

**How is Western-Influenced Contemporary Performance Practice in Dialogue  
with Fifth Wave Feminism?**

An MA Dissertation Presented by Shannon Mulvey

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## ABSTRACT

In response to a number of political demonstrations, for example the Women's March (2017), Sophie Walker leader of the Women's Equality Party released a statement detailing the launch of a fifth wave of feminism. This dissertation explores the ways in which fifth wave feminism and performance practice are intrinsically linked, through the usage of performance as a medium to instigate live encounters and embodied actions.

The recent rise in attendance at political protests can be traced back to the use of online platforms such as social media being galvanised to provide mass exposure for feminist activist actions. However, this study highlights the importance of transcending the online world in order to activate embodied engagement in the live space and therefore actualise the intentions of fifth wave feminism. Through an analysis of fifth wave feminism in chapter one, this research looks at the aims of the movement and illustrates its development through a construction process as a result of contemporary socio-political feminist discourse, as well as events such as the aforementioned political action.

The emphasis upon the *process* of creating fifth wave feminism illuminated in this study, demonstrates parallels with the creation processes used in performance-making. Thus the intention of this dissertation is to explore the process of developing the movement, as well as the dialogical relationship between fifth wave feminism, activism and contemporary feminist performance practice. Performance practice has been used as a methodology for discovering feminism throughout history, for example during the Suffragettes movement and throughout the Women's Liberation movement, whether it was through the art itself or as a political protest. Through case study examinations of three feminist performance events and an analysis of a practical investigation, *The Anarchist Feminist Party* (2018), this dissertation argues that performance is being used as a medium to initiate live encounters whilst also using the tools of our feminist predecessors to build upon their momentum.

The discussion considers intersectionality, diversity and inclusivity as primary concerns for fifth wave feminism and looks at the ways in which practitioners are actioning these concerns and how we can further effectuate these considerations within the movement.

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# HOW IS PERFORMANCE PRACTICE IN DIALOGUE WITH FIFTH WAVE FEMINISM?

## INTRODUCTION

On 21 January 2017 160,000 protestors took to the streets of London for a Women's March to send a bold message to Donald Trump on his first day in office, that women's rights are human rights (Women's March, 2017). In reaction to this momentous response, Sophie Walker, leader of the Women's Equality Party, announced the launch of a programme of activist camps across the UK called *Feminism 5.0*. In Walker's launch statement she explains:

Feminism is moving into a new, fifth wave, as hard-won freedoms are under attack across the globe, and the prospect of a gender-equal future looks more fragile than ever before. Women are beginning to organise and act, and Feminism 5.0 will give these new activists the tools they need to push forward...Our Feminism 5.0 camps will build on the momentum generated by January's actions, carrying that protest through to political power. (Walker, 2017)

In the section above, it becomes clear that by using the term '5.0' Walker is implying that she is aiming for a fifth wave of feminism, a movement currently being shaped by contemporary feminist discourse. In chapter one I will examine how Walker defines fifth wave feminism. I will consider the previous waves of feminism and the ways in which the wave narrative has have been questioned within feminist discourse.<sup>1</sup> From this evaluation, I will illustrate my reasoning and justification for focusing upon the waves and the emergence of a fifth wave of feminism.

It is also important to highlight that the fifth wave movement is currently going under a process of construction, which is what this dissertation will focus upon. It is a kind of devising project, which has equivalences with the creation processes used in performance-making. In the *Feminism 5.0* camps, Walker is creating a space in which the online activism and organisation can transfer into embodied action, bringing activists together into the live space. The aim of this dissertation is to explore the emerging relationship between fifth wave feminism and Western-influenced contemporary performance practice, and how the two are in dialogue as a result of being shaped by contemporary feminist, socio-political discourse, I will do this by examining both in terms of form and content.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'wave narrative' was coined by Marsha Lear (1968) in order to differentiate between US, UK and European women's liberation movements from the women's suffrage movement (Gamble, 2006).

