



Title: Can the notion of raunch culture be effectively challenged by contemporary performance makers?

Name: Rebecca Anne Leach

This is a digitised version of a dissertation submitted to the University of Bedfordshire.

It is available to view only.

This item is subject to copyright.

CAN THE NOTION OF RAUNCH CULTURE BE  
EFFECTIVELY CHALLENGED BY  
CONTEMPORARY PERFORMANCE MAKERS?

by

Rebecca Anne Leach

A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire, in  
partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts by research, RIMAD

November, 2013

## **Abstract**

The focus of this thesis is involved with whether or not contemporary performance makers can effectively challenge the notion of raunch culture. This study identifies the cultural phenomenon of raunch culture and offers an academic definition; popular feminist and academic feminist texts are used to inform this definition. The research method use is a qualitative approach. Findings from this thesis demonstrate that raunch culture is part of a constantly evolving script of narrowly defined femininity. This script is oppressive and works to control the behaviour and appearance of girls and women. It is promoted by mass media in order to lock women into the cycle of capitalist gain. Judith Butler's theory of gender construction highlights the performative nature of gender imposed upon society through dominant discourses. Dominant discourses ensure that traditional hierarchies of power remain unchallenged and the gender matrix remains intact. The performances of GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN, Lucy Kirkwood, and Nic Green show that the performative nature of gender scripts can be unveiled. This thesis proposes that once the performative nature has been revealed, performance makers can challenge the notion of raunch culture but that political feminist ideas must be utilised in order to offer an effective counter strategy.

## **Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts by research at the University of Bedfordshire.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any University.

Name of candidate:

Signature:

Date:

## **Dedication**

In memory of Mr G. J. Leach, a wonderful Grandad; and Mrs G Sweeting, an amazing woman and Auntie.

## **Contents Page**

Page one – Abstract

Page Two – Declaration

Page Three – Dedication

Page Four – Contents Page

Page Five – Acknowledgements

Page Six – Introduction

Page Ten – Chapter One Raunch Culture

Page Eighteen – Chapter Two Gender Construction and Dominant Discourses

Page Twenty-five – Chapter Three Impact of Raunch Culture and Suggested Academic  
Definition

Page Thirty – Chapter Four Unveiling the Performative Nature of Gender and Big  
Hits

Page Thirty-eight – Chapter Five NSFW

Page Forty-four – Chapter Six Trilogy

Page Fifty – Conclusion

Page Fifty-four – Reference List

Page Fifty-six - Bibliography

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Dr Antje Dierdrich and Dr Giannandrea Poesio for their time, guidance, and support.

## **Introduction**

This thesis will address the question can the notion of raunch culture be effectively challenged by contemporary performance makers? The research project will investigate the subject area of feminism in performance. It will focus specifically on whether or not contemporary performance makers are developing counter images of female identity in response to the ones being produced by raunch culture. It will analyse performances made by GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN, Lucy Kirkwood, and Nic Green.

A little more than ten years before the start of the second feminist political movement, Simone De Beauvoir observed that that 'a woman is simply what man decrees; thus she is called "the sex", by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being.' (De Beauvoir, 1988, p. 16). This, she observed, was the condition of women under patriarchal rule where the male is the subject. Women were only thought of as the binary opposite of the men so therefore were relegated to the position of object. Women's legal status as property 'reflected the belief that women's bodies were inherently different from men's that made women both defective and dangerous.' (Weitz, 1998, p.3). It is because of this perceived danger and defect in women that the female gender was scripted as being passive, subservient, and pure to make them easier to control under patriarchal rule.

The female gender can be seen then as 'scripted role-play organised by institutional forces...' whereby women learn to be women through observation and the internalisation of normative gender behaviour. (Brook, 1999, p.11). Gender scripts are reinforced by the media and naturalised so they appear as the way things should be. In fact it is culture that produces 'ontological and epistemological frames of reference which are so powerful that they congeal into the apparent invariance and irreducibility of material reality.' (Kirby, 2006, p.23).

The feminist political movement of the 1960s/1970s in Britain, Europe and America, saw The Women's Rights Movement and the Women's Liberation Movement campaign for the emancipation of women. This increase of feminist activity, termed the second wave of feminism, was concerned with issues such as contraception, equal pay, childcare, women's objectification, and the acknowledgement of female sexuality. (Jenainati and Groves, 2010, P. 87). Feminist writer Germaine Greer was at the forefront of this political movement insisting that 'women must learn how to question the most basic assumption about feminine normality in order to reopen the possibilities for development which have been successively locked off by conditioning.' (Greer, 2006,

pp.16/17). It could be suggested that this movement was somewhat successful in bringing equality to women concerning some of the issues that were campaigned for.

This thesis will argue that, as a result of the second wave of feminism, female sexuality and identity has been culturally acknowledged but it is now being used as an economic tool by patriarchy to oppress women; and locking them into a cycle of capitalist gain.

On any weekend evening, women across Britain can be observed wearing revealing outfits that flaunt their athletic, slender bodies. High heels, heavy makeup, hair extensions, and fake breasts and suntan appear to be the common physical attributes of these women who enter into bars and nightclubs to gyrate and dance sexually; many of whom will end the night with a one night stand of their choosing. Self-objectification appears to be common amongst adolescent girls, young women, and middle ages females. Messages of self-improvement concerning women's appearance and material gain have never been more prominent. This cultural phenomenon has been given the term raunch culture.

Raunch culture is an expression used by Ariel Levy, a New York journalist, in her book *Female chauvinist pigs: women and the rise of raunch culture*, 2005. Levy argues that mass culture encourages women to strive to be seen as the most attractive and sexiest instead of the most accomplished. Mass culture does this through the circulation of idealised images of female beauty, sexuality, and identity in magazines, adverts, television, and films. Her argument states that female sexuality is dictated by these images and is more about performance than pleasure or individuality. Women accept these images because they believe that raunch culture is a form of sexual freedom and empowerment but Levy states that if 'we are really going to be sexually liberated, we need to make room for a range of options as wide as the variety of human desire...instead of mimicking whatever popular holds up to us as sexy.' (Levy, 2005, p. 200).

Laurie Penny, a British columnist and writer of *Meat market: female flesh under capitalism* (2010), states that "'Raunch culture," as the milieu of lads' mags, go-go dancing and Girls Gone Wild has come to be known, is unquestionably a strategy of control.' (Penny, 2011, p.5). Raunch culture describes the way in which women are objectifying their bodies in their pursuit of material power. It could be said that mass culture, through the use of the media, encourages women to believe that, in order to be successful, they must conform to an ideal of female beauty and sexuality. Natasha Walter, a British campaigner, broadcaster, and writer of *Living dolls: the return of sexism* (2010), believes that it is 'time to challenge the exaggerated femininity that is being encouraged among women of this generation' and that western culture should be 'questioning the claustrophobic culture that teaches many young women that it is only through exploiting their sexual allure that they can become powerful.' (Walter, 2010, p.14).

Raunch culture is problematic for the equality of women because it caters to a male dictated ideology of female sexuality; the male gaze. Laura Mulvey states that

in a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously look at and displayed with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact. (2001, p.346).

This thesis proposes that gender scripts are detrimental to women's equality, sexuality, and identity. Performance has been used by feminism to circulate ideas and gain support for the emancipation of women. Theatre and performance often reflects society and can be used as a tool for education and change, culminating in a broadening of understanding and the possibility for change. The following chapters will interrogate contemporary performance. The aim is to investigate if performance makers are able to challenge the narrowly defined ideals of feminine identity promoted by dominant gender scripts. It is proposed that this needs to happen so that other forms of female identity can be explored and acknowledged. If this was to occur, women may finally feel free of the patriarchal restrictions regarding their appearance and behaviour; opening up the possibility to start defining their own personal and individual femininities.

The research method being used for this research project will be a qualitative approach to collecting research material. Secondary source material in the form of popular feminist books, academic feminist texts, newspaper articles, performance reviews and journals will be considered so that a comprehensive analysis of raunch culture and practitioners work will be accurate and current. Popular feminist writing will be used alongside academic sources as they provide the most in-depth critique of raunch to date. Performance analysis will be used so that contemporary performances can be taken into consideration. The audience's point of view will be considered through critics reactions to the performances included in the thesis. Access to the performances will be through the use of live performances, original performance texts, and recordings of live performances.

The thesis will follow the format of six chapters and a conclusion. Chapter one will discuss the phenomenon of raunch culture as informed by popular feminist sources and personal observations. This chapter aims to highlight key points regarding raunch culture, how it is perpetuated, and why it has become so prevalent. Chapter two is concerned with the gender construction through dominant discourses as discussed by Butler; which are informed by psychoanalysis and Michel Foucault's theories on knowledge and power and the formation of identities. Chapter three will be an analysis of the psychological and sociological impact of raunch culture on girls and women. It will outline the political implications of the discourse and offer an academic definition. Chapter four is an analysis of GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN's performance of *Big Hits*; chapter five is an analysis of Lucy Kirkwood's play *NSFW*; and finally, chapter six is an analysis of Nic Green's *Trilogy*. The aim of these chapters is to see whether or not these

contemporary performance makers are able to challenge the narrow script of femininity that raunch culture propagates.

## **Chapter One Raunch Culture**

As a result of the second wave of feminism, Western women have secured reproductive and legal rights, challenged traditional beliefs about their social role, and entered higher education and the workforce on mass. Twenty years, or so, after the height of this feminist movement, do women feel liberated from patriarchal constraint? (Wolf, 1991, p.9). Naomi Wolf, American author, social critic and political activist, identifies that there is a relationship between freedom and female beauty; it appears that as women gain more material freedom, the importance of conforming to set standards of beauty grows. Her book, *The Beauty Myth*, identifies a cultural trend in which scripts of narrowly defined femininity work to control the behaviour and appearance of contemporary western women. Wolf challenges the cosmetics industry for the marketing of this narrow script and their promotion of unrealistic standards of beauty.

Wolf describes a gender script in which unrealistic images of beauty are used for political purposes to inform women that their worth is intrinsically tied into their physical appearance. In order for patriarchy to remain in power this cultural trend is woven into the lives of women using many contexts such as the workplace, sex, and popular culture. Ideas about beauty have developed alongside the industrial revolution when women entered the workforce and threatened to disrupt the traditional hierarchy of power. (Wolf, 1991, p.20). Wolf has developed a concept called the professional beauty qualification (PBQ) which, she argues, has been created to discriminate against women in the workplace. The PBQ works on three vital ideas: In order to be successful women must be beautiful; beauty can be gained through hard work and enterprise; women are encouraged to think about beauty in a way that undermines the values and successes of the women's movement. (p.28). Consumer industry offers women ways to become more beautiful and in turn become more successful. When women cannot live up to the standards of beauty promoted by mass media, their self-confidence may be affected resulting in a blaming of oneself for their lack of success in the workplace and in relationships. This can lock women into the capitalist cycle of constant spending and ensures that women's energy is spent in achieving beauty success. (p.54).

The beauty myth is naturalised because it utilises the idea that beauty is about natural selection; young, fertile women will appear more beautiful and more men will want to mate with them. This is an idea that is promoted by mass media. When women left the domestic sphere and moved into the workplace, they left behind the desire to

purchase high levels of household products and conveniences. Advertisers needed to find a new way to keep women spending the same amount as before and started focusing on the female body. Instead of women's sense of achievement and pride coming from an immaculate house, advertisers now claimed that it came from achieving the perfect body. (Wolf, 1991, p.67). Magazines used this obsession with the perfect body and face as a way to undermine the feminist movement and progress; an intentional process that aims to distract female energy and control women's spending. Women are deeply affected by what magazines tell them because general culture usually takes a male view of what is newsworthy. Women can relate to magazines because they offer them the most insight into their mass awareness. (p.70). Magazines may also encourage women to judge each other on what is ugly and unworthy, therefore distancing themselves from one another.

Wolf suggests that historically every generation of women since about 1830 has had to fight against their own version of stereotyped femininity and 'in spite of the great revolution of the second wave, we are not exempt.' (1991, p.12). If Wolf is correct and the beauty myth is a constantly evolving script of narrowly defined femininity, what is its current manifestation?

When reading magazines, such as *Cosmopolitan*, *More!*, and *Now*, it is not long before one is drawn to the many articles advising women on how to achieve the sexiest beach body, sex tips, and photos shaming and criticising celebrity bodies and fashion sense. Television adverts can often be seen utilizing women's sexualised bodies to sell a range of products such as perfume, cars, and razors. Popular music videos show female singers in minimal clothing and performing raunchy dance moves. It appears as though young girls and women are adopting the images of femininity that they see in the media when styling and presenting themselves. In any town in Britain women can be seen on a weekend night flaunting their lean hard bodies, big breasts, fake tan, hair, and eye lashes in revealing clothing. The dance floor of nightclubs becomes a hive of gyrating young women emulating the dance moves promoted by some popular music artists. These women appear to be sexually empowered and may often end the night with a one night stand of their own choosing.

Levy observes that in the late 1990s/early 2000s, hetero-sexual women are advising each other on the best way to lap dance, women and young girls are wearing revealing outfits, and are priding themselves on who is the sexiest, not who is the most accomplished. (2005, p.1). Examples from American television show *Girls Gone Wild* describe the way that young women are 'flashing their breasts, their buttocks, or occasionally their genitals to the camera, and usually shrieking "Who!" while they do it.' (p.8). Levy has developed the term "Raunch Culture" to describe the way in which the media, and women themselves, are portraying a hyper-sexualised version of femininity. Raunch culture has been observed as a cultural phenomenon since the early 2000s exerting a growing influence on girls and young women.

Raunch culture seems to have evolved from the beauty myth. Unattainable beauty ideals have been replaced by raunch femininity that promotes hyper-sexualisation in behaviour and dress. Music videos, adverts, and even children's products are being advertised as "sexy". (Levy, 2005, p.30).

The raunch script of femininity encourages girls and women to objectify themselves and to have tight hard bodies and big breasts, all traces of body hair should be removed. This look has been inspired by the mainstreaming and increased accessibility of pornography. The pornographic feminine script has been adapted by raunch culture and is popularised through mass media. Examples of the promotion of the sexualisation of women can be found in television where female characters and presenters are more likely to be attractive and provocatively dressed than their male counterparts (APA, 2007, p.5). Video/computer games are significantly more likely to depict female characters partially nude or to have them act in a sexually provocative manner.

