normal womanhood", sexuality, maternity, and personality traits like nurturance, warmth, and nonaggressiveness. While most of those surveyed felt that the feminist movement has done much to improve the status of women, there was general agreement that feminists are tough, aggressive, unattractive, hostile, and "afraid of being a woman." The decline of patriarchal (more or less feudal) states based on kinship and the concurrent return of repressed republican ideology, the "Machiavellian moment" of the early modern age, invariably coincided with the emergence of a bourgeois society in which households became the typical site of commodity production, and the paterfamilias (the male head of the household) became the paradigm of the citizen. In the contemporary political landscape, the feminist movement stands at a crossroads, grappling with both internal fragmentation and external political pressures. Historically intertwined with leftist ideologies advocating for social justice, equality, and the redistribution of power, feminism now faces significant challenges in maintaining its political relevance and coherence. The rise of digital platforms, shifting political paradigms, and the manipulation of feminist discourse through victimization narratives have created a complex terrain for feminist theory to navigate (Kaifa, Yaseen, & Muzaffar, 2024). These challenges are further compounded by the broader political dynamics that often dilute or co-opt feminist ideals, leaving them disconnected from their radical, transformative potential.

This paper seeks to critically examine the hurdles that modern feminist theory encounters in sustaining its political relevance. Drawing upon the theoretical frameworks of Michel Foucault and Friedrich Nietzsche, it explores how feminist discourse is shaped by shifting power dynamics, political paradigms, and the politics of victimization. Foucault's analysis of power as diffuse and relational provides a lens for understanding the subtle mechanisms through which feminist ideas are manipulated and marginalized, while Nietzsche's notion of sovereignty offers a radical vision for feminist political autonomy that transcends victimhood and embraces agency. Moreover, the paper advocates for the necessity of digital platforms as a means of radicalizing feminist discourse in the contemporary period, suggesting that the digital realm offers new possibilities for feminist movements to reassert their political potency.

By critically engaging with these themes, this paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the contemporary challenges facing feminism, while also proposing a path forward for the movement to reclaim its political agency and relevance in a rapidly evolving global context. Through this analysis, the paper underscores the need for feminism to adapt to new socio-political realities, drawing on both its historical roots and modern innovations to shape a more inclusive and transformative future.

Literature Review

As Max Weber understood bureaucracy as the creature of the large corporations, so Lukács, who was Weber's student, understood bureaucracy as the apogee of proletarianization: "Bureaucracy implies the adjustment of one's way of life, mode of work and hence of consciousness, to the general socio-economic premises of the capitalist economy, similar to that which we have observed in the case of the worker in particular business concerns. The split between the worker's labor-power and his personality, its metamorphosis into a thing, an object that he sells on the market is repeated here too." But under the aegis of bureaucracy, "the division of labor which in the case of Taylorism invaded the psyche, here invades the realm of ethics."

Legions of scholars have used the sex/gender system to dissect virtually every type of cultural narrative, ranging from ancient myths and legends to capitalist theory to con temporary films and advertising. The methodologies used in these studies are complex and variable, but virtually all of them are premised on the assumption that gender identity is an arbitrary cultural product that exists in the domain of mind separate and distinct from the domain of the body. When a woman's consciousness is raised by the sex/gender system, she learns to identify herself with her gender and to see all relations with men in political terms. The menacing "other" becomes the patriarchal culture that allegedly defines her gender identity in even the most familiar and seemingly innocuous phenomena. Not surprisingly, seeing the world through the prism of the sex/gender system normally produces dramatic results. "Now that the sex/gender system has become visible to us," says gender feminist Virginia Held, "we can see it everywhere."

Writers such as Nancy Fraser (2009) in *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World* argue that the feminist movement has encountered tensions in its relationship with the left, as the focus on economic redistribution and class-based politics has sometimes overshadowed concerns of gender equality. Fraser critiques the failure of both leftist politics and feminist theory to adequately address the intersectionality of social justice, which includes race, class, and gender.