Performance practice has been used as a tool by feminist artists and performance practitioners since the late 1960s to manifest the potential for art's political potency against the male-dominated art world (Heddon, 2008 p20) and before that by the suffragettes.<sup>2</sup> During the late 1960s and 1970s performance began to intersect with the actions of the consciousness-raising movement (Heddon, 2008 p20). Through this discussion-based activism, feminist artists began to find a strategy in which they could generate material for performance. This was done by considering their identities in these sessions and using their art to question and dismantle systems of oppression (Heddon, 2008 p.23), which illustrates that the power intrinsic with performance for instigating a dialogue became a vital tool for feminist activism (Heddon, 2008 p.23). Performance art has always been at the forefront of figuring out what feminism is, whether it was through the art itself or as a political protest. At various points in this dissertation, I will be reflecting on how Western-influenced contemporary performance work is building upon those previous actions and how it is still being played out today to dialogically connect with fifth wave feminist concerns. By focusing upon Western-influenced contemporary performance practice and activism, the intention is to highlight the influences of the previous waves and continuity of the feminist movement. However, whilst looking at these aspects, I will also be engaging with a critique of the waves. In doing so, this dissertation aims to highlight the on-going work that needs to be done in order to construct fifth wave feminism as an inclusive and intersectional movement. This analysis is present in the choice of case studies included in this research: the first case study looks at Martha Wilson's event *Art Rising* and traces the trajectory of online activism into the live space within the context of Trump America; the case study on Pussy Riot illustrates the third wave feminist influences on the Russian bands practice; the final case study examines the work of Lauren Barri Holstein and the performance methodologies the artist uses to highlight post-feminist culture in current feminism and how she 'inhabits the world of pop-feminism...in order to unmake it' (Mulvey and Holstein, 2018).<sup>3</sup>

Presently there is a relatively small body of literature that is concerned with fifth wave feminism, due to its conception being so recent, but there are examples of where the movement is headed. Current discussions of contemporary feminism offer material from

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<sup>2</sup> The Suffragettes were members of women's organisations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries which advocated for women to gain the right to vote in public elections. Groups such as the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and the National Union of Women's Suffrage became well known for their advocacy of women's suffrage (Opdycke, 2000).

<sup>3</sup> In the interview conducted with Lauren Barri Holstein, included at the end of this dissertation, the artist uses the terms 'pop-feminism' and 'post-feminist' interchangeably to refer to the notion that current feminism is being shaped by popular culture and commodity capitalism (Mulvey and Holstein, 2018).

which to deduce how a fifth wave might be defined, and what its key aims are. For example, Sara Ahmed, author of *Living a Feminist Life* (2017), focuses on the provision of a new form of feminism which disassembles what has already been established and moves toward a more egalitarian mode of feminist practice. Ahmed writes:

To build feminist dwellings, we need to dismantle what has already been assembled; we need to ask what it is we are against, what it is we are for, knowing full well that this we is not a foundation but what we are working toward. (Ahmed, 2017 p.10)

While Ahmed suggests dismantling preceding notions of feminist practice and starting over, Walker implies a continuation of what has already been established and building upon its momentum. This indicates a need to understand the current identity of feminism and how it might be formed in consideration with present feminist discourse. This study aims to provide new insights into what Walker has identified as a fifth wave and to contribute a deeper understanding of the movement in relation to contemporary feminist performance practice. Throughout this dissertation I will be using literature from theorists such as Judith Butler, bell hooks, Rene Eddo-Lodge and Sara Ahmed to examine the ways in which performance practice is being used to respond to the activism presently happening globally.

The overall structure of the dissertation takes the form of four chapters. It begins by exploring how fifth wave feminism might be defined in chapter one and draws out its performative aspects by discussing the Women's March and the political actions it has triggered. It will then go on to discuss how these recent feminist movements are in dialogue with Western-influenced contemporary feminist performance practice and will do so in two ways. Firstly, by using case studies in chapter two. Secondly, through my own practice, I curated a performance event called *The Anarchist Feminist Party* which was designed in order to further determine my research question by facilitating the practice of it.