The music industry will often show women as sexual objects through their use of styling, clothing, sexual dancing, and objectification of body parts in music videos. The American Psychological Association (APA) observe that '(c)ontent analysis indicate(s) that 44% - 81% of music videos contain sexual imagery.' (2007, p.5). Women are often displayed in ways that emphasise their bodies, specific body parts, and sexual readiness. Brittany Spears, Christina Aguilera, The Pussycat Dolls, Madonna, and countless other female groups and artists are marketed as sexual objects to help improve their record sales.

Popular music songs, by both male and female artists, sexualise women or refer to them in degrading ways. Songs with explicit sexual lyrics can be listened to on any popular music station, can be downloaded from the internet or purchased easily.

It could be observed that women are often portrayed as sexual objects in many films. Bond girls, heroines, and even princesses in children's films are often extras to enhance the story for the male protagonist. Many female roles are played by the most desirable and attractive actresses and are styled to encourage sexualisation. Sexual content can be found in most adult and teen movies. *American Pie* and *Cruel Intentions* are films that are directed at teenage/young adult market and depict women as sexual objects to be obtained by the male hero.

Magazines often advise girls and women on how to attract and please men. The APA report that 'one of the dominant themes about sexuality reported in...magazines is that presenting oneself as sexually desirable and thereby gaining attention of men is and should be the focal goal for women' (2007, p.7). Diet and exercise regimes often encourage women to lose weight and change their shape, and pictures of celebrities in swimwear are often critiqued. In a sample of magazines published in August 2013, evidence of the promotion of raunch could be found in every one. The magazines were all aimed at female readers and ranged in target age from teenagers to middle age. In

*Seventeen* an article that outlines a worrying trend of young women posting pictures of the gap between their thighs on social networking sites, is accompanied by exercise regimes, sex advice, and advice on how to apply the best make up for the first week back at school; which includes bright red lipstick and the application of false eyelashes. *Closer* features celebrity diets, combined with an article about a woman who has spent more than £21,000 on plastic and cosmetic surgery and beauty products in order to feel confident on dates. *Now* has a feature with the title “We love our REAL BODIES” that shows pictures of celebrities. Although at first glance it appears to celebrate celebrity women being happy with their bodies, the photos are often accompanied by comments such as ‘star flaunted her 32B boobs in all their glory in Ibiza recently, despite them not having the gravity-defying quality of some of her co-stars’ and ‘size 6 Kylie posed for photos in a leopard-print swimsuit that made the most of her famous – and now more rounded – bottom.’ (Anon, 2013, p.18). Celebrities in swimsuits are critiqued in *Woman’s* summer special, where women are categorised in to the good and the bad. Comments about celebrities’ weight, shape, and style are commented on.

Accessibility to the internet has risen, meaning that pornography is more easily accessible. Girls and women are increasingly posting pictures of themselves onto social networking and sharing websites that encourage other people to give anonymous feedback. Some girls and women can be seen posing in provocative clothing, seemingly advertising their sexual availability.

The sexualisation of women and girls is particularly prominent in advertising. (APA, 2007, p.10). Advertisements selling cars, home products, children’s clothing, diet and fitness regimes, fashion items, and beauty products all use images of women in sexualised states or attire. Even advertising ‘and fashion features in women’s magazines still regularly present women in narcissistic poses...’ (Macdonald, 1995, p.107). It could be said that women are bombarded with the possibility of products that promise to help women to achieve the bodies and beauty that societal norms promote. Skin creams, make-up, diet and exercise regimes, fashion, and even children’s products encourage the sexualisation and self-objectification of girls and women. An example of this can be found when looking at Bratz Dolls. These dolls are designed specifically for four to eight year old girls and can be observed wearing fishnet stockings, mini-skirts, and feather boas. (APA, 2007, p.13).

Raunch culture seems to be particularly prominent in certain social contexts. Many nightclubs and bars promote their evenings with flyers with pictures of scantily clad women on them in sexual poses. Within the clubs, poles, showers, and podiums are often provided to encourage women to show their best sexy dance moves. Image is of greatest importance on the weekend evening social scene and women will dress as provocatively as possible in order to get noticed, be given free drinks, or entry to a venue. Sexual dancing has become the most popular style found on a night out. Women will often copy the moves that they see in music videos which appear to be inspired by

lap dancing moves; the grinding of buttocks into crotches, twerking, and pseudo-lesbianism are utilised in order to be rated the sexiest and to attract male attention.

The script of raunch that mass media promotes encourages women to enact goes against traditional views of female sexual passivity and devalues the domestic realm. Girls and women are encouraged to be slender but to combine this with fitness to ensure that they are not passive but athletic. Raunch feminine sexuality can be 'characterized by a breaking down of the traditional barriers between pornography and mainstream ideals of female sexuality.' (Lynch in Thorpe, 2008, p.36). Heterosexuality remains the norm but same-sex experimentation is encouraged and allowed within the script; this appears to be more about harnessing the male gaze than actual sexual fulfilment. The clothing worn by followers of raunch is exposing, sexually alluring, and shows as much of the female body as possible. Sex is for pleasure rather than reproduction and experimentation with different partners, sexual practices, masturbation, and the use of sex toys is encouraged. Raunch seems to primarily affect adolescent girls and women under forty; this may help raunch to appear normalised, as outlined in the beauty myth, where the most fertile women are suggested to be the most attractive. The hyper-sexualisation promoted by raunch could be viewed as self-objectification in order to harness the male-gaze which has been linked to success.

This hyper-sexualisation is strengthened by a new emphasis on the difference between the sexes. Walter examines the way western culture has reverted back to biological determinism and cites this as one of the main contributors to self-objectification. She observes that society has turned its back on the feminist past of encouraging girls and boys to play across sex boundaries. The gap between the sexes is in fact widening with toy shops being divided into pink and blue sections. (Walter, 2010, p.1). The association of between girls and pink is no longer being described as a social phenomenon but as a result of biology, making the belief hard to change. (p.11). Little girls are encouraged to gravitate towards all things pink and sparkly and not 'only are little girls expected to play with dolls, they are expected to model themselves on their favourite playthings.' (p.2).

Becoming a doll seems to have become an aspiration for many young women and girls and as they leave childhood they embark on a project of turning themselves into living dolls. This project entails grooming, waxing, bleaching, dieting, and shopping and is spurred on by films, magazines, advertisements, music videos, and other forms of mass media. (Walter, 2010, p.2).

Walter states that this depiction of feminine beauty has been adopted by culture because of the increase of accessibility to pornography and the movement of the sex industry into mainstream culture. (2010, p.10). Girls and women who subscribe to raunch culture could be described as resembling females appearing in pornography; female pornography stars could be described as resembling living dolls. They are usually slim, with hard athletic bodies, have big breasts, usually with implants to increase the size and to reshape them into round balls, have long hair, increased with extensions,

tanned skin, with fake bottled tanning lotion, and wear heavy make-up, false eyelashes, and may utilise facial cosmetic surgery to emphasise the eyes and mouth.

Along similar lines Penny argues that adolescents and women learn through the culture of pornography that 'sexual performance and self-objectification are forms of work: duties that must be undertaken and perfected...' in order to advance themselves socially. (2011, p.11). Nina Power, senior lecturer in Philosophy, also discusses the link between pornography and work, specifically how pornography has projected the view that sex is work for women and what matters most is quantity. (2009, p.55). She compares the joy and fun of vintage porn, where women are seen to laugh and express pleasure, with contemporary pornography where women appear to be in pain, shouting and screaming. What she concludes is that performance and desirability appears to have won over joy and pleasure when representing sex. (p.53). Women judge their sexuality, appearance, and sexual encounters against what they see in pornography. This could be deemed as problematic as pornography only represents sexuality and women from the point of view of the male fantasy. This encourages women to internalise male standards of beauty and objectify themselves for the pleasure of men. Particularly young girls are not interested in sex because of how it feels but because it grants them social status. (Levy, 2005, p.146): '(a)dolescent girls in particular – who are blitzed with cultural pressure to be hot, to seem sexy – have a very difficult time learning to recognize their own sexual desire, which would seem a critical component of feeling sexy.' (p.168).

Contemporary pornography and the pervasiveness of raunch culture may have contributed to the belief that a woman must flaunt her assets in order to get what she wants. She must make the most of herself and be constantly advertising her best bits in order to capitalise on her assets most effectively. (Power, 2009, p.23). It appears, then, that women must objectify themselves, break themselves down into assets, in order to gain recognition in the workplace and when expressing their sexuality.

This section will interrogate why women are embracing raunch culture and self-objectification. Levy claims that women are embracing the culture of raunch and are using it as a symbol of their liberation. She observes that negative images of feminism have affected the way that young women view what it means to be a feminist. The stereotyped image of the hairy legged, man-hating, lesbian feminist, some women may feel, threatens their own sense of identity and sexuality. (2005, p.82). Penny agrees with the notion that feminism has been made unpopular by its representation in the media. (2011, p.36). This portrayal of feminism works to make women feel as if their femininity is threatened. Women would still like to be involved in issues that concern women a type of raunch feminism has been developed as a response to this need.

Raunch feminism is a cultural movement that has evolved from the women's sexual liberation movement where women fought to change traditional ideas about female sexuality. This strand of feminism appears to give women the chance to be in control of their sexuality and liberation; but this may be a false sense of liberty. Women's magazines, popular feminist books, and academic women's courses often link

female sexuality and raunch culture together in the promotion of women's sexual liberation. Catherine Hakim, British sociologist, promotes raunch feminism. She argues that women could benefit from raunch culture. She suggests that women should not be turning their backs on their erotic capital, they should be exploiting it. In *Honey Money: the power of erotic capital*, self-objectification is portrayed as an asset and should be used as an economic tool to gain an advantage on men.

The problem is, whilst raunch feminism is embracing female sexuality, it is also trying to be publicly sexy and has adopted a narrow patriarchal stereotype of femininity; it appears not to have found an identity of its own. (Levy, 2005, p.82). Walter has observed that hyper sexuality and female liberation have been wrongly linked together. Instead of reflecting women's freedom, it redefines female success through sexual allure and a narrow framework of femininity. (Walter, 2010, p.10). Women hold on to narrow scripts of femininity, such as raunch culture, because they are scared that radical politics will destroy their gender identity and sexuality. (Penny, 2011, p.36).

Power highlights a link between raunch feminism and capitalism in *One Dimensional Woman*. She attacks the up-beat political views of contemporary feminism that portrays female achievement as culminating in the 'ownership of expensive handbags, a vibrator, a flat and a man...' (2009, p.1). Capitalism offers feminism as a choice of goods; one must buy into these in order to be perceived as a successful woman. The social messages of being a girl or young woman in today's society is intrinsically linked to consumption. To be a girl or woman is to want shoes and clothes, or so we are told by consumerism, and these are gendered signs that can be bought and sold on the labour market. (Penny, 2011, p.36). If contemporary feminism is about self-fulfilment and materialism it masks the true nature of emancipation and the desires of women can be controlled. (Power, 2009, p.69). Women must purchase material things in order to portray that she is a feminist, and this continues the cycle of capitalist gain. (p.32). Raunch culture and the use of women's erotic capital is a tool used by capitalism to control women's spending. Women are told that they must work just as hard on their bodies as they do on their homes, this keeps the focus of women inward and in a constant cycle of purchasing for self-improvement. Women do this because they are scared of the social repercussions of refusing the "natural order"; women will police their own standards and the standards of others.

The promotion of raunch culture and its use of erotic capital for material gain is mostly condemned by the popular feminist books cited in this thesis. Women cannot buy or sex their way to freedom and that 'sexuality alone, and heterosexuality in particular, is never enough to destabilise complex architectures of money and power.' (Penny, 2011, p.64).

Compliance with the dictated ideal female image is simply to go along with the way things are. Women are being fooled into thinking that there is only one narrow image of acceptable female physicality and if they tame their bodies accordingly,

buy into commoditised signs of femininity, and use their sexuality in such alienated ways, they will be successful; this is a lie. (Penny, 2011, p.65).

Many young women now appear to believe that sexual confidence is the only important type of confidence but this can only be acquired 'if a young woman is ready to conform to the soft-porn image of a tanned, waxed young girl with large breasts...' (Walter, 2010, p.37). Sexual power is only one form of female power and in order for women to explore what they truly enjoy they 'would have to stop endlessly re-enacting this one raunchy script in order to find out.' (Levy, 2005, p.196). Following this narrow script of female identity would not be a bad thing if there was equal celebration of other types of women expressing alternative forms of sexuality and achievement. This appears not to be the case. In fact women that reject the promiscuity and unemotional sex can often be isolated. (Walter, 2010, p.100).

The liberation and equality that was fought for in the second wave has been perverted and misconstrued by advertisers, mass media, and promoters of raunch femininity. Returning, then, to Wolf's question of whether or not women feel free a generation after the second wave of feminism. It could be said that a small majority of women feel free following the narrow script of femininity portrayed by raunch culture; but for many they may conform due to fear of being outcast from society, being deemed unsuccessful, or because they are not aware of the other choices available to them.

## **Chapter Two Gender Construction and Dominant Discourses**

Raunch femininity has been identified as part of an evolving narrow script that dictates the ideals of feminine beauty and behaviour. Feminism has fought to release the female body from the restraints of patriarchal rule and its ideals of objectification. Raunch culture highlights that although in some areas women have achieved equality, this is not the case concerning the control over women's physical appearance and conduct.

This chapter will examine the feminist writings of Judith Butler to try and explain why women are willingly following the rules of raunch culture and are presenting themselves as hyper-sexualised objects.

As previously outlined, raunch femininity could be viewed as part of a long history of patriarchal ideals that offer instructions on how women should present themselves. These instructions have been referred to as scripts within this thesis but they could also be referred to as discourses. Discourses could be explained as processes of thought that are made up of beliefs, practices, ideas, attitudes, and actions that create the worlds of which they speak. This definition of discourses originates from Michel Foucault, French theorist, historian, and social theorist. Foucault's theories of power and knowledge are used by Butler to investigate the links between power and gender identity formation.

Butler's interest lies within the genealogy of the culture of sex and what cultural structures are working upon it to produce masculine and feminine genders as oppositional. This is a concept that will be explained later in this chapter. Butler utilises Foucault's theory that society is made up of discursive practices. Discursive practices are the ways in which someone knows or recognises something, which can include systems of belief, perception, language, archetypal ways of organising bodies, and representations of behaviour. (Kirby, 2006, p.40). This theory places the notion of the sexed body, a body that has been named as male or female, at the centre of women's oppression instead of falling back on essentialism or biological determinism. Essentialism is the view that something must have a group of specific attributes in order to have an identity and to function. Biological determinism is the proposition that biological factors completely regulate how something will behave. What follows is a brief explanation of the theories concerned with essentialism; this has been done to ensure that it is clear what Butler is questioning when using Foucault's theories of power.