Further complicating this dynamic, Judith Butler (2004) in *Undoing Gender* has explored how the feminist movement often fails to construct a coherent political discourse that accounts for the multiplicities of identity and oppression. Butler's work interrogates the ways in which feminist movements, especially those aligned with the left, tend to prioritize particular forms of oppression (such as class or race) while sidelining others (such as gender non-conformity). As such, the feminist movement struggles to maintain its relevance in a fractured political world, where its narratives are often co-opted or diluted by broader political agendas. The rise of digital platforms and social media has significantly impacted feminist movements. Scholars like Danielle Keats Citron (2014) in *Hate Crimes in Cyberspace* explore the opportunities and dangers of online platforms for feminist activism. Social media provides a space for feminist voices to challenge traditional narratives and organize around global issues. Movements like #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter have shown the potential of digital platforms to mobilize individuals around shared grievances, making it possible for feminist activists to engage in political action across borders and outside traditional institutions (Muzaffar, Chohdhry, & Afzal, 2019).

However, as Zeynep Tufekci (2017) argues in *Twitter and Tear Gas*, digital platforms also present significant challenges for political movements. While they enable grassroots organizing, they can also facilitate the spread of misinformation, amplify hate speech, and enable the manipulation of political movements by external actors (Muzaffar, Yaseen, & Safdar, 2020). This dual-edged nature of digital platforms means that while they present opportunities for radicalization, they also require strategic navigation and critical engagement.

Material and Methods

The point of emphasizing the historiographical dimensions with critical discourse method of the relation between modern subjectivity and political paradigms and movements is of course polemical. Ultimately the critique of consumer culture blocks the search for alternatives to the "man of reason" who served as the paradigm of self-determination in the modern epoch, and thus blinds us to the political, intellectual, and cultural possibilities of our own postmodern moment. The sovereignty of this modern self is experienced and expressed as the ontological priority of the unbound individual, that is, the individual whose freedom resides in the release from obligations determined by political communities, or, what amounts to the same thing, in the exercise of "natural rights" that such communities can neither confer nor abrogate. One virtue of this definition is that it permits the connotation of possessive individualism but does not reduce modern subjectivity to ownership of the property in one's capacity to produce value; the emphasis is instead on those discontinuities that finally hardened into dualisms under the sign of Enlightenment. This is catered by Foucault and Nietzsche in their respective theories of Power and Sovereignty. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality* (1976) present power not merely as a centralized force but as something diffused throughout society, embedded in everyday practices, institutions, and relationships. Feminist scholars like Judith Butler and Luce Irigaray have drawn on Foucault's ideas to explore how power operates in ways that oppress women and marginalized groups in subtle, pervasive ways, not only through laws and policies but through social norms, language, and cultural practices.

Results and Discussion

The obvious problem with the "men have the power and women do not" equation is that it is not in accord with socioeconomic reality and the complexities of the modern world. "The mythology still among women," says psychologist Judith Sherven, "is that men have all the power, and if you're male, you must have all the power. I see it in my women clients. There is this sort of difficulty in seeing men as singular individuals, who have singular lives separate and apart from men, and a willingness to just put blanket assumptions on any man." But since men as a group are more privileged, many have been perplexed by the increasingly common spectacle of men, particularly white men, complaining of victim status. Some commentators have attributed this behavior to the "culture of complaint." Others have written it off as little more than a futile display of male resentment toward women who are now receiving the respect they have always deserved. The evidence suggests, however, that the male as than hostility toward the feminist movement. For example, many recent studies have shown that the majority of American men have embraced fundamental goals of the feminist movement. In a 1993 Gallup poll, 99 percent of the men said they approved of women receiving equal pay for equal work, and 88 percent favored women working outside the home regardless of family income. In spite of improvements in the lives of women over the last two decades, 52 percent of the men said that they believed society favors men over women. This does not mean, of course, that we are living in a sexually equal society or that the goals of the feminist movement have been realized. Much work clearly remains to be done. It also seems clear, however, that the conflict has degenerated into a war of attrition in which the terms for peace are perpetually redefined. The principal source of this dilemma is the two-domain distinction sanctioned by the sex/ gender system.

Political victimization often frames individuals or groups as passive victims of external forces, which can be a useful rhetorical tool in certain political strategies. However, when used excessively or manipulatively, it can strip movements of their agency and make it harder to develop robust, forward-thinking solutions. Feminism, as an emancipatory movement, risks losing its transformative potential if it remains ensnared in a victimhood framework rather than advocating for empowerment and equality. Foucault's notion of power as pervasive and relational is particularly useful for understanding the challenges modern feminism faces in navigating contemporary political landscapes. Feminism must contend with power not only from patriarchal institutions but also from within political movements, social media spaces, and corporate entities that manipulate or dilute feminist messages for strategic purposes. As Ruth Wodak (2015) highlights in *The Politics of Fear*, the manipulation of political movements is often facilitated by the selective use of victimhood narratives, where marginalized groups, including women, are presented as helpless victims rather than active agents in their struggles.