The event comprised of contributions and performances from artists who are currently using their mediums to create a dialogue between fifth wave feminist concerns and performance practice. The appearance and delivery of the event was shaped by the idea of anarchy and enabled me to experiment with this concept theatrically by, for example, removing hierarchy and creating an element of self-organisation during the event. I was determined to create an inclusive, safe space and therefore all performers who identify as women or non-binary were welcome. The results of my practical investigation will be examined through a reflective analysis in chapter three. I have also conducted interviews with feminist performance practitioners, Lois Weaver and Lauren Barri Holstein, and the writer of *Theatre and Feminism* (2015) Kim Solga in order to contribute to an understanding of fifth wave



feminism. Excerpts from these interviews are included within this research project and full interviews can be found in the appendices. To conclude, I will draw on what I have learned from these perspectives to examine the impact of current feminist political activism on performance practice, and how performance is in dialogue with fifth wave feminism.

## CHAPTER ONE: FIFTH WAVE FEMINISM

The Women's March (21 January 2017) saw protestors organise and participate in political demonstrations across the globe 'to spread a message of inclusiveness and positivity in the wake of the rising tide of intolerance and division that has emerged during the US Election' (Evening Standard, 2017). London saw 160,000 protestors and 400 organisations in partnership with the marches, and in London, the Women's Equality Party was one of the groups involved (Evening Standard, 2017). After witnessing the vast global solidarity and momentum of political action, Sophie Walker, leader of the Women's Equality Party identified the emergence of a fifth wave of feminism which sparked during the Women's Marches worldwide. Walker states that we are moving into a 'new wave of feminism in which women are beginning to organise and act' (Walker, 2017).

Before I begin to define fifth wave feminism, it is crucial to reflect upon the regular questioning by feminist scholars who view the wave narrative as unhelpful and limiting to the wider progression of the movement. A number of feminists have identified the problematic nature of the narrative, suggesting that it has: induced generational divides (Evans and Chamberlain, 2014); privileged western feminism (Hemmings, 2005); excluded feminists of colour (Springer, 2002) and implies periods of inactivity (Evans and Chamberlain, 2014). However, some have found it a useful method to identify the chronological structure and ideological development of the feminist movement (Evans and Chamberlain, 2014). Although this research is focused upon western feminist practice, it recognises the critical flaws within the mainstream feminist narrative and the incapacity to capture the complexities of every individual's fight for equality. This point can be identified during the original goals of third wave feminism, which initially sought to challenge the domination and centralisation of the experiences of upper middle-class white women (Walker, 1992). Though as the wave developed, it soon became synonymous with white, young women from well-educated backgrounds (hooks, 1994). Furthermore, the rise of post-feminism in the 1980s triggered a reaction against the ideology of second and third wave feminism. Post-feminists believed that women have achieved the goals set up by the second wave and highlighted the inconsistencies and absences that remained within the movement (hooks, 1996). Thus the term post-feminism was used to describe the backlash against the feminist movement (hooks, 1996). However, focusing on waves of feminism can also provide us with the opportunity to instigate continuity, solidarity and an inter-wave dialogue. This approach can facilitate the breakdown of generational divides; a critical dialogue analysing and improving upon the contradictions of the past; and an inter-wave feminist solidarity. Therefore, this

dissertation aims to demonstrate how fifth wave feminists are using the wave narrative to build upon the work of their predecessors and to consistently engage with inclusive practices. As a result of this ongoing work, this research aims to depict fifth wave feminism as in process rather than fixed.

In order to understand fifth wave feminism, it is essential to examine the preceding fourth wave and the events which signalled the transition from fourth to fifth wave feminism. From 2011-2013 feminist activity on social media began to surge, and the internet transformed into a space for feminist networks to organise marches, rallies, and protests on a global scale (Chamberlain, 2016 p.458). The internet became a forum to organise political activism, and feminists began to create actions in response to this impetus all over the world. This internet phenomenon became known as the fourth wave of feminism and was characterised by its political action taking place predominantly online (Chamberlain, 2016 p.458).