Historically, essentialism and biological determinism has coupled sex with nature and gender with culture. This way of thinking suggests that after a child's sex is identified, social meanings are added to that sex to construct gender. This has led to the creation of binary oppositions such as nature/culture, sex/gender, female/male, bad/good. Society views men and women as being essentially, and naturally, different because of these binary systems. Femininity and masculinity are portrayed as opposites and activities and ways of behaving are normally gendered; for example, masculine traits could be considered as being active, using big movements, and loud ways of speaking, and feminine traits are suggested as being passive, small, and polite. (Thorpe, 2008, p.7). Foucault highlights that society thinks like this because it is the way that history has been recorded. Essentialism has affirmed and legitimised biological determinism and 'history comes to operate around a logic of identity which is to say that the past is interpreted in a way that confirms rather than disrupts the beliefs and convictions of the present.' (McNay, 1992, p.13/14). This has the effect of naturalising biological determinism and essentialist thought, making it appear as though things have always been this way and cannot be challenged.

Discursive practises therefore work within contemporary culture to ensure that gender identities are fixed by easily identifiable markers. Butler uses psychoanalysis to discuss why certain discursive practices have been adopted by Western culture. Sigmund Freud, developed theories about the development of sexuality in infants leading to the construction of the Oedipus complex. Freud believed that human infants are born being able to find pleasure in a number of objects, progressing through stages as the infant develops. In the first stage the infant experiences pleasure orally through nursing, the second is the anal stage where pleasure is gained from evacuating the bowels. The third stage is named as the phallic stage and it is during this that Freud suggests humans experience the Oedipus complex. Male infants start to identify the mother as a sexual object, this is brought to an end by the perceived threat of castration when the child notices that the mother does not possess a penis and may wish to take his. There is also the threat of castration from the father who may punish the male infant for desiring the mother. The male child then identifies with the father due to their shared experience of having a penis. Freud postulates that the female infant, during the Oedipus complex, becomes aware that she does not possess a penis and blames the mother for her castration. The female infant becomes attracted to the father but will eventually identify with the mother through the fear of losing the mothers love; Freud termed this as the feminine Oedipus complex. (Wright, 1992, p.130).

Freud's theories were developed further by Jacques Lacan during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. His theories concerning the "mirror stage" dictate that it is the mother that first occupies the position of other for the child as he begins to recognise himself in the mirror. The child notices that the other is incomplete because she does not possess a penis; this lack forms the basis for the castration complex. Lacan believed that in order for someone to become part of the wider society they must move away from the primary relationship with the mother with the help of the father. Lacan states that it is

the paternal function to regulate desire and impose the law during the Oedipus complex. (Wright, 1992, p.206). This means that the father is in charge of dictating to the child what acceptable and unacceptable sexual desire is; leading to the development of the law of the Father and patriarchal rule being enforced within culture.

It is the perceived threat of castration that prohibits incest and forces the displacement of heterosexual desire. The female is perceived as lack and is therefore judged by different symbolic rules, creating sexual difference. According to psychoanalysis, in order for a human to become a subject they must enter in to the realm of the symbolic. Heterosexualisation is required by the Symbolic law which is the law of the Father. (Butler, 1999, p.27). The law of the Father and the Symbolic law is the realm of culture as opposed to the Imaginary order of nature. Butler insists that all cultures wish to reproduce themselves and preserve their social identity. In order to do this, marriage can only take place outside the family group, hence, incest and homosexuality becomes taboo. (p.73). Discursive practices ensure that the incest taboo remains by determining what is appropriate and what is punishable.

Many feminist writers have examined the essentialist way of thinking because of the observation that biological sex is something that gender adds to in order to make a person a subject. Feminists have often tried to find a way back to the time before culture as they believe that it is culture that inscribes sexual oppression. Butler goes against this theory and argues that there is no biological sex that gender is imposed upon but that sex is replaced by the social meanings that it takes on. This results in gender emerging as something that replaces sex, abolishing the oppositional relationship that sex and gender have. Butler believes that there is no point in trying to gain access to sex before it has been culturally signified because 'it appears not only that sex is absorbed by gender, but that "sex" becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retroactively installed at a prelinguistic site to which there is no direct access.' (Butler, 1993, p.5).

It is here that Butler utilises Foucault's observation that sex is not the natural origin of desire but that it is a social construct. The way in which we view sex is already a cultural effect because it has been named; Butler argues that the notion of language possesses a constitutive and regulatory force. (Kirby, 2006, pp.27/28). The social construct of sex works to regulate and control the sexualities within its society by performing certain functions; it groups together unrelated bodily functions and pleasures and uses them to support the notion of "natural" heterosexuality. Sexuality is viewed as an unruly force that power can only try to repress and control instead of the reality that sexuality is a phenomenon that is produced through power relations. (McNay, 1992, p.29). This theory of gender construction may give an account of how sexual difference, domination and power affect the lived experience of men and women. According to Butler's theories of social construction, gender can be understood as a way in which power constructs and takes hold of bodies in certain ways. Sexual difference does not involve biological facts but is concerned with the manner in which

'culture marks bodies and creates specific conditions in which they live and recreate themselves.' (Gatens in Price and Shildrick, 1999, pp.230/231).

This thesis will investigate how discursive practices of power work in relation to disciplining and maintaining essentialist ideals and social hierarchies in society. Power does not simply repress unruly forces but it instils, and produces effects in the body which is referred to as the "regulatory ideal". (Butler, 1993, p.1). The regulatory ideal works through a process of reiteration of norms producing intelligibility of the body.

The reiteration of norms can be described as a ritualised production of normal behaviour, dress, and gestures that society deems as appropriate for ones gender. Butler describes this production of norms as performativity. Performativity is not 'a singular "act" or event, but a ritualised production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo...' (1993, p.95). According to Butler's definition, performativity is not chosen by the subject but is instilled by societal power under the threat of ostracism if one does not perform ones gender/sexuality correctly. Gender, therefore becomes a script or discourse that must be played out appropriately to ensure gender coherence and appropriation with essentialist laws. To perform ones gender 'is neither free play nor theatrical self-presentation; nor can it be simply equated with performance. Moreover, constraint is not necessarily that which sets a limit to performativity; constraint is, rather, that which impels and sustains performativity.' (p.95).

Foucault argues that the operations of knowledge and power invest a body with certain properties so that they can be inserted into the regimes of truth held by society. (McNay, 1992, p.28). 'For Foucault, power is non-authoritarian, non-conspiratorial, and indeed non-orchestrated; yet it nonetheless produces and normalises bodies to serve prevailing relations of dominance and subordination'; if this is the case how does power produce and manage gender norms and ensure their reiteration? (Bordo in Price and Shildrick, 1999, p.252).

Power works by first insisting that it is something that people, individuals and groups, do not have. It is instead presented as a force or dynamic that we recognise as assuming particular historical forms but that we do not control. Dominance is achieved by through multiple processes and construction, not through magisterial decree. Traditional discourses prevail, not through physical restraint, but through self-management and surveillance of the regulated norms. (Bordo in Price and Shildrick, 1999, p.253). Discourses, therefore, are formed and reformed by the individuals who have the power and knowledge behind them. Most people's subjectivity is formed by the dominant discourse of the time as the more natural and normal a discourse appears the more powerful it is. (Thorpe, 2008, p.5). Power is successful because it conceals itself as being regulatory, but presents itself as being naturalised, aligning itself with biological facts, and societies assumption that this is the way things have always been and should be. (Butler, 1999, p.2). Foucault sums up that

there is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against himself. (Foucault in Price and Shildrick, 1999, p.253).

Butler explores this concept of a regulatory gaze, using Lacan's theory of the Mirror stage. The Mirror stage, as explained earlier, is when the human infant first notices that he is a separate entity from the mother and that he must learn to view himself from another's perspective. Butler agrees with Lacan when he postulates that a child's ego is connected to the others perception of him because his anatomy is informed by social regulations. (Kirby, 2006, p.58). The ego is formed by looking in the mirror and seeing yourself as others see you, this would contribute to the internalization of the gaze that controls the regulatory norms; ensuring that bodies are produced by the juridical systems of power that represent them.

By constantly reiterating the regulatory ideal, bodies are divided into distinct genders and sexualities resulting in a stable heterosexual matrix. If bodies were not to perform their assigned gender role, and break out of the traditional discourses, what would be the result? Both Butler and Foucault pledge that the performativity of discourses is built upon restrictions and constraint. Gender performances are policed by everybody in society due the internalization of the regulatory gaze. If one was not to follow the traditional discourses of their gender, Butler suggests that they will face the threat of being cast out from society and possibly even death. (Butler, 1993, p.95). By not conforming to the heterosexual matrix and regulatory norms one is denied the position of subject within society, one becomes a non-person. Butler suggests that it is only through the constant reiteration of normative discourses, and the exclusion of those that don't conform to society's ideology, that one's body can achieve a meaning; otherwise known as intelligibility of the body. She also states that it is through the constant repetition of performance that slippages and weaknesses can be discovered, exposing the failure of heterosexual regimes to fully control and contain their own ideals. (p.237).

Butler, in utilising Foucault's theories of power, has created a model of gender construction that opposes the traditional binary systems that society proposes as natural. She has highlighted how sexuality and gender are a social construct that is regulated through the reiteration and performativity of gender norms. These performances become normative discourses that work in favour of the heterosexual matrix ensuring that those in power remain in control and without disruption. Disruption is kept to a minimum due to the internalization of the regulatory gaze resulting in subjects using surveillance on themselves and others. Fear of being ostracised keeps subjects in line without the need for physical intervention or coercion.

This chapter will relate the theories of Butler and Foucault to the phenomenon of raunch culture. Susan Bordo considers this construction of gender model particularly

useful in the 'analysis of male dominance and female subordination, so much of which, in a modern Western context, is reproduced "voluntarily", through self-normalisation to everyday habits of masculinity and femininity.' (In Price and Shildrick, 1999, p.253). It has been questioned why women would follow the narrow script of femininity prescribed by raunch culture and Bordo and Butler both insist that the normalisation process is the dominant reason, especially with regards to the politics of the female body. (p.246).

The internalisation of dominant discourses acknowledges that women maybe contributing to the continuation of female subordination by participating in 'cultural practices which represent women as sexual enticement...' (Bordo in Price and Shildrick, 1999, pp.253.254). Within this framework women are not viewed as victims of sexism. This links in with the ways in which women are engaging with the hyper-sexualised imagery promoted by raunch culture. Although men can appear to be blameless in the Foucauldian model, it does not eliminate the fact that they may have a higher stake in maintaining the establishments of which they have traditionally occupied dominant positions. (p.254). Traditionally capitalism is a patriarchal model because it has been developed during a time of patriarchal rule. Capitalism has been stressed as one of the main promoters of raunch culture, as outlined in the first chapter.

Reiteration of feminine discourses are promoted by the media; by supressing and controlling alternatives women are given little choice other than to follow the dominant discourse of the time. It could be said that raunch is the dominant discourse currently being regulated within Western society. Reiteration of raunch can be observed in magazines, music videos, films, advertisements, and even products aimed at children. Jen Thorpe corroborates that women 'learn to be women by observing other women. Representations of normal femininity are shown by our peers, the media, education and films.' (2008, p.5).

It could be said then that women are internalising the discourse of raunch, modelling themselves on the depictions of femininity as seen in the media, and are using the regulatory gaze to police and judge themselves and those around them. When commenting on the cultural phenomenon of women having breast implants to improve their self-esteem she observes that these 'women are not 'cultural dopes'; usually, they are all too conscious of the system of values and rewards that they are responding to and perpetuating.' (Bordo in Price and Shildrick, 1999, p.250). This suggests that women are conscious of the fact that they are part of a discourse that maintains and encourages a sexist view of women as objects. Perhaps they do this because, as Butler suggests, they are too worried about being ostracised from society to break away from it or perhaps it is because they are not given many other alternatives. Raunch culture sells self-objectification as a route to becoming successful, it could be said that raunch is a discursive practice that is being utilised by societal power to keep biological determinism and binary opposition in place. This results in women following the dominant discourse, allowing culture to subscribe their sexuality, ensuring that clear

gender identifiers are predominant so that the heterosexual matrix remains intact. Raunch culture enables the heterosexual matrix to remain intact by promoting a narrow script of femininity that encourages women to appeal to the male gaze. Although same-sex sexual encounters are permitted they are primarily used as a tool to appeal to male fantasy. Heterosexuality is the norm within the discourse of raunch and as previously discussed, women who do not follow the rules may become ostracised. Raunch presents female sexuality in a narrow light that does not acknowledge or accept many deviations therefore ensuring the heterosexual matrix remains dominant.

### **Chapter Three Impact of Raunch Culture and Suggested Academic Definition**

This chapter will investigate raunch culture as examined by psychologists and sociologists in two different studies which look at the impact of a hyper-sexualised culture. The political implications that may arise from raunch culture will then be discussed culminating in an attempt to provide an academic definition of raunch culture based upon the information used in previous chapters.

The American Psychological Association (APA) formed a task force on the sexualisation of girls in 2005. The task force was formed because of growing concerns from journalists, child advocacy organisations, parents, and psychologists, about the impact of sexualisation on girls. At the recommendation of the Psychological Association committee on Women in Psychology and with the approval of the Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest, the task force set out to 'examine and summarize the best psychological theory, research, and clinical experience addressing the sexualisation of girls via media and other cultural messages, including the prevalence of these messages and their impact on girls...' (APA, 2007, p.V). The Board for the Advancement of Psychology in the Public Interest appointed six psychologists and one public member to research the importance of modelling as a developmental process. In other words, how girls develop their identities by imitating the behaviour of the older girls and women around them and the way in which women are represented in the media. (p.3). The APA state that 'exposure to constant themes *over time* leads viewers to adopt a particular perspective of the world, one that coincides with the images they have been viewing.' (p.3).

Sexualisation is defined by the APA task force as,

a person's value only coming from his or her sexual appeal or behaviour, to the exclusion of other characteristics; a person is held to a standard that equates physical attractiveness (narrowly defined) with being sexy; a person is sexually objectified – that is, made into a thing for others' sexual use, rather than action and decision making; and/or sexuality is inappropriately imposed upon a person. (p.1).