Foucault's analysis of power moves beyond traditional top-down structures to show how power is diffused and operates in subtle, everyday ways. This is relevant for understanding how feminism may be disempowered by the dynamics of contemporary politics, where power is often decentralized and operates through media, institutions, and other subtle mechanisms rather than through overt political regimes. Feminist movements, therefore, may struggle to assert their own autonomy in such a complex power landscape.

Nietzsche's concept of sovereignty, which emphasizes the individual's assertion of power and the creation of values, is also crucial for evaluating feminism's political potential. Feminism in the current political context may require a shift from reactive, victim-centered approaches to a more radical, proactive assertion of autonomy and

values. This could mean rethinking feminist goals not just in terms of rights or protections, but in terms of the creation of new political paradigms and social structures that embody feminist principles in ways that are not limited by existing power dynamics.

The call for the left and feminism to utilize digital platforms to "radicalize itself" is particularly timely and relevant. In the digital age, traditional political movements can struggle to maintain relevance and momentum, while digital spaces offer new opportunities for organization, mobilization, and dissemination of ideas. Social media, blogs, and other online platforms have already been central to feminist movements, particularly in the rise of global campaigns like #MeToo. However, feminism needs to be more radicalized in the digital sphere that could imply a need for a deeper engagement with digital tools, one that goes beyond advocacy and into a realm of social transformation and political disruption. Radicalization, in this sense, is not about extremism, but rather about embracing a new, more revolutionary approach that challenges the status quo and pushes for systemic change.

Since the two-domain distinction requires that we view the behavior of men and women as entirely learned, it was reasonable to assume that the standard for healthy normalcy in love relationships should be the same for both men and women. Since women seem more capable of emotional directness and honesty, for the last twenty years, social scientists have valorized women as intimacy experts and pathologized men as incapable of intimacy. Men, said many social scientists, have a "trained in capacity to share," and have learned to overvalue independence and to fear emotional involvement. While male friendships are based on competition, emotional inhibition, and aggression, female friendships are based on emotional bonding and mutual support. Given that men tend to talk about shared interests, such as sports and cars, male friendships were characterized as superficial and trivial. Since women tend to share feelings and confidences, female friendships were celebrated as deep, intimate, and true. Social scientists also pathologized maleness because men typically view love as action, or doing things for another, while women view love as talking and acknowledging feeling. Psychotherapist Richard Driscoll in *The Binds That Tie* describes the following interaction between a married couple. After Paula asks her Don if he "really loves her," Don says, "I know I want to be married to you. I am satisfied to go to work every morning, because I know that I am supporting you and that you are there for me. I would never want to leave you, and I would never want you to leave me. Is that what you mean by love?" Hurt and angered by this response, Paula says, "But why can't you say you love me?" Driscoll then points out that Don, unfortunately, has been taught to view love as action whereas Paula has been taught to view love properly—as feeling.

It is consistent with Friedrich Nietzsche's claim that the "most distinctive property of this modern man [is] the remarkable opposition of an inside to which no outside and an outside to which no inside corresponds, an opposition unknown to ancient peoples." If we follow his lead a bit further, we can begin to see that the genuine selfhood of the modern subject simply is the oscillation between epistemological extremes in which Ralph Waldo Emerson—one of Nietzsche's heroes—specialized. For all his genius, this modern man was representative because he lived the opposition between romanticism, which typically glorifies the "organic" or "subjective" inner self as against the "mechanical" or "objective" circumstances that constitute outward existence, and positivism, which typically celebrates the increasing density of that external, thing like realm of objects as the evidence of progress toward human mastery of nature. By all accounts, the "era of the ego" in which Emersonian self-reliance, that is, modern subjectivity, comes of age is the historical moment, circa 1600–1900, in which the

market becomes the organizing principle of European and North American societies, as commodity production comes to reshape and finally to regulate social relations as such.

In *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), Nietzsche critiques conventional moral systems that prioritize the "slave morality," which he associates with passive victimhood and subordination. Instead, Nietzsche advocates for the emergence of an "Übermensch" (Overman), an individual who redefines values and asserts power over their own existence. While Nietzsche's ideas have been controversial within feminist circles due to his critiques of women's traditional roles, Christa Davis Acampora (1996) in *Nietzsche on Modernity* suggests that Nietzsche's concept of sovereignty can be understood as a call for individuals, particularly women, to create new values and assert control over their own lives outside of patriarchal structures.