Many scholars argue that fourth wave feminism is an extended, though digitised, version of third wave feminism and that the Internet itself has enabled the shift from third to fourth wave feminism (Munro 2013). The Internet has facilitated the creation of 'call-out' culture, which allows users to challenge displays of sexism or misogyny through online platforms (Munro 2013). This illustrates a continuation of the influences of third wave feminism in regard to the emphasis upon micropolitics and challenging the everyday experiences of sexism and misogyny (Munro 2013). However, the existence of a fourth wave has been disputed by some scholars who propose that an increase in Internet usage does not indicate a new wave of feminism (Munro 2013). Nevertheless, this does suggest that technology has enabled access to issues on a far-reaching expanse and thus has facilitated the creation of global communities of feminist activists.

Prudence Chamberlain identifies that the infinite possibilities and opportunities available to feminists through social media have made political organisation an easier task, as she explains in her article *Affective Temporality: Towards a Fourth Wave* (2016):

Social media websites allow for activism to be organised rapidly and efficiently without feminists being required to occupy the same physical space as one another. (Chamberlain, 2016 p.458)

This illustrates how digital media has become a vital communicative device for feminist activists to stay connected, mobilise the movement and recruit new members (Jouët 2018). Furthermore, it demonstrates how digital media has also contributed to the rise of new leadership roles and organisational practices (Jouët 2018). As Judy Wajcman explained in *Feminist Theories of Technology* (2009) while many feminists of the early second wave

feared the role of technology in reproducing patriarchy, cyberfeminist scholars such as Donna Haraway (1991) and Sadie Plant (1997) celebrated digital technologies as a liberatory device for women (Wajcman 2009). Many feminist activist Facebook groups today such as *Bossy*, for example, operate with an egalitarian approach allowing members to post freely without restriction.<sup>4</sup> However, the group is moderated by four administrators who oversee the posts and intercept if necessary. Often this is the case in online groups with a large number of members (Jouët 2018) and although many feminists activists are working towards non-hierarchical modes of practice, this can prove difficult in some online spaces. Nevertheless, some online feminist activist groups are utilising their member's skills in order to manage particular facets of their group agenda. For example, many young feminist activists who grew up in a generation of mastering digital skills have become experts in producing visual narratives online (Jouët 2018). By using images and video content, for example, these activists are employing their skills to increase online engagement with feminist issues (Jouët 2018) and mobilise their activism beyond the digital space, a practice which I will return to in chapter three.

When feminist activist groups make events and campaigns using their online platform, the actions are then echoed into the public sphere (Jouët 2018). This therefore indicates that digital media is a platform in which to trigger a form of performative activism in the live space and thus has enabled an increase in activist actions face to face. However, there have been many political complications with some social media sites like Facebook for example, which impacts on the way feminist activists navigate these online spaces. In early 2018 it was reported that the company Cambridge Analytica had harvested the personal data of millions of Facebook users' profiles without their consent (Lewis and Hilder 2018). This information was used to create target adverts for political purposes, most notably the Trump presidential campaign, and thus influence public opinion (Lewis and Hilder 2018). As Thérèse Tierney writes in *The Public Space of Social Media: Connected Cultures of the Network Society* (2013) although the Internet provides possibilities to connect communities, there is not enough recognition of the power structures which lie behind the screen (Tierney 2013). Therefore further acknowledgment and understanding of the data mining and surveillance practices conducted through social media sites is necessary for activists to protect their campaigns. One example of an online feminist resource available is the *#FemFuture: Online Revolution* report conducted by Courtney E. Martin and Vanessa

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<sup>4</sup> 'A Facebook feminist activist forum for women and non-binary people in film/theatre/performing arts' (King et al. 2019)

Valenti. The report seeks out new methodologies of strengthening feminist online alliances and provides recommendations to create an 'infrastructure of support for these important voices' (Martin and Valenti 2013). I will return to the ways in which the participants of *The Anarchist Feminist Party* engaged with social media to challenge political complications online in chapter three.