The APA does not use the term raunch but by this definition it is clear that they are referring to the same cultural phenomenon.

The APA observes that mass media, such as television, music videos, films, and magazines, are sexualising women. Study findings have shown that women are more

likely to be sexualised than men, often dressed in revealing clothing, and portrayed as body parts or objects instead of a whole person. In addition to being objectified, the women portrayed follow a very narrow script of female identity. (APA, 2007, p.2). Parents are aiding the sexualisation of girls by allowing plastic surgery and buying clothes for children that are deemed sexual. Children also police themselves, girls will bully other girls who do not measure up and boys will often objectify the girls. (p.2). This may lead to girls sexualising themselves from an early age as they try to emulate the people they look up to, in the media, at home, and at school, following raunch models of femininity.

Self-objectification has been identified by psychological researchers as a process where girls learn to treat and think of their bodies as objects of others' desires. In self-objectification, girls internalize an observer's perspective on their physical selves and learn to treat themselves as objects to be looked at and evaluated for their appearance.' (APA, 2007, p.2). Studies have shown that self-objectification occurs more frequently in girls and women than it does in boys and men.

The effects of raunch culture and self-objectification appear to affect girls and young women most prevalently but negative effects could be observed in females of all ages, classes, and demographic areas. Self-objectification can impair concentration levels leading to poor performance in mental tasks. A hyper-sexualised culture has been linked with the most common mental illnesses to occur in females: eating disorders and depression. (APA, 2007, p.3). Shelly Grabe, Monique Ward, and Janet Hyde also observe that there is a link between media exposure and eating disorders. Findings from their research suggests 'that media exposure is linked to women's generalized dissatisfaction with their bodies, increased investment in appearance, and increased endorsement of disordered eating behaviours.' (Grabe et al, 2008, p.470). Mental health issues and eating disorders could lead on to physical health implications. Self-objectification has been linked directly with poor sexual health amongst adolescent girls, this could lead to the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies. (p.3).

Sexuality and sexual well-being plays an important part in healthy development. Raunch culture celebrates a narrow version of female sexuality. The APA argues that narrow feminine ideals are associated with unrealistic and negative associations with sexuality. These narrow ideals do not only affect girls and women, men may find it hard to find a partner that meets these ideals making it hard to enjoy intimacy. (APA, 2007, p.3). A rise in sexual violence, sexual harassment, and child pornography may also be observed in America, Europe, and the UK.

Sociologists in the UK have found that raunch culture is affecting the way that women and girls are viewing their bodies and that 'body dissatisfaction has reached normative levels' amongst girls and women. (Grabe et al, 2008, p.460). Women and girls are taking more sexual risks because of this.

*The Male in the Head: young people, heterosexuality and power* is a study carried out in 2004. It started out as an investigation into women taking sexual risks during a time when HIV/AIDS was on the rise in the UK. Feminist theory was used to make sense of findings and the feelings expressed by the women during the study. (Holland et al, 2004, p.3). During their research Janet Holland, Caroline Ramazanoglu, Sue Sharpe, and Rachel Thomson, found that due to a lack of adequate sex education, young people were often turning to popular media sources and pornography for information. This absence in the quality of education serves to reinforce a passive view of female sexuality; therefore resulting in young women not feeling in control of their sexual lives. (p.51-55).

Media representations of femininity may be informing young women that they must accept that men are in charge of their bodies. The young women, engaged in the study, 'suggest that they are under pressure to construct their bodies into a model of femininity which is both inscribed on the surface, through such skills as dress, make-up, and dietary regimes, and disembodied, in the sense of detachment from their material bodies.' (Holland et al, 2004, p.98). Young women are encouraged to internalise a male perspective when critiquing themselves. Holland et al term this condition of self-objectification as the male-in-the-head. (p.10). Their study found that although young women are encouraged to act in a sexual manner, their real knowledge of their sexuality is sparse leaving them at risk during sexual encounters. The male-in-the-head works as a regulatory power of heterosexual relations; controlling meanings, expectations and practices of both men and women. It is observed that by following the narrow script of femininity, young women are becoming distanced from their own sexuality through the moulding of their physical appearance and disciplining of their bodies. This may stop them from caring about their bodily safety as they feel that they are detached from it. (p.102).

The study found that attempts to be more sexually powerful in public settings proved to be problematic. The male model, where women seek empowerment through engagement in sexual relationships without personal responsibility, highlights the inequalities of power and control hidden within this type of discourse. Although this discourse is attractive to young women who are trying to take control of their sexuality, Holland et al observe that it is not enabling women to recognise and challenge male power; ultimately it challenges traditional conventions of femininity but reinforces 'the heterosexual gender relations that punish female sexuality agency as unnatural.' (2004, p.119).

The male-in-the-head is so resilient to change because it works on the notion that male and female desire work in opposition. It relies on traditional discourses, such as those discussed by Butler in previous chapters, to appear as the natural order of things. (Holland et al, 2004, p.174).

The political feminist movement of the 1970s fought to gain equality for women and were somewhat successful in gaining equal access to education, employment, and

legal representation. The popular form of raunch feminism, that has been discussed previously, has been successful to some degree in celebrating women's sexual empowerment but it does not appear to be as liberating as it first appears and some of the other key feminist political ideals are being undermined by it.

One of the key philosophies of the feminist movement was that women's oppression lay in their constructed status as other to that of the man. (Jenainati and Groves, 2010, p.82). Raunch culture operates on the premise that men and women are necessarily and naturally different; a concept taken from essentialist thought and biological determinism. This is problematic for feminist ideals as unless this binary opposition is challenged, women will remain as the oppressed other. This results in women being unable to be as successful in the public sphere unless they conform to the criteria and expectations demanded of them from patriarchal hierarchy. Raunch culture leads women to believe that they are empowered and that they can have all they need to be successful if they buy certain products and conform to dictated ideals; but all too 'often, bodily essentialism disguises a retreat; a retreat from a politics of capital and labour, a retreat from the broader structures of women's oppression, and a retreat from the true complexities of gender and sexuality.' (Penny, 2011, p.37).

The personal is political was one of the strongest messages promoted by feminists. Raunch culture dictates what is personal for a woman; women should be concerned with gaining material success through taming and grooming their bodies. Women who fall outside of this are made to feel isolated by society and by other women. It also acts as a way of distracting women's attention away from more pressing issues concerning the emancipation of women. Power states that the 'political imagination of contemporary feminism is at a standstill. The perky, upbeat message of self-fulfilment and consumer emancipation masks a deep inability to come to terms with serious transformations...' therefore masking the real political issues that feminism faces. (2009, p.69).

The Women's Liberation Movement and Socialist feminists fought for women to have the right to define their own sexuality, social relationships, and to have control over their own bodies. (Jenainati and Groves, 2010, p.98). Raunch culture is in direct opposition to this. By objectifying their own bodies, women are accepting a narrowly defined stereotype of female sexuality thinking that it somehow proves that they are empowered and sexually liberated. Women appear to have forgotten that sexual power is only one specific form of power; and women do not even have complete control over their own sexuality. Levy questions whether this form of sexual identity is 'the one that turns us – *or men* – on the most?' (2005, p.198). The terms women's liberation and empowerment, used by feminists to get rid of the limitations imposed upon women, have been misconstrued and perverted by raunch culture. Levy concludes that women 'have simply adopted a new norm...If we are going to be sexually liberated, we need to make room for a range of options as wide as the variety of human desire.' (p.200).

Whilst researching raunch culture it became evident that it was a subject being tackled by popular feminist writers, journalists, and social critics. This subject did not appear to have been taken up considerably by academia. The evidence provided in this thesis suggests that raunch culture is clearly more of a reality than just fashion, custom or trend; therefore this thesis will suggest an academic definition for the cultural phenomenon of raunch.

Raunch culture is a cultural phenomenon that encourages girls and women to objectify themselves in a hyper-sexualised manner. It is part of a constantly evolving gender script that dictates feminine ideals in order to keep the heterosexual matrix intact and perpetuate traditional, patriarchal, societal belief systems. The script is reiterated through popular forms of mass media which leads to the internalisation of the dominant discourses ideals. Women use these ideals to judge and police their own and the standards of others against these ideals. Raunch cultures is primarily backed by capitalism which packages this form of femininity and sells it back to women in order to lock them into the cycle of capitalist gain; ensuring that the desires of women can be controlled. Girls and women partake in raunch culture because they are led to believe that in order to be successful they must aspire to be the sexiest and that it is part of women's liberation and empowerment.

Women adopting the raunch script often resemble dolls who have adopted the image of femininity portrayed in pornography. The raunch script idealises slender, athletic bodies with no body hair and big breasts. Due to the requirement of fitness, breast augmentation is sometimes the only way to achieve this. Hair extensions, false eye lashes, fake tan, and heavy make-up are utilised in order to emphasise the feminine appearance. Raunch clothing is as revealing as possible in order to advertise and sexualise the body. Raunch values encourage women to enter into sexual encounters in order to show that they are sexually empowered. One night stands and pseudo-lesbianism are advocated but only in order to harness the male gaze and cater to male fantasy.

Raunch culture sexualises women in the arts. They are used as role-models to promote the script's ideals and values concerning gender. Women in films, theatre, music, and art are often styled to encourage and cater to the male gaze. Because of this they become fetishized objects of the male fantasy. Many women in the arts are therefore only successful because of their physical appearance and are compliant with raunch norms; perpetuating the idea that in order to be successful and to have worth, a woman must follow the raunch script.

The sexual nature of raunch culture stems from the Women's Liberation Movement. The political objectives of this movement have been perverted so women believe that they have gained sexual liberation. Raunch encourages women to act in a sexual manner but only in ways that are deemed acceptable by the discourse. Girls and women who do not express their sexuality in this way often face being ostracised.

## **Chapter Four Unveiling the Performative Nature of Gender and Big Hits**

Butler's theories of reiteration have been utilised to demonstrate how the dominant discourse of raunch is promoting a limiting script of femininity and why girls and women, appear to be abiding by and policing the guidelines set out by this cultural phenomenon. The following chapters will investigate whether contemporary performance makers are challenging the images and conditions set out by raunch culture and how their performances maybe confronting it. In order to analyse the performance work being created by contemporary performance makers, Butler's notions will be employed to see whether the performative nature of raunch culture can be exposed.

It has been discussed that gender is fabricated through the repetition of gender norms, such as gestures, acts, dress, mannerisms, and behaviour; according to Butler these are constructed corporeal signs and are what she terms as performative. (Butler, 1990, p.185). Butler states that performativity 'must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act," but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names.' (1993, p.2). This results in gender being only a fantasy produced by a discourse that propagates that there is a primary and stable identity. (1990, p.186). The success of dominant discourses relies on the premise that it remains hidden; women should not know, or should not acknowledge that they are aware that the gender norms that they are following are performative rather than natural. Butler suggests that in order to interrogate gender roles and displace dominant discourses, the performativity of gender must be revealed as an act that a supposed natural self presents. (Butler, 1990, p.146). This would result in a splitting and opening up of closed gender scripts and categories, allowing the practices of repetition to be contested.

In order for the performative status of the dominant discourse to become apparent as mimetic and derived, Butler reveals the usefulness of parody. She uses the example of drag performances to highlight the way that it '*implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself.*' [emphasis in original]. (Butler, 1990, p.187). The performance of drag serves to highlight the imitation of gender norms, in a parodic way, that displaces the naturalised and essentialist view of gender identities. Through this parodic contextualisation, Butler believes that gender meanings are denaturalised even though the styles of gender identity still clearly belong to the misogynist, hegemonic culture. Butler states that '(i)n the place of an original identification which serves as a

determining cause, gender identity might be conceived as a personal/cultural history of received meanings subject to a set of imitative practices...' (p.188).

Butler utilises Fredric Jameson's view of pastiche to insist that it is not only parody that can illuminate the performative nature of discourse. Jameson insists that pastiche

is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique style...but is the neutral practice of mimicry, without parody's ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse,...without that still latent feeling that there exists something *normal* compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic. Pastiche is blank parody...(in Butler, 1990, pp.188/189).

Pastiche celebrates, rather than mocks, the style of something. If pastiche is applied it implies that the original is something that has been created by another; therefore drawing attention to the performative status of gender scripts. This thesis will apply Butler and Jameson's ideas of drawing attention to the performative nature of discourses to the analysis of performances that engage with raunch culture. It has already been discussed that raunch culture is a limiting script of femininity that works through imitation and reiteration. Butler states that it is 'through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity, and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them.' (Butler, 1990, p.147).

The selected performances all engage with and comment on raunch culture, but belong to different performance genres and utilise different performance styles. The analysis for *Big Hits*, performed from 2012 to present day, will be centred upon a live viewing of the performance. *NSFW* was performed in 2012, and the analysis for this will be based on the dramatic text. The analysis for *Trilogy*, performed throughout 2009/2010 will come from a video recording of a live performance. None of the performances refer to raunch culture using this specific terminology, possibly because it is not widely acknowledged as such, but all make reference to the same cultural phenomenon. All performances mentioned have taken place in small to medium sized theatres throughout Britain and most have toured nationally and/or internationally, with the exception of *NSFW* which was performed at the Royal Court Theatre, London; one of the most important theatres in Britain.

*Big Hits* was conceived, devised, designed and written by performance company GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN. The company is made up of Hester Chillingworth (Artistic Director), Lucy McCormick, and Jennifer Pick who are based in London and Essex. GETINTHEACKOFTHEVAN describe themselves as a performance company who make broken genre performance. They produce theatre, live art and installations playing with 'glory, endurance, artifice and the banal.' (Getinthebackofthevan, 2013). These statements, found on the company's website, give the reader clues into what areas of exploration an audience may find within their performances. These statements may indicate that the company are acknowledging a kind of playfulness and to situate their

work in postmodern, live art context. They may also indicate that GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN are interested in exploring and possibly questioning the social politics of contemporary society through their work and performances. GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN formed five years ago and make politically engaged work at the point between live art and theatre. They have developed a mentorship scheme supporting new work and curated a platform for emerging artists.

The company have taken *Big Hits* on a national and international tour, performing in small and medium sized theatre spaces, as part of art festivals, and as stand-alone performances throughout 2012 and 2013. This analysis of *Big Hits* will be based on performances seen at The Junction in Cambridge on the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2012, and at the Almeida Theatre in London on the 25<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN promise to blast their hearts right out in this performance and ask the audience if they feel free. The performance blurb entices the audience in telling them they 'look very nice. We're Big Hits and we're on a mission. You'll learn SELF-IMPROVEMENT here with us tonight and you will COMPLETELY improve yourself.' (Getinthebackofthevan, 2013).