Nietzsche's influence on feminist thought is seen in the calls for a more radical, proactive feminist movement that redefines itself rather than simply responding to oppression. Feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir (1949) in *The Second Sex* and Bell Hooks (2000) in *Feminism is for Everybody* have similarly argued for a reimagining of women's roles that empowers them to break free from traditional constraints. Nietzsche's ideas on sovereignty could thus serve as a theoretical foundation for a feminist radicalization that goes beyond protest or victimhood, embracing the creation of new political and cultural values.

The concept of political victimization, particularly how feminist narratives can be manipulated for political purposes, has been explored by scholars such as Sara Ahmed (2017) in *Living a Feminist Life*, where she examines how feminist movements can become entangled with the politics of victimhood. While victimization has long been a central part of feminist discourse—especially in the context of gendered violence and inequality—Ahmed cautions that when victimhood becomes the sole focus, it risks disempowering women and reducing their capacity for agency. She critiques both mainstream feminism and neoliberal politics for using victim narratives to deflect from structural issues or to maintain power within established frameworks.

Similarly, Linda Martín Alcoff (2018) in *Rape and Resistance* examines how feminist theories around sexual violence are often co-opted by institutionalized systems to preserve the status quo rather than challenge the underlying causes of gender-based violence. Alcoff argues that these victimizing narratives can obscure the need for deeper structural changes and reduce the movement's potential for radical transformation.

In the digital age, traditional political movements can struggle to maintain relevance and momentum, while digital spaces offer new opportunities for organization, mobilization, and dissemination of ideas. Social media, blogs, and other online platforms have already been central to feminist movements, particularly in the rise of global campaigns like #MeToo. However, the paper's suggestion that feminism needs to be more radicalized in the digital sphere could imply a need for a deeper engagement with digital tools—one that goes beyond advocacy and into a realm of social transformation and political disruption. Radicalization, in this sense, is not about extremism, but rather about embracing a new, more revolutionary approach that challenges the status quo and pushes for systemic change.When the threshold of the living subject is unsettled, however, the effects bear on all those gathered there: the living subject. Those who are judged incapable of governing themselves autonomously may be exempted from liberal freedoms and governed directly for their own good/the good of others. With respect to the biopolitics of the perinatal threshold, the move from freedom to unfreedom

corresponds to risk compliance secured through two separate powers: security and discipline. Biopolitics is not a single power but a field comprised of interacting, agonistic powers in strategic relations with each other, what I have called a power field.

When the threshold of the living subject came to be problematized, the strategic relations among the powers mobilized at the threshold became unclear. The powers mobilized at the threshold of the living subject were linked together in two alternative strategic fields: (1) security–liberal governance–sovereign law; (2) discipline–illiberal governance–sovereign law. The sequence of security liberal governance–sovereign law, what might be called governing through security, was applied on a population basis in prenatal risk assessment. In this strategy women were configured as liberal subjects. In the second of the strategic fields, governing through discipline, women's freedoms as liberal subjects were suspended.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the contemporary feminist movement faces profound challenges in asserting its political relevance and coherence in a rapidly evolving socio-political landscape. The fragmentation of feminist discourse, particularly in its relationship with left-wing politics, is exacerbated by the manipulation of victimization narratives and the complex dynamics of power.

Moreover, the paper emphasizes the transformative potential of digital platforms, suggesting that the digital realm offers new avenues for feminist radicalization and global solidarity. While digital spaces present their own set of challenges, they also afford unprecedented opportunities for organizing, mobilizing, and disseminating feminist ideals on a global scale. In this context, the call for feminism to engage more deeply with these platforms is not merely a suggestion of technological innovation, but a necessary adaptation to the demands of the 21st century.

Recommendations

Ultimately, the feminist movement must confront these modern complexities with both theoretical rigor and practical ingenuity. By revisiting its foundational principles and embracing new methods of engagement, feminism has the potential to reclaim its transformative power and carve out a path toward a more just and equitable society. This paper, in its exploration of the intersection between power, politics, and digital platforms, offers a framework for reimagining feminist practice and theory, ensuring that feminism remains a relevant and radical force in the face of contemporary political challenges.

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