The emergence of fifth wave feminism occurred due to the increase of political demonstrations in 2016, mainly because of social media providing a quick and easy method of mass organisation in response to specific political events. As outlined in the discussion above, many scholars have argued that the wave narrative has some limitations which can cause interwave conflict to arise and exclusionary ideologies to dominate the movement (Evans and Chamberlain 2015). However, fifth wave feminism seeks to support the continuity of the feminist movement by building upon the achievements of previous waves and placing inclusivity and attention to the discourse on privilege at the core of the agenda. Fifth wave feminism is also about online action transferring into embodied action, bringing online activism into the live space. This illustrates one of the ways fifth wave feminism is building upon the actions and efforts of the fourth wave, whilst also rigorously questioning and challenging how the fifth wave can be more inclusive and intersectional. An essential factor in the formation of fifth wave feminism has been the online solidarity triggered by the exposure of sexual harassment and assault across multiple industries. In light of the most recent allegations of sexual assault and misconduct by influential members of the arts industry such as Harvey Weinstein, Max Stafford-Clark, and Kevin Spacey the world has seen a rapid rise in solidarity amongst victims of sexual harassment and abuse. Viral campaigns which responded to this unanimity, such as #MeToo was used on Facebook by 4.7 million people around the world within 24 hours (Main, 2017). A number of high profile celebrities who engaged with the hashtag then went on to speak publicly about their experiences, which prompted a number of further actions to occur. One instance was at the Golden Globes Awards ceremony, where many guests arrived dressed in black out of solidarity with the #MeToo movement and the victims of sexual violence (*One Year Of #Metoo: A Timeline Of Events | DW | 15.10.2018*, 2018). Following this, over 300 women from the US film industry started the foundation Time's Up, a Legal Defense Fund which supports the payment of legal costs for those who have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace (*TIME's UP Legal Defense Fund*, 2017).

In wearing a costume of sorts in the form of black attire, the embodiment of this activism interweaves with a performative technique. The cross-pollination between political activism and performance methodology in order to heighten political change has been a strategy

used by protesters since the early forms of demonstration (Fuentes, 2017). As Marcela A. Fuentes explains in her article *Performance, Politics, and Protest* (2017):

Contemporary activism in both its 'live' and online deployments exposes the intertwined relationship between aesthetics and politics. Though historically there have been numerous examples of tactical uses of embodied behaviour within so-called civil disobedience events—for example, Gandhi's peaceful sit-ins, Rosa Parks' refusal to comply with segregationist rules (Fuentes, 2017).

As Fuentes demonstrates, protests rely heavily on uses of the body to communicate across borders and languages (Fuentes 2017). Performance practice offers an alternative reflection on the politics of embodiment (Fuentes 2017) and by doing so it can be used as a resistance strategy, to mobilise the politics of identity within the framework of activism. The dimension of the internet adds a viral documentation which is accessible on a global expanse and has now become an integral component of not only the activism itself but the performance of activism.

In this dissertation, the terms 'Live art', 'performance art' and 'contemporary performance practice' are used interchangeably to refer to the body of work and methodologies of the artists referred to in this study. For example, when looking at the work of Lauren Barri Holstein I will be using the terms 'performance art' and 'Live Art'. Firstly, this is due to the artist referring to their work with this terminology, but also because of the style, content and form of the work being explored.<sup>5</sup> The Live Art Development Agency describes some of the methodologies used by Live Artist and performance artists in the following ways:

In a rejection of objects and markets, [performance artists] turned to their body as the site and material of their practice and ...broke the traditions of the circumstance and expectations of theatre...Live Art has proved to be a potent site, where the disenfranchised and disembodied become visible, and where the politics of difference are contested. (*What Is Live Art? - Live Art Development Agency* 2018)

Many of the artists discussed in this dissertation employ performance strategies which align this description. It also demonstrates that these performance methodologies share many similarities with the practice of activism and protest. Therefore it is essential to explore these approaches to performance in order to further understand the dialogical relationship between the fifth wave feminist movement and western-influenced contemporary performance practice. The Live Art sector and experimental performance practice supplements the use of the body as a site for political provocation by instigating a dialogue, and in doing so, reinforces the idea that the embodiment involved in political activism is

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to the interview with Lauren Barri Holstein at the end of this dissertation.

inherently connected to performance practice. This notion is echoed in Jill Dolan's book *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre* (1997), where she accentuates the transformative experience of performance and its power to move the politics beyond the parameters of the theatre. Dolan expresses that theatre can be a place for social change through its openness to human interactions, which life outside of this 'no-place' prohibits (Dolan, 2017 p.36). Dolan illustrates that the theatre can provide a setting in which to create revolutionary change, whereby it becomes a separate space from the real world, and also a space for imagination to thrive and creation to take hold.