The audience are seated in a traditional format in front of the stage. The stage is bare except for two speakers, microphones, water, gaffer tape, and make-up removal wipes. Everything on the stage is physically utilised during the performance which incorporates basic lighting states throughout. Spots are used where necessary but most of the performance is lit in a general white wash. *Big Hits* is a contemporary performance piece that acknowledges that it is a performance. Like most live/performance artists, GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN employ a postmodern/post-structuralist performance style whereby the art is not necessarily about one specific thing. Instead, the performances usually consists of actions that the performers do that are then somehow put together to form a show. This means that the meanings that emerge from the performance are much more open to individual interpretation than narrative-based or representational theatre. Due to the polysemic nature of *Big Hits* it would be impossible to try and present all possible meanings presented in the performance; therefore this analysis will try to interpret the signs using a raunch lens.

The performance starts with McCormick and Pick onstage introducing themselves by their real names. McCormick is dressed in an overtly sexual fashion with a mini skirt, see through top and high heels. Pick is dressed in a fluffy rabbit costume and wears sexy lingerie underneath. The audience are told that McCormick will represent them tonight and that Pick will represent all that makes them feel safe and secure. This implies that McCormick is adopting the script of the dominant discourse and Pick maybe an emblem for all that that the script bases itself upon. Women who are following a gender script may do so because they believe that if they don't they will be perceived as outcasts; by following the norms dictated women may feel as if they are safe from this fate.

The performance feels like a stuck record with McCormick singing Hallelujah over and over again in different ways. The rabbit dances, entices the audience to look at it and reassures them that it is cute and harmless. This goes on for the duration of the performance until Pick and McCormick decide that the audience have improved themselves enough to let go of all that is safe and secure. The rabbit then endures a death scene where the head of the rabbit is put onto a revolving disco ball while McCormick hums along to yet another rendition of Hallelujah.

Behind McCormick and Pick is Craig Hamblyn, acting as a stage hand. Hamblyn is downtrodden, drenched in stage blood and caters to the women's every demand. He speaks only when he is told to, telling corny punning jokes prompted by the women. He is made to hold props, move equipment, and carry out meaningless tasks for the amusement of McCormick and Pick. He caters to their every whim without a second thought and without argument; as reward he is allowed the microphone for a tiny moment to tell a joke and even then the women roll their eyes and belittle him.

McCormick's behaviour becomes more extreme and hysterical as the performance progresses. She 'basically pawns off her dignity to please us. She whores herself out onstage.' (Truman, 2012). As the rabbit humps her leg she collapses into giggles and by the time it has turned her round and is simulating sex with her it seems as though all rationality leaves her. McCormick seemingly does anything to keep the audience smiling by catering to the male gaze. She takes out one of her breasts, wobbles it comically, squeezes it, and licks it awkwardly in a pornographic fashion. She demands that Hamblyn spank her, not in a fake stage way but really spank her. Hamblyn responds by using stage slaps that do not actually touch McCormick. Her response to this is to pull her skirt up and her pants down and to demonstrate. She hits herself repeatedly as red marks and welts appear on her buttocks. The audience's initial reaction is to laugh but as the scene plays out, an uncomfortable atmosphere settles as they wince at this physical evidence of pain. 'Any eroticism of the initial pose – her high heels are still on, her legs cocked seductively – has shattered.' (Trueman, 2012).

McCormick goes further still, kneeling down on hands and knees, her buttocks splayed open, she freely lets the others make puns and jokes about her: 'It's almost unwatchable, largely because it's so freely chosen.' (Trueman, 2012). McCormick appears to be willing to do whatever is demanded of her. She is completely opening herself up for the audience's viewing pleasure. During this, Pick prompts Hamblyn what jokes to tell. The jokes move from bottom puns to personal insults about her physical appearance, telling her she has faeces on herself and a mole that she should have removed from her anus.

The performance finishes with Hamblyn being made to run relentlessly to the backing track of Hallelujah. His physical exertion is clear as he is cheered on by the women to run faster. Their cheers appear false and without commitment, clearly bored they act nonchalantly sip water sit by side in what could be read as an act of solidarity.

Once the song has finished, Hamblyn can be heard gasping for breath and sweat covers his body; the women point and laugh at him.

*Big Hits* engages with the idea of raunch culture in the portrayal of the triangular relationship between the performers. McCormick is a woman who is adapting the raunch script of femininity. Her behaviour such as slapping her buttocks, flirting with the audience, and performing overtly sexual actions and poses, resemble that of a female porn star that is catering to the male gaze. Her costume is revealing, tight, and see-through in areas, clothing that is traditionally associated with female prostitutes and porn stars; the style that has been adopted and made mainstream by raunch culture. Thorpe agrees that clothing 'is one of the most powerful markers of subscription to particular types of femininity.' (2008, p.67).

Pick, dressed as a giant fluffy rabbit, has desexualised herself but is exposed as wearing sexy lingerie underneath. The choice of a rabbit costume is an interesting one. During the performance McCormick comments to the audience that she suggested that Pick wear a "bunny outfit" and implies that Pick has misinterpreted her suggestion, "bless her". The Playboy empire has long used the bunny as its motif; playmates wear floppy rabbit ears and fluffy tails resulting in the bunny logo becoming the emblem for the male erotic experiences that Playboy offers. This motif has become a recognisable cultural symbol for the sexualisation of girls and women. Although the rabbit costume has desexualised Pick the costume could be read, when taking into consideration the associations associated with women wearing bunny outfits, as an emblem of hypersexualised cultural trends. Even though *Big Hits* uses pornography as its main point of reference, raunch is fuelled by the scripts provided by porn. Pornographic scripts of femininity are widely accessible due to the increasing availability of pornographic material.

The relationship between the two women could be read as symbolic of the relationship between pornography and those adopting the hypersexual/raunch discourse. Pick often encourages McCormick's outrageous and sexual behaviour, humping her as the rabbit, suggesting she sing Hallelujah again in a different way and making fun of her when she appears to go far. This is typical of the way in which dominant discourses encourage the policing of the standards of others. As a possible emblem for the sexualisation of women, Pick could be representing the way that gender scripts promote and encourage certain types of behaviour and imposes performative norms. Although McCormick sometimes challenges Pick and teases her about her appearance, she generally does this in a jokey fashion, as if she is nervous about rejecting the rabbit and all that it symbolises.

Hamblyn's relationship with the two women is subservient. He caters to almost their every wish, apparently without resentment, even though some of the tasks clearly subject him to physical strain. An example of this is when Pick tells him to elevate two speakers up with his hands and hold them there. Hamblyn can be observed physically struggling, his muscles are shaking and his face is twisted into a grimace of pain. The

women offer him no sympathy but shout to him to hold them higher and try to look less like Jesus when doing so. He receives no praise for accomplishing these tasks but is allowed the small reward of telling a joke to the audience; even then he is told which joke to tell. McCormick flirts and playfully teases Hamblyn throughout the performance but he appears to be unaffected by her advances. It appears as though he does not see her as a sexualised object therefore rejecting the expectation of the male gaze. When asked to spank McCormick he continues to use stage slaps, never making actual physical contact with her even though she insists relentlessly whilst hitting herself. Hamblyn is rejecting the male expectation of the pornographic script, he appears to accept his role as subservient but will not encourage or be a part in any sexualised behaviour or objectification.

These relationships could be representative of the way in which hyper-sexual/raunch scripts operate in society. McCormick has adopted the dominant discourse and her behaviour is often encouraged and initiated by the symbol of male erotic experience (Pick dressed as the rabbit). Hamblyn does not initiate any of the actions and is reluctant to accept the male gaze and expectation. This reluctance and refusal undermines the pornographic/raunch scripts in the way that it illuminates not all men want to sexually objectify women. Raunch culture instils the belief that in order to become successful, a woman must cater to the male gaze and objectify herself because that is what all men want. Hamblyn rejects this notion in his refusal to participate in male expectation opening the possibility of other ways of being. As discussed in the previous chapter, the power of dominant discourses lie within them being viewed as the normal and natural way of existing.

Hamblyn's rejection of the pornographic/raunch script moves the audience's attention away from the common feminist view that the everyday man is at fault for the objectification of women. The focus shifts from Hamblyn and on to the rabbit who appears to be in control of him and also McCormick. It is this symbol of male erotic culture that is encouraging McCormick's behaviour, and in turn both of them give the orders to Hamblyn. The performers engage with games throughout the performance that offer the audience the opportunity to reflect on gender relationships and on raunch culture.

Underneath the rabbit costume is Pick. Her refusal to sexualise and objectify herself acts as possible undermining of hypersexual/raunch culture. She is wearing sexy underwear beneath her costume but she does not need to advertise this in order to gain power or success within the performance. She is rejecting the raunch discourse and proving the point that women do not need to objectify themselves in order to gain recognition or power.

Spectators of *Big Hits* are told at the beginning of the performance that McCormick represents them. They are told that they will be taught self-improvement and that time is running out for them to improve themselves. McCormick's willingness to do anything to please, exposing herself and opening herself up to criticism and degradation is

symbolic of the way in which, by adopting the dominant script, women are giving themselves for the pleasure of others. In this context the other represents the male and the problem is that whilst women work to satisfy men they are not finding their own pleasure. Matt Trueman concludes his review of *Big Hits* by reminding the audience that it is easy to forget that McCormick is representing all of them tonight and that 'her willing degradation is ours.' (2012). Women are degrading themselves, under the promotion of raunch by capitalism. This could be interpreted as by buying into limiting scripts of femininity we women are selling ourselves for the profit of others. This is oppressive because it does not allow women the opportunity to explore other types of femininity and they may be ostracised if they do not conform.

The performance unfolds through a series of tasks that leave the spectator as just an observer without emotional investment in any particular thing. Without investment, the meaning of the action can be focused upon and each image produced by the performers is individually received. This performance style may make it easier for the witness to think about the topics that have been presented and to make up their own minds about what they have seen; making an effective tool for the opening up of various possibilities concerning pornography/raunch scripts and what they mean to the individual lives of the spectators.

Butler's notion of parody as enabling the performative status of gender norms to be exposed can be applied to *Big Hits*. McCormick is an extreme version of a woman adopting the values and expectations that arise from raunch culture. Her performances of behaviours are overdone and emphasized making them comedic and a parody of raunch traits. This may highlight the performative nature of this feminine script therefore denaturalising them. The spectator laughs along with her sexual flirting and although they know that she is performing they may also recognise similar behaviours in themselves and others around them. Pick and Hamblyn are representing alternatives to the norms that are expected within the discourse. The spectator may recognise gender scripts as a cultural expression of perceived meanings instead of the natural state that the discourse wants them to believe. *Big Hits* presents the possibility of contesting gender scripts by denaturalising gender norms and by opening them up the chance of being contested; allowing for other discourses to be explored.

The performance does not make explicitly political remarks about pornography, raunch culture, or dominant discourses but does offer the spectator the opportunity to critically examine these issues for themselves. *Big Hits* is analytical in its presentation of some of the issues and traits of pornography/raunch culture in that it portrays them in a certain light; but it does not go too deep in its analysis. This engagement with raunch may expose the performative nature of raunch and gender scripts in general but unless someone is aware of cultural phenomena, its impact may be limited. Spectators may make some observations about their own behaviour and adoption of dominant discourses but the performance did not offer many alternatives to raunch and only took

place on a small scale; therefore resulting in only a tiny challenge to raunch culture and the sexualisation of girls and women.

## **Chapter Five NSFW**

Lucy Kirkwood is a contemporary British playwright who has written a succession of plays and screenplays. Kirkwood has been commissioned to write plays for the Bush and the National Theatre Studio and is currently a writer in residence at Clean Break, a women's theatre company set up thirty years ago by two prisoners. Kirkwood runs writing classes and workshops within prisons with female inmates. Most of Kirkwood's plays confront contemporary issues with some that may concern women. Her plays often adopt dark humour when tackling issues such as human trafficking, patriotism, and the domestic and economic challenges faced by young couples trying to get in the property ladder. Although women feature strongly within her work Kirkwood states that that '(I)'d rather be a playwright than a woman playwright...But I'm interested in how you fight from a position of implicit inferiority.' (Kirkwood, 2012).

*NSFW*, one of Kirkwood's most recent plays was performed in the Jerwood Theatre downstairs at the Royal Court Theatre, London. The play ran between the 25th October and the 24th November 2012. The play's title refers to a website acronym meaning "not safe for work" and applies to material that employees would not want to be caught looking at online; such as pornography. The analysis of *NSFW* will be primarily based on the original play text and reviews of its premier at the Royal Court, directed by Simon Godwin. This approach follows in a more traditional path for theatre but deals with contemporary issues. The play employs characters, an elaborate set, and lighting; this indicates Kirkwood is adopting the style of Realism for this show. The audience are given all the tools to suspend their imaginations and to believe that the environments, characters, and stories created on the stage are real, for the duration of the performance.

*NSFW* has three acts, performed in two halves, set in different magazine offices. The first two acts are set in one office and then the set is changed during the interval where the play is then set in the second office. The first is Doghouse magazine. A lads mag that features topless pictures of women and short amusing articles concerning contemporary male issues and trivia. From the description of the magazine, it could be likened to such publications such as *Nuts* or *Loaded* that are aimed at men over the age of 18. The set incorporates a pool table, dartboard, sports paraphernalia, computer games, gadgets, with framed prints of topless women on the walls and could be described as a typically male environment. (Kirkwood, 2012, p.3).

Act one starts with Sam, a university educated working-class office junior aged twenty-four, rushing into the office with coffee for the office. He enters into an argument between Rupert, an upper-class writer aged twenty-eight, and Charlotte, a middle-class university educated writer aged twenty-five. They are soon joined by Aiden, editor of the magazine in his early forties. Aiden is carrying a large envelope which he opens to reveal a framed print of a topless woman. The picture is of Carrie, she has been selected as the winner of a competition where readers send in topless pictures of their girlfriends. Carrie's picture is hung on the wall and all the employees admire her physicality. Act one establishes the characters and their roles within the office, the nature of the magazine is made explicit as Aiden discusses future articles and plans.

A crisis looms at the end of act one when Aiden discovers that Sam has sanctioned the use of topless photos of a fourteen year old girl. Mr Bradshaw, a reader of the magazine in his late forties, has seen the topless picture of Carrie (his daughter) and has rung to complain. Mr Bradshaw is invited into the office to talk with Aiden and all his expenses are paid as Aiden tries to placate him. In act Aiden tries to buy off Mr Bradshaw with money; when this does not work he implies that it is the father's fault that his daughter has done this and that for a moment Mr Bradshaw saw Carrie in a lustful way before he noticed it was his daughter. Aiden insinuates that as a reader of the magazine, Mr Bradshaw must have looked at the picture as he would any other of an attractive topless girl; that his focus would have been on her breasts before looking at her face. The act concludes with an angry Mr Bradshaw accepting a check from Aiden. Sam blames himself for sanctioning the photo and has gone into a catatonic state believing that there is something wrong with himself for finding her attractive. Charlotte is used throughout the act to try and calm Mr Bradshaw down and is used as an example of how women are appreciated within the office and not victimised.

The second half of *NSFW*, act three, is set in the editor's office of Electra magazine. Electra is a weekly publication for young women. There are pictures on the wall of heavily photoshopped healthy looking women. After being fired from Doghouse, for the use of the fourteen year old's photo, Sam is now being interviewed for Electra. As part of the interview process, Sam is told he is required to look at pictures of famous women and identify their physical flaws by putting a red ring around them. Sam is reluctant to do this but to placate the interviewer he states that the women in the picture is 'an unhealthy role model – projecting, well, damaging standards of unnatural physical, you know. Perfection.' (Kirkwood, 2012, p.66) Miranda, editor of Electra, responds this by saying that 'She's not perfect. Nobody is perfect...I need you to point out the ways in which this woman is not perfect.' (p.67). Although Miranda enthuses that the magazine has a feminist agenda she also believes that after a long day it's not a crime to not want to think about it. (pp.64-66).

Miranda continues to try and push Sam into identifying the physical flaws of women and in doing so she brings up his ex-girlfriend. She believes that he stopped loving her because of her physical flaws,

MIRANDA. A small thing. A mole that made you feel sick to look at it. Or a fungal infection in the toenails.

SAM. No. No I don't –

MIRANDA. Not even something as noticeable as that even, just maybe, a sagging, somewhere. Or a texture.

SAM. A texture?

MIRANDA. To the skin, a roughness or a dimpling.

SAM. Yeah well, that's just – skin, isn't it?

MIRANDA. And once you'd noticed it, you couldn't stop noticing it.

(Kirkwood, 2012, p.68-69).

The play concludes with Sam finally giving in to Miranda's wishes and starts to circle the flaws on the pictures of the women; much to Miranda's delight.

Kirkwood's play engages explicitly with the sexualisation and objectification of girls and women. Doghouse is principally about the publication of pictures of topless women; as Aiden says, '(t)he articles are shit...no one buys our publication principally for the literature.' (Kirkwood, 2012, p.37). All the women are judged purely on their physical appearance and as 'a beautiful pair of firm, young breasts.' (p.39). As mentioned above, 'contemporary culture demands that women treat their breasts as wholly separate entities, with little or no connection to themselves, their personality, or even the rest of their body.' (Power, 2009, p.24). The editors of *Electra* do not sexualise women but still break them down into parts that can be scrutinised; typical of the policing that raunch encourages amongst women. This indicates that women are their own worst critics when objectifying their bodies. Readers of female orientated magazines are

encouraged to look upon the bodies of... female models as a man would, to evaluate her own body by those standards, and in turn, to remake herself according to that model. Femininity is defined by the ability to attract a man – to undergo the male gaze and be judged suitable. (Krassas et al, 2001, p.766).

*NSFW* appears to be commenting on the fact that both male and female magazines, in perpetuating and following the dominant discourse, 'present women as sexual objects who should seek to attract and sexually satisfy men.' (p.754).

It appears that Kirkwood is using the example of Carrie to draw attention to the double standards of the male magazine industry. The whole office is happy to use her photo until they realise that she is an underage girl but her physicality remains the same. The opinion of the office is that if a woman of girl is happy to flaunt her assets then they are providing a public service by printing pictures of them. As Aiden points out, '...we don't go *out* with a *net* to find girls like Carrie. We don't have to. Why? Because they queue up. They come to us.' [emphasis in original text]. (Kirkwood, 2012,

p.46). Kirkwood is trying to make a point about how raunch culture encourages and promotes sexualised behaviour in young girls and women. From an early age girls are bombarded with sexual images and are encouraged to buy products that bear symbols with sexual connotations. Kirkwood seems to be commenting, through the play, that magazines should not be surprised that young girls want to be viewed as sexual beings when they are the ones perpetuating the notion that women are valued for their sexual appeal.

During the play, the audience is made aware that Charlotte belongs to a feminist group outside of work and that she lies about what she does as a job to them. What she understands is that in order to be successful in a male dominated environment she must take a male orientated attitude towards the content of the publication. Levy points out that women 'who've wanted to be perceived as powerful have long found it more efficient to identify with men...' (Levy, 2005, p.95). The fact that Charlotte lies to her feminist group about her work indicates that she is ashamed of it and feels that the sexualisation of women goes against feminist values. Kirkwood is commenting that women who do not agree with the principles of Raunch culture may often go along with them because they have little alternative economically and socially. Electra is portrayed as a publication that allies itself with feminist values. Kirkwood is of the opinion that feminist values have been misinterpreted/misrepresented within the female magazine industry. When Miranda says that women do not want to think about feminism all of the time it is an observation that feminism has been made to look unpopular by the media and raunch values encourage society to believe that self-objectification is a choice made possible because of sexual liberation. The play seems to be reflecting current cultural trends, one of which is the lack of popularity in political feminism.

Sexual bullying is observed within the play as Rupert is used to convey male culture in the workplace. The relationship between Rupert and Charlotte is a strained one. They regularly argue, sometimes resulting in physical rough and tumble. Although the arguments are often petty and teasing, Charlotte often takes Sam's comments to heart even though he does not take anything she does seriously. The banter between them is ferocious and often incorporates personal insults. Charlotte often questions Rupert's qualifications and competence to do his job. Rupert will retaliate saying that she got the job because she used her erotic capital:

CHARLOTTE. D'you know how Rupert got this job, / Sam?

RUPERT. Classy. Really fucking classy, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE. D'you think he did an interview? D'you think he spent hours checking the font on his CV?

RUPERT. Century Gothic, thank you and actually yes I did an interview and FYI, I didn't conduct it on my knees, like some / people we COULD MENTION –

(Kirkwood, 2012, p.4).

Kirkwood may be highlighting the fact that men in the workplace may resent and undermine women in the workplace due to not wanting to feel inferior because of their own shortcomings. This is possibly linked to the way in which raunch encourages men to view women as only worth what they sell in erotic capital. This undermines female achievement gained through skills, education, and experience.

*NSFW* reflects aspects of raunch culture and the playwright shows the audience certain facets of it through character, dialogue, and action. It engages with the issues of raunch (self-objectification, its promotion in magazines, a lack of popularity in political feminism), through the use of comedy. Although the issues are serious they are discussed in a comic way enabling the audience to absorb the information without it appearing as though the critique of raunch is being forced upon them. Kirkwood uses comedy as a tool to draw attention to the double-standards perpetuated by raunch and makes it apparent that the magazine industry helps to construct and inform gender norms.

*NSFW* is successful in highlighting some of the issues concerned with dominant gender discourses but as Jameson warns, satire may often leave the audience with the feeling that there is something normal that is being over played; therefore assuming the issue is being over played as well. (In Butler, 1990, pp.188/189). The problems with *NSFW* being able to draw attention to the performativity of gender norms could be its use of comedy and Realism. The play is a critique of gender norms and invites the audience to look at magazine culture in relation to raunch. It appears that the witnesses are not invited to identify with any of the characters in the play but may identify with some of the behaviours and opinions expressed by some of them. This could possibly lead to a questioning of their own behaviours but Kirkwood does not condemn nor condone these behaviours; she merely invites the audience to laugh along with the satirized characters.

*NSFW* has a female character that is actively encouraging the performance of the raunch script/discourse and a male that goes against male expectations. Miranda promotes raunch culture through pushing others to embody the expectations dictated by the dominant discourse. Sam does not fulfil the expectation of men gladly objectifying women and this is shown through his reluctance to participate in what is expected of him. Kirkwood is utilising this device to show that not everyone is or should be following the dominant gender scripts presented to them. She is making a statement that women may often be the ones that are policing, regulating, promoting raunch culture as they are possibly led to believe that they must; in order to be deemed socially and economically successful. Sam does not seem to feel the same need to conform but both is treated with disrespect, and as unimportant by other characters. This could be a statement about the way in which people are deemed as outcasts and ostracised, as outlined earlier in the discussion of Butler, if they do not follow the normal gender expectations as dictated by dominant discourses.

*NSFW*'s engagement with raunch does not offer an effective counter strategy to raunch culture. It highlights a few key points about the behaviour raunch encourages and makes a statement about how magazines promote dominant discourse gender ideals. At best some spectators may take away a deeper understanding of certain behaviours promoted by publications but it does not offer an alternative or opening up of dominant gender scripts. *NSFW* offers a critique of raunch culture but does not expose the performative nature of gender scripts. It exposes the way in which this script is perpetuated by popular forms of mass media but does not offer a way of challenging it; therefore *NSFW* is successful at drawing attention to certain aspects of dominant discourses but does not offer a way of challenging or changing them.

## **Chapter Six Trilogy**

Nic Green is a young artist and artistic director who makes and develops theatre performances, community and public arts-projects, choral works, interactive web-based projects, and offers holistic and research-based learning experiences. After graduating from the Royal Scottish Academy of Drama and Music in 2005, Green is primarily 'committed to developing creative work that is ecological in it's nature,...(studying) relations, based on the understanding that all is interrelated and holds agency as e/affecting.' (Green, 2013). Through her work she aims to allow the interrelatedness of social problems to become visible, meaningful, and resonant with the day-to-day lives of people. Her work challenges commonly accepted binaries such as human/animal, life/matter, and organic/inorganic in an attempt to reframe them as non-oppositional. Holism, where parts of the whole are seen to be intimately connected to one another and cannot be understood without reference to the whole, resonates highly within her artistic work. Green describes herself as an activist through theatre and she states that 'performance is rooted in action, and action is everything to me...' (2010).

Whilst working on a project called *Cloud Piece* in 2007, Green observed sexualised and self-policing behaviours being displayed by a group of volunteer girls, aged eight to eleven, that she was working with. She found that the girls would switch between age appropriate activities like cloud gazing to emulating the sexual behaviour and dance routines of their favourite pop icons; this spurred her to develop a piece that looked at how the media portrays the female body and how this affects women's relationships with their own physical being. Later in 2007, Green collaborated with Laura Bradshaw in devising and choreographing part one of *Trilogy*, it is described by Green as a piece that is 'all about wobbling different parts of our bodies, presenting them as practical objects, instead of statuesque objects d'art.' (2010). Green and Bradshaw devised a further two parts where the completed performance had a successful run at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2009. In January 2010 *Trilogy* was performed at the Battersea Arts Centre and the Barbican Theatre London, culminating in a tour around medium sized theatres in Britain throughout 2010.

Alongside the performance a website, *Make Your Own Herstory*, was set up to encourage women to reflect on their own femininity in creative ways. Women who engaged with the website could share their writing, pictures of them doctoring their birth certificates, and filming themselves singing naked. Wherever the performance was

shown, local female volunteers were recruited to take part in the performance, furthering the exploration of personal femininity issues.

*Trilogy* is a multi-media show that features a broad mix of performance styles including dance, lecture, and direct audience participation. This analysis will be based on a recording of the performance that took place in the Barbican Theatre in January 2010.

Part one of the performance is introduced by Green and Bradshaw. Like all performers in this piece they play themselves, without character, and introduce themselves to the audience as such. The stage is bare and black except for microphones at the back. The lighting is simple throughout, using general washes and spotlights when appropriate. After introducing themselves, Green and Bradshaw inform the audience of their shape as defined by the popular notion of female body shapes resembling fruit or other objects; for example "I am Nic Green and I am an apple." Green gives us some of her favourite quotes from Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*; she does this in order to contextualise what will follow in the first part of the performance. The audience are told that the performers believe that even though the book was written in the 1970s, it still resonates with them as young women. The quotes taken from the book are of Greer's observations of the fetishisation of the female body and that women are made to feel insecure in order to cater for a buyers' market. Women are instructed to change their bodies in order to cater to the male gaze and that their breasts, legs, buttocks are ever deemed to be good enough without constant self-improvement.

The performers start to dance and during this they undress until they are completely naked. On a screen behind the performers is a recording of Green and Bradshaw looking through women's magazines in a supermarket. Wearing only gold bikinis and knee pads they ask other shoppers what they think of the images in the magazines. The recording changes to images of fruit, jelly, naked body parts being made to wobble. After the dance Green and Bradshaw stand front centre stage and meet the gaze of the audience. They are joined by approximately a hundred naked female volunteers who perform a joyous and lively dance together accompanied by fast paced music. The shouts and whoops of the women can be heard above the soundtrack.

Part two is a response to the film *Bloody Town Hall*, a documentary about a debate that took place in 1979 between the president of the National Organisation of Women Jacqueline Ceballos, literary critic Diana Trilling, feminist writer Germaine Greer, poet Jill Johnston, and chaired by novelist Norman Mailer. Green and Bradshaw are joined by performers Jodie Wilkinson, Murry Watson, and Louise Brodie. All of the performers are wearing plain masculine associated clothing, ties, waistcoats, trousers, and baseball trainers. The speech made by Johnston is shown first in which she advocates political lesbianism as a way of achieving revolution. The performers on the stage respond, after the speech, by addressing her as if in a letter describing their reactions and perception of what she is saying and how they remember her.

The performers move on to telling birth stories about how, when, and what happened when they were born. Some act out their birth moments in a physically comical way. This remembrance sparks off a list of questions about the definition of self, evolving into the questioning of the difference of men and women, history, and what we celebrate as a society. As Greer's lecture regarding the masculine artist is projected on to the screen above the performers either watch or enact synchronised dance movements. Volunteers who are older than the performers are asked to come forward from the audience. They are shown a simple sequence of movements that they are asked to perform on the stage. The performers, who have undresses on the stage, stand naked in the opposite corner of the stage facing the backs of the fully dressed volunteers. As the movement plays out it creates an image of the older generation waving to the younger one. The two generations pass each other in the centre of the stage, culminating in the two generations facing one another.