In the description of fifth wave feminism released by the Women's Equality Party, some aspects convey parallels with the creation processes used in performance practice. The Women's Equality Party are establishing a space to envision radical change through the creation of their feminist activist camps, Feminism 5.0. The magnitude of participation in the Women's Marches in 2017, provoked the Women's Equality Party to create dedicated camps in order to build upon the efforts achieved in the demonstration. As Walker explains:

Feminism 5.0...is the adaptive work that we have to do to change the world we live in. It is the breadth of the movement needed to dismantle structural inequalities, and it is the vehicle for our journey from protest to power. Feminism 5.0 is not yet written. It is the purpose and agency with which we will determine what the next wave of what feminism looks like (Walker, 2017).

It is through this description that Walker indicates the movement is currently undergoing a process of being created. This emphasis upon a 'process' has a synonymous connection to theatre practice when considering the concept of devising. It reveals a strategy which enables camp members to collectively generate a definition of the movement, and the tactic of devising becomes vital in order to outline its features. This suggests that fifth wave feminism will be characterised by the events that occur during this 'process' at the camps, together with any activist-based works that happen externally, this includes performance work and Live Art that are in dialogue with fifth wave feminism. In addition to this, the implementation of a camp to facilitate the process reflects an environment comparable to a rehearsal room in which to construct the fifth wave collectively, 'rehearse' identities and to 'practice' feminism in a safe space. In Deidre Heddon's book *Devising Performance* (2006), she describes the origination of the word 'devising' in relation to performance making. Equivalencies can be identified in the strategies outlined for the Feminism 5.0 camps, again highlighting the performative attributes of fifth wave feminist activism:

When used in non-theatrical settings, 'devising' suggests the craft of making within existing circumstances, planning, plotting, contriving and tangentially inventing...At the core of all

devising or collaborative creation is a process of generating performance. (Heddon, 2006 p.21)

Both Heddon and Walker demonstrate that the process is the vital phase in which actions are embodied and plans are imagined. Therefore, Heddon and Walker illustrate that defining a political movement can be through the process in which the creation of the movement takes place. The process becomes the laboratory for invention and the movement becomes embodied by the actions that occur during this period. These definitions by Heddon and Walker suggest a process of building upon already fixed circumstances, which is a key aspect in the development of fifth wave feminism.

To conclude, intersectional feminist incentives are beginning to underpin fifth wave feminist praxis and as our awareness increases, our inclusivity and sensitivities also start to become analogous. The rise in trans theatre is an indication that we are moving towards performance which reflects the complexities of gender and the diversity of ethnicities, class and abilities presented in these stories. This concept is reminiscent of the ideas presented by bell hooks in her literature on feminist discourse when addressing the whiteness of western feminism. hooks identifies that feminism has been saturated with the presence of white, middle-class voices particularly during the second wave. When discussing the contemporary feminist cultural discourse in *I-D magazine* (2017), hooks illustrates that the major intervention black women, and women of colour, have made to contemporary feminism has been the focus on intersectionality (I-d, 2017). It is the perseverance to make audiences listen to their narrative, that shows fifth wave feminists are utilising the ideologies presented by their predecessors, to reinforce an inclusionary movement and to build upon the achievements of preceding feminists in both performance and activism. However, In order to truly employ an intersectional approach to feminism it is vital that those in privileged positions due to gender, race, or other factors make space for those who are heard less often and use their platforms to elevate their comrades. It becomes fundamental that fifth wave feminists consistently question how inclusive their practices are so that the movement does not become exclusively for white, upper-class, able-bodied, cis, straight women as it has done so in the past.

In my next chapter, I will be forming case studies which analyse three performance events that occurred in 2017. I will be looking at the ways in which these performances and fifth wave feminism are in dialogue in each of these events.