Part three is devoted to Green and Bradshaw encouraging the audience to participate in the reclaiming of feminist "herstory". Green gives a lecture about the history of herstory and the importance of the song *Jerusalem* to the first wave women's liberation movement. The audience are taken through a set of slides that are instructions and pictures on the steps to follow to create their own herstory using the website created by Green. Half way through the slides the pictures change to reflect how rape and sexual violence is portrayed in British society. Green and Bradshaw make out that the slides have got in there by mistake but it is a stark reminder that feminist issues are still very relevant in contemporary society. During the description on how to write your own "womanifesto", a live phone conversation between Bradshaw and her mother is played through the speakers. Bradshaw's mother reads out her womanifesto for the audience to hear.

For the finale, all female audience members are invited on to the stage. They are told that if they wish to participate then they should go behind the curtains and take off their clothes in order to sing *Jerusalem*, standing shoulder to shoulder with all the other participants. Those wishing not to participate in this way and the male audience members are encouraged to stand and sing along with the women in the auditorium. In the performance witnessed, most of the female audience members volunteered to come up on stage and sing naked; the women could be seen to look happy, strong, and a strong sense of solidarity was felt.

Part one of *Trilogy* offers a critique of the unachievable images of femininity favoured by the media. The hard, slender bodies and round fake breasts, considered ultimately beautiful by popular scripts of femininity, are contested by the fact that all female bodies wobble. By taking inspiration from pornographic depictions of the female body, the media represents women as being solid, unchanging, more like an object or doll than a living human body. In art, the female body is often depicted as statuesque, something that Green wanted to challenge and instead present as something practical as opposed to impractical perfection. The images of fruit, jelly, and

human flesh shown on the screen help to reflect the action of the dance being performed; making the statement that the female body is useful, practical, and above all else, mobile.

*Trilogy* 'is a critique of the cultural discourses which commodify and "discipline" women's bodies, constructing them for women as a radically ambivalent object of pleasure and shame...' (Harris, 2012, 108). The quotes from *The Female Eunuch* illuminate the fact that discourses that work to encourage self-improvement and discipline are even more prevalent in contemporary society than they were during the second wave of feminism. The performance goes further than critiquing dominant discourses that oppress women through their use of volunteer dancers. The women who enter the stage are of all shapes and sizes, the dance they perform is joyful, bouncy, and gives a feeling of liberation. Geraldine Harris states that this part of the performance

offers a (literally) embodied metaphor of what it might *feel* like for women to be liberated from the shame produced by the prevailing "disciplinary regimes" and to celebrate their bodies together in ways *other* than those already determined by them. (2012, p.109).

This performance is a critique of all dominant scripts, throughout history, that have oppressed women and their bodies

During the introduction to the show, the performative nature of discourses is briefly touched upon. By introducing themselves and comparing themselves to the shapes of fruit, the performers appear to following the widely accepted way in which women have adopted this metaphor. This tool of classification is often used in television programmes, such as *How to Look Good Naked*, that teach women how to appreciate themselves through the use of tricks that allow them to "approximate the norms" defined by the beauty industry.' (Harris, pp.108/109). The ridiculousness of this comparison is exposed during the slide show of fruit being cut open as actual female bodies dance in front of them. The statement that could be being made here is that fruit is nothing like a female body and the female body is nothing like a fruit. They are not the same on the inside or the outside. Butler's notion of gender performativity could be applied here because the comparison is exposed to be ludicrous and comic but is something that many women use because it is part of a popular feminine script.

As previously discussed, girls and women are constantly bombarded by scripts of limited femininity and are given limited, if any, alternatives to follow. *Trilogy* embodies the feeling that women may experience if they break away from the dominant discourse and suggests how this may be achieved.

The second and third part of the performance engages with feminist ideas of the past. Johnston's speech about political lesbianism can be read as solidarity between women, a way of reclaiming the term lesbian and allowing it to simply mean a bond between women who have learnt to love themselves. This is a direct challenge to the

values held by raunch that encourage women to not only police themselves but to judge and compete with one another for the pleasure of men. Elements of this speech are invoked in the performance with a rolling list of names of the performers, volunteers, and audience members who have given their name, preceded with the words “We love...”. The participants performing the dance in part one, and the volunteers singing in the finale stress the solidarity created by journeying together towards learning to be more accepting of one’s own body and the body of others.

Greer’s speech about the most privileged figure in elitist male society, the masculine artist, highlights the cost this has upon his female peers. (Harris, p.110). Misogynist views are damaging women’s self-esteem and may be discouraging them from entering into certain professions where women are deemed to be the object of art instead of the artist. Greer suggests a move away from male elitist art and advocates democratisation of the industry. This could be related to the way in which *Trilogy* utilises volunteers and audience participation before and during the performance; and outside the performance through the use of the website.

By using feminist speeches from the past the audience becomes aware that the issues prevalent in the 1970s, objectification and commodification of the female body, violence towards women, oppression through patriarchal discourses, are still relevant today. Through the structure of the performance, the company find their way back and discover personal and political connections with the past that connect with their immediate concerns and questions relating to the present. These interests of the past are responded too and reinterpreted by the performers during the dances. The performance applies contemporary aesthetics in order for the performers to explore their own identities and answers to their own political questions. (Harris, p.111).

The performances main concern is re-connecting with both the second and the first wave of feminism. It achieves this through the use of feminist material but also through featuring actual stories from mothers and grandmothers. This gives the feeling that although feminism has been made unpopular by the media, it can be repaired through a dialogue between generations. Harris believes that this makes *Trilogy* unusual because the politics that it deals with have seemed unpopular for a considerable amount of time. (2012, p.93). It is through this reconnection with feminist values that expressions of femininity, which lie outside of dominant discourses, can be explored.

*Trilogy* encourages women to look at their own femininity creatively. It does this in the way that it presents female nudity. Sexualised images of the female body have become normalised within society and there is a distinct lack of variety when it comes to physicality and expression. The performers and volunteers appear perform in an unselfconscious and committed way, because of this ‘the nudity is rapidly “normalised”...’(Harris, 2012, p.107). *Trilogy* presents the audience with a wide range of female bodies of different sizes, shapes, colours, and ages. This acts to normalise a range of female bodies that fall outside of dominant discourse specifications, resulting in the questioning of normative gender norms and the revealing other alternative scripts of

physical femininity. The naked female body is also not presented as a sexualised object, Harris comments that the naked moments 'are presented in such a way that it is difficult to focus on any one body let alone in a way that might "objectify" them.' (p.107).

The performance creates a sense of solidarity within the audience. The performers, volunteers, and audience participation carries the spectator along what feels like a journey of political and personal exploration. Feminism is made to feel relevant and popular which encourages the witness to evaluate their own experiences and to learn and reflect on the past. The website as an extension of the performance adds to the experience of exploring creative expressions of femininity. *Trilogy* appears to create a sense of community amongst both women and men and a feeling that changes can be achieved through re-education and participation; tools that the performance gives to the audience.

Green appears to have developed an effective counter strategy to raunch in the promotion of and reflection on feminist values. By reframing feminism as relevant and necessary it encourages the audience to rethink femininity, opening up the possibility of exploration into how to effectively challenge restrictive feminine scripts. Harris identifies that it is 'this spirit of what feminism might be *for*, the passionate optimism that it may be possible to alter the world in revolutionary ways yet to be thought' that makes *Trilogy* a direct and plausible challenge not just to raunch culture but to all narrow dominant scripts of femininity. (2012, p.109).

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this thesis was to investigate whether contemporary performance makers could effectively challenge the notion of raunch culture.

Raunch culture has been identified as part of a constantly evolving script of narrow femininity. This script is based predominantly on patriarchal ideals of feminine appearance and behaviour ensuring that the heterosexual matrix remains intact. Society wants the heterosexual matrix to remain intact because all cultures want to preserve their social identity and reproduce themselves. Gender scripts act as a way of controlling the sexuality and behaviour of society, any divergence away from the norms imposed are acknowledged as deviant and the threat of ostracism occurs.

Raunch culture adapts the hyper-sexualised script of femininity often found in pornography. The move of pornography into mainstream culture means that this type of femininity is easily accessed by young children and adolescent girls and boys; often it will provide them with their first experience of sexual relationships and identities. Female porn stars are often hairless on their bodies, have fake breasts, hair, and eye lashes, wear heavy makeup that accentuates features associated with female attractiveness; also wearing clothes that emphasize and reveal the female body. Pornography is predominantly styled to catering for male desire and sexual fantasy; which makes the adoption of this image by raunch culture problematic for women's rights.

Raunch promotes itself as women's sexual liberation and a success of the second wave of feminism. This idea has been misconstrued because only a narrow version of sexuality is appropriate within the raunch script; a sexuality that caters to the male fantasy. Some women may feel liberated and empowered whilst following the raunch script but its exclusionary nature means that the girls and women who do not, have little alternative or access to any other form of sexual expression.

Dominant discourses work through a process of reiteration; a constant repetition of gender norms that makes it appear as though it is the natural way of things. Raunch is reiterated through mass media such as television, music, film, computer games, magazines, and also through the behaviour of others. The media portrays femininity as a range of products, fitness regimes, and self-improvement guides. Girls and women believe that in order to be a successful woman they must buy

these products and constantly improve their appearance. This ensures that women's spending power is harnessed and they are locked into the cycle of capitalist gain.

Political feminism has been made unpopular by its representation in the media; resulting in women feeling as though it threatens their femininity. The cultural trend of raunch femininity perpetuates the cycle of capitalist gain by packaging up feminism as the acquisition of material things. Raunch feminism informs women that because they have been granted sexual and economic liberation, fought for during the second wave of feminism, they can represent feminist ideals by purchasing all the shoes, handbags, and vibrators that they wish. The problem here is that whilst women feel as though they have achieved sexual and material equality they do not appear to be concerned with the issues still being fought for by political feminists.

Women's concern for physical and material perfection is not necessarily a fault of their own. Gender scripts are powerful because they rely on the constant repetition of norms and appear as the natural order of things. This is backed up by societal assumptions and biological facts. Butler describes the way in which certain behaviours and identities become normalised through the process of reiteration so that the performative nature of gender remains hidden. Foucault adds that power works because people believe that they do not have it and dominance is achieved self-management and surveillance. Women are not aware of raunch culture as being a dominant discourse because it conceals itself from being a regulatory force. Women internalise the regulatory gaze/male gaze and use it to judge their own standards and the standards of others against the norms presented to them by raunch culture.

The impacts of narrowly defined scripts of femininity are predominantly negative. The sexualisation of girls and women, leading to self-objectification, affects girls and women in a range of undesirable ways. Mental illness, poor sexual health, and physical health implications are all connected to striving for dictated ideals of feminine identity. Poor concentration levels have been documented in girls and women engaged in self-objectification leading to poor performance in mental tasks. This may result in women not fulfilling their true academic potential because they are consumed by thoughts of their appearance and a lack of confidence in their ability. In a society that informs women that success is measured by being desired by others, women may also not bother striving for achievements, other than to be the best looking; resulting in women being underrepresented in many areas of employment.

Raunch challenges traditional conventions of femininity but also reinforces heterosexual gender relations. Women are encouraged to act in a sexual manner but have little knowledge of their own sexuality. Women become distanced from their own sexuality and their bodies meaning that they may take greater risks with their sexual health and their bodies. Under the raunch script women are not in control of defining their own bodies, sexuality, or identity; this is oppressive.

Raunch culture increases societal problems and may produce incidents of sexual violence, sexual harassment, and child pornography. Girls and women are encouraged to dress and act in a sexually provocative manner and men are encouraged to look at them as sexual objects; it is little wonder that unwanted societal behaviours will arise from this. Most children will now gain their first experience of sexual relations through watching pornography. This leads to children having a one-dimensional view of sex and what it means. In a culture that promotes success being judged upon being or acquiring the most physically desirable, men may find it hard to find a partner who meets these unrealistic ideals.

Restricting gender scripts and raunch culture in particular are oppressive for women. They oppress their creativity in expressing their femininity, their sexuality, and their cultural identity. They are oppressive economically because they tell women what to buy and what to strive for. It appears that women are less free concerning their right to explore and define their own femininity than before the second wave of feminism. The need for political change is hidden by diverting women's energy away from the issues of oppression; which is why it is vital that contemporary performance makers take up the challenge of addressing the issues involved with raunch culture.

Butler proposed that in order to challenge dominant discourses, their performative nature must be exposed; she advocates the use of parody and pastiche in order to do this. Once the performativity of gender becomes apparent then narrow scripts can be opened up and alternatives examined. *Big Hits* and *NSFW* are performances that utilise the style of parody or pastiche in order to invite the spectator to laugh along with ridiculous behaviours of the characters/performers and situations presented. This may allow the audience to question the performative nature of these behaviours as they recognise them as over-acted versions of reality.

Both performances offer a critical analysis of the way in which raunch culture is promoted and circulated. The behaviours and physical attributes associated with this gender script are portrayed for the audience to consider and may present an opportunity for reflection. Interestingly both performances involve a female that is the promoter of raunch ideals and a male that refuses to conform to expectations. This may be a comment upon the way women are internalising the regulatory gaze and perpetuating raunch ideals; turning women against one another in their judgement of how another lives up to dictated standards. The male character/performer that rejects involvement with raunch culture and behaviours could symbolise the fact that raunch culture may not actually reflect the fantasies of all men. Although the comments made about raunch culture by GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN and Kirkwood do expose some aspects of raunch and its performative nature, it does not offer an effective counter strategy.

Green's performance *Trilogy* utilises parody to unveil the performative nature of dominant discourses, but then goes on to present a variety of female identities that do not align with the discourses' ideals. It's engagement with other forms of and

expressions of femininity, in the performance and the website, invites women to creatively explore their own femininity; just as the performers and volunteers have done before them. Women are presented as diverse from the norms dictated by narrowly defined gender scripts and they are embraced not ostracised. The naked female body is shown as a useful, functioning thing which results in it being viewed as non-erotic and human as opposed to object. *Trilogy* allows the audience to experience what true female liberation might feel like, encouraging women to break the confines pushed upon them by gender discourse. Political feminism is made relevant and necessary by the way the performance illuminates feminist ideas of the past and the way that they resonate with the current situation of women. This arms women with a strategy to take control of their bodies, their sexuality, and how they express their femininity; providing an effective counter strategy to raunch culture and ultimately challenging gender scripts.

Revealing the performative nature of gender, as suggested by Butler, is not enough. Once the performative nature has been exposed it would be beneficial for performance makers to offer a strategy that works to normalise a range of femininities; enabling women to creatively explore what it means to be a woman without the fear of ostracism. The more that contemporary performance can engage with feminism, the more relevant it would be seen in society, allowing for a possible revival and challenge to the oppressive nature of narrow female scripts. In answer to the question proposed at the start of this thesis, can contemporary performance makers effectively challenge the notion of raunch culture, yes they can; opening the possibility of a challenge of all dominant gender discourses allowing for a more equal and fair society.

## **Reference List**

- American Psychological Association. (2007) *APA task force on the sexualisation of girls: executive summary*. [Online] USA: APA: Available at: [www.apa.org/pi/wpo/sexualization.html](http://www.apa.org/pi/wpo/sexualization.html) (Accessed: 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013).
- Anon. (2013) 'We love our real bodies', *Now*, August, p.18.
- Aston, E., Harris, G. (2012) *A good night out for the girls: popular feminisms in contemporary theatre and performance*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bordo, S. (1999) 'Feminism, Foucault and the politics of the body', in Price, J., Shildrick, M. (eds.) *Feminist theory and the body*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.246-257.
- Brook, B. (1999) *Feminist perspectives on the body*. Essex: Pearson Education.
- Butler, J. (1993) *Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of sex*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender trouble*. London: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1999) *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. London: Routledge.
- de Beauvoir, S. (1988) *The second sex*. London: Pan Books.
- Foucault, M. (1999) in Bordo, S. 'Feminism, Foucault and the politics of the body', in Price, J., Shildrick, M (eds.) *Feminist theory and the body*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Gatens, M. (1999) 'Power, bodies and difference', in Price, J., Shildrick, M (eds.) *Feminist theory and the body*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp.227-234.
- GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN (2013) *Getinthebackofthevan: are you going to get in the back of the van?* Available at: <http://www.getinthebackofthevan.com/> (Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> May 2013).
- Grabe, S., Ward, L., Hyde, J. (2008) 'The role of the media in body image concerns among women: a meta-analysis of experimental and correlational studies', *Psychological Bulletin*, 134(3), pp.460-476.

Green, (2010) 'Trilogy', in Gardner, L., *The Guardian*, 13<sup>th</sup> January [Online]. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2010/jan/13/trilogy-review> (Accessed: 6<sup>th</sup> June 2013).

Greer, G. (2006) *The female eunuch*. London: Harper Perennial.

Harris, G. in Aston, E., Harris, G. (2012) *A good night out for the girls: popular feminisms in contemporary theatre and performance*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Holland, J., Ramazanoglu, C., Sharpe, S., Thomson, R. (2004) *The male in the head: young people, heterosexuality and power*. (Second edn.) London: Tufnell Press.

Jameson, F. in Butler, J. (1990) *Gender trouble*. London: Routledge.

Jenainati, C., Grove, J. (2010) *Introducing feminism: a graphic guide*. Cambridge: Icon Books.

Kirby, V. (2006) *Judith Butler: live theory*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Kirkwood, L. (2012) *NSFW*. London: Nick Hern Books.

Krassas, J., Blauwkamp, M., Wesselink, P. (2001) 'Boxing Helena and corseting Eunice: sexual rhetoric in cosmopolitan and playboy magazines', *Sex Roles*, 44(11), pp.751-771. *Academic OneFile* [Online]. Available at: <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.brums.ac.uk/login.aspx> (Accessed: 17<sup>th</sup> January 2013).

Levy, A. (2005) *Female chauvinist pigs: women and the rise of raunch culture*. New York: Free Press.

Lynch, A. in Thorpe, J. (2008) *Harmful scripts. Raunch femininity as the disguised reiteration of emphasized feminine goals: an exploration of young women's accounts of sexually explicit forms of public expression*. Unpublished masters degree thesis, University of Rhodes.

Macdonald, M. (1995) *Representing women: myth of femininity in the popular media*. London: Edward Arnold.

Mulvey, L. (2001) Visual pleasure and narrative cinema, in Durham, G. and Kellner, D. (eds.) *Media and cultural studies: key works*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp.342-352.

Penny, L. (2010) *Meat market: female flesh under capitalism*. Hants: O Books.

Power, N. (2009) *One dimensional woman*. Hants: O Books.

Thorpe, J. (2008) *Harmful scripts. Raunch femininity as the disguised reiteration of emphasized feminine goals: an exploration of young women's accounts of sexually*

*explicit forms of public expression*. Unpublished masters degree thesis, University of Rhodes.

Trueman, M. (2012) *Review: big hits, soho theatre*. Available at: <http://matttrueman.co.uk/2012/09/review-big-hits-soho-theatre.html> (Accessed: 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013).

Walter, N. (2010) *Living dolls: the return of sexism*. London: Virago.

Weitz, R. (ed)(1998) *The politics of women's bodies: sexuality, appearance, and behaviour*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wright, E. (ed.)(1992) *Feminism and psychoanalysis: a critical dictionary*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

McNay, L. (1992) *Foucault and feminism: power, gender and the self*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

## **Bibliography**

### **Books:**

- Aston, E. (1995) *An introduction to feminism and theatre*. London: Routledge.
- Aston, E., Harris, G. (2012) *A good night out for the girls: popular feminisms in contemporary theatre and performance*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Aston, E., Case S-E. (eds.)(2007) *Staging international feminisms*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Berger, J. (1972) *Ways of seeing*. London: Penguin.
- Brook, B. (1999) *Feminist perspectives on the body*. Essex: Pearson Education.
- Butler, J. (1993) *Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of sex*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1990) *Gender trouble*. London: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1999) *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. London: Routledge.
- Case. S-E. (2008) *Feminism and theatre*. (Reissued edn.) Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Case. S-E. (ed.)(1990) *Performing feminism: feminist critical theory*. London: The John Hopkins University Press.
- Counsell, C., Wolf, L. (eds.)(2001) *Performance analysis: an introductory coursebook*. London: Routledge.
- de Beauvoir, S. (1988) *The second sex*. London: Pan Books.
- Dolan, J. (1991) *The feminist spectator as critic*. USA: University of Michigan Press.
- Grabe, S., Ward, L., Hyde, J. (2008) 'The role of the media in body image concerns among women: a meta-analysis of experimental and correlational studies, *Psychological Bulletin*, 134(3), pp.460-476.
- Greer, G. (2006) *The female eunuch*. London: Harper Perennial.

- Greer, G. (1999) *The whole woman*. London: Transworld Publishers.
- Hakim, C. (2011) *Honey money: the power of erotic capital*. London: Penguin Group.
- Harris, G. (1999) *Staging femininities: performance and performativity*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Holland, J., Ramazanoglu, C., Sharpe, S., Thomson, R. (2004) *The male in the head: young people, heterosexuality and power*. (Second edn.) London: Tufnell Press.
- Howell, A. (1999) *The analysis of performance art: a guide to its theory and practice*. Amsterdam: OPA.
- Jenainati, C., Grove, J. (2010) *Introducing feminism: a graphic guide*. Cambridge: Icon Books.
- Juno, A., Vale, V. (eds)(1991) *Angry women*. London: Re/Search Publications.
- Kirby, V. (2006) *Judith Butler: live theory*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Kirkwood, L. (2012) *NSFW*. London: Nick Hern Books.
- Levy, A. (2005) *Female chauvinist pigs: women and the rise of raunch culture*. New York: Free Press.
- Macdonald, M. (1995) *Representing women: myth of femininity in the popular media*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Moran, C. (2011) *How to be a woman*. Croyden: The Random House Group.
- Mulvey, L. (2001) Visual pleasure and narrative cinema, in Durham, G. and Kellner, D. (eds.) *Media and cultural studies: key works*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp.342-352.
- Pavis, P. (2003) *Analyzing performance: theatre, dance, and film*. USA: University of Michigan Press.
- Penny, L. (2010) *Meat market: female flesh under capitalism*. Hants: O Books.
- Phoca, S., Wright, R. (1999) *Introducing post-feminism*. Duxford: Icon Books.
- Power, N. (2009) *One dimensional woman*. Hants: O Books.
- Price, J., Shildrick, M. (eds.)(1999) *Feminist theory and the body*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Riviere, J. (1986) Womanliness as masquerade, in Burgin, V., Donald, J., Kaplan, C. (eds.) *Formations of fantasy*. London: Methuen and co.
- Schneider, R. (1997) *The explicit body in performance*. London: Routledge.

Shepherd, S. (2006) *Theatre, body and pleasure*. London: Routledge.

Walters, M. (2005) *Feminism: a very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Walter, N. (2010) *Living dolls: the return of sexism*. London: Virago.

Weitz, R. (ed)(1998) *The politics of women's bodies: sexuality, appearance, and behaviour*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wright, E. (ed.)(1992) *Feminism and psychoanalysis: a critical dictionary*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

McNay, L. (1992) *Foucault and feminism: power, gender and the self*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

### **Reports:**

American Psychological Association. (2007) *APA task force on the sexualisation of girls: executive summary*. [Online] USA: APA: Available at: [www.apa.org/pi/wpo/sexualization.html](http://www.apa.org/pi/wpo/sexualization.html) (Accessed: 11<sup>th</sup> January 2013).

American Psychological Association. (2010) *APA task force on the sexualisation of girls: full report*. [Online] USA: APA: Available at: <http://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report-full.pdf> (Assessed: 24<sup>th</sup> August 2013).

Thorpe, J. (2008) *Harmful scripts. Raunch femininity as the disguised reiteration of emphasized feminine goals: an exploration of young women's accounts of sexually explicit forms of public expression*. Unpublished masters degree thesis, University of Rhodes.

### **Journals:**

Bale, C. (2011) 'Raunch or romance? Framing and interpreting the relationship between sexualized culture and young people's sexual health', *Sex Education*, 11(3), pp.303-313. *Academic Search Elite* [Online]. Available at: <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.brums.ac.uk/login.aspx?direct=true&db=afh&AN=63634465&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2013).

Bouchard, G. (2012) 'Skin deep: female flesh in the UK live art since 1999', *Contemporary Theatre Review*, 22(1), pp.94-105. [Online]. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10486801.2011.645230> (Accessed: 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2013).

Haysom, L. (2012) 'Women's sexuality and pornography', *Agenda*, 26(3), pp.1-7.

Krassas, J., Blauwkamp, M., Wesselink, P. (2001) 'Boxing Helena and corseting Eunice: sexual rhetoric in cosmopolitan and playboy magazines', *Sex Roles*, 44(11), pp.751-771.

*Academic OneFile* [Online]. Available at: <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.brum.beds.ac.uk/login.aspx> (Accessed: 17<sup>th</sup> January 2013).

Nally, C. (2009) 'Grrrly hurly burly: neo-burlesque and the performance of gender', *Textual Practice*, 25(4), pp.621-643. *Academic Search Elite* [Online]. Available at: <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.brum.beds.ac.uk/login.aspx?direct=true&db=afh&AN=43429763&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> November 2012).

Schooler, D., Ward, L.M. (2006) 'Average joes: men's relationships with media, real bodies, and sexuality', *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 7(1), pp.27-41. *psycARTICLES* [Online]. Available at: <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.brum.beds.ac.uk/login.aspx?direct=true&db=pdh&AN=2006-02952-003&site=eds-live&scope=site> (Accessed: 24<sup>th</sup> November 2012).

#### **Newspaper and Magazine Articles:**

Adams, T. (2012) 'Boys are force-fed this very plastic sexuality on a mass scale', *The Guardian*, 21<sup>st</sup> October [Online]. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/oct/21/lucy-kirkwood-nsfw-pornography-play-interview> (Accessed: 14<sup>th</sup> October 2013).

Anon. (2013) 'We love our real bodies', *Now*, August, p.18.

Billington, M. (2012) 'NSFW – review', *The Guardian*, 1<sup>st</sup> November [Online]. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2012/nov/01/nsfw-review> (Accessed: 14<sup>th</sup> October 2013).

Billington, M. (2008) 'Tinderbox', *The Guardian*, 29<sup>th</sup> April [Online]. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2008/apr/29/theatre4> (Accessed 23rd August 2013).

Gardner, L. (2010) 'Trilogy', *The Guardian*, 13<sup>th</sup> January [Online]. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2010/jan/13/trilogy-review> (Accessed: 6<sup>th</sup> June 2013).

Spencer, C. (2012) 'NSFW, Royal court, review', *The Telegraph*, 1<sup>st</sup> November [Online]. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-reviews/9648662/NSFW-Royal-Court-review.html> (Accessed: 14<sup>th</sup> October 2013).

#### **Organisational and Personal Internet Sites:**

Changing Minds (2002-2013) *Mirror phase*. Available at: [http://changingminds.org/disciplines/psychoanalysis/concepts/mirror\\_phase.htm](http://changingminds.org/disciplines/psychoanalysis/concepts/mirror_phase.htm) (Accessed: 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013).

Clean Break Theatre Company (2013) *Clean break mission*. Available at: <http://www.cleanbreak.org.uk/mission> (Accessed: 17<sup>th</sup> February 2012).

GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN (2013) *Getinthebackofthevan: are you going to get in the back of the van?* Available at: <http://www.getinthebackofthevan.com/> (Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> May 2013).

Green, N. (2013) *Nic Green's Website*. Available at: <http://www.nicgreen.org.uk/> (Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> May 2013).

Green, N. (2013) *Trilogy*. Available at: <http://nicgreen.wix.com/trilogy> (Accessed 10<sup>th</sup> May 2013).

Trueman, M. (2012) *Review: big hits, soho theatre*. Available at: <http://matttrueman.co.uk/2012/09/review-big-hits-soho-theatre.html> (Accessed: 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013).

#### **Live Performances:**

*Big Hits* by GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN (2012) Directed by GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN. [The Junction, Cambridge. 14<sup>th</sup> February].

*Big Hits* by GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN (2013) Directed by GETINTHEBACKOFTHEVAN. [Almeida Theatre, London. 25<sup>th</sup> July].

*How to Become a Cupcake* by Lauren Barri Holstein (2013) Directed by Lauren Barri Holstein. [Arnolfini, Bristol. 15<sup>th</sup> February].

*Motherland* by Vincent Dance Theatre (2012) Directed by Charlotte Vincent. [The Junction, Cambridge. 17<sup>th</sup> October].

#### **Recording of Live Performance:**

A copy of the live performance of *Trilogy* was obtained from Nic Green. Because of the nature of this performance and agreement was signed to ensure that the content of the recording would not be shared.