## CHAPTER TWO: CASE STUDIES

In the following case studies, I will be looking at the ways in which various theatre-makers are creating work which is in dialogue with fifth wave feminism and in doing so, I attempt to illuminate the complex back-and-forth between socio-political discourse, activism, and performance-making. I will be looking at the interchange between these areas and how it is marked by constant questioning, with art and life holding each other accountable. As mentioned in chapter one, I will be referring to elements of fifth wave feminist practice which have become a devising project as a result of being shaped by contemporary feminist discourse. The following is a list of the examples I will be using in the case studies: the protest performance project *Art Rising*; Russian feminist punk performance collective Pussy Riot; and American performance artist Lauren Barri Holstein.

### CASE STUDY ONE: HOW IS FIFTH WAVE FEMINISM INFLUENCING AND SHAPING ART RISING?

Since Donald Trump's election as President of the United States in 2017, budget cuts in the US have become increasingly severe. One of the worst affected sectors is the arts and heritage, with programs like The National Endowment for the Arts threatened with an eighty percent budget cut (Hooton, 2017). In response to this, some groups are taking action: for example, Caterina Bartha curated the feminist performance action *Art Rising* (2017) at the Trump Tower Public Garden, June 14, 2017. This event provided a platform for artists to speak out, not only against the budget cuts but also the sexist, racist and homophobic rhetoric which has saturated Trump's election campaign (Neiwert, 2017). When *Art Rising* occurred, there were various features of the performance action such as online organisation, participant diversity and a chance for contribution which suggested that it was in sympathy with the aims of fifth wave feminism and that these elements played a critical role in shaping the event itself. The performance began when ten women, diverse in their ethnicity and race, joined hands and formed a 'human wall against misogyny' (Steinhauer, 2016). They wore jumpsuits with bricks printed upon them, each brick contained texts such as 'Bimbo' and 'Grab her by the pussy', all of the comments reported to have been uttered by the US president (Steinhauer, 2016). They remained in position for the next hour and a half as seven presentations addressing the matter were given by performance artists, musicians, actors, and activists (Steinhauer, 2016).

*Art Rising* utilised the Internet not only as a device for increasing their exposure but also as a platform to intensify the effectiveness of their offline actions. The organisation leading up

to the event, which predominantly took place online, provided a digital tool which enabled *Art Rising* to efficiently circulate information about the event and therefore optimise their internal organisation to accomplish a widespread impact (Micó and Casero-Ripollés, 2013 p.858). The event was organised as part of a series of direct actions hosted by the campaign group #TakeTrumpTower, a hashtag title which could be used interchangeably as a trending hashtag on social media platforms as well as a direct link to their website. The link which takes you to their collective page offers the option to add the date to your 'iCal' or 'gCal', a calendar application which is linked to Google or Apple products, as well as the option to instantaneously 'share' the page on a wide range of social media sites at the click of an icon. The description of the event states that you must RSVP on Facebook, which implied that the social media site was being used to provide a method of estimating the number of attendees, as well as creating an online collective space for dialogue before the event occurred in the live space.

However, as crucial as the online communication became in the organisation of the event, the emphasis upon the action came from the gathering of bodies into the live space. When reflecting on the effects of digital technology on performance practice, Aston and Harris illustrate in *Performance Practice and Process* (2008) that it is still the human element of communication which becomes integral to these kinds of performances (Aston and Harris et al, 2008 p.44). Therefore, it is the interaction between online activism and offline actions transferred into the live space that show a sensibility in line with fifth wave feminism. In an excerpt from Paris, co-artistic director of *Curious Theatre Company*, she expands upon Aston and Harris' notion explaining:

Technology is simply the campfire around which we now tell our stories...but the salient point, as far as I'm concerned, is that the common denominator of both sending and receiving still resides in living, breathing human bodies (Aston and Harris et al, 2008 p.44)

In addition to this, *Art Rising* exemplified that the identity of the bodies is what determined the political energy of the message communicated. This being a message of diversity, intersectionality and solidarity, which again remains in sympathy with the aims of fifth wave feminism. Notably, the 'human wall of misogyny' stayed in place throughout the entirety of the performance presentations, projecting a living reminder that these voices must not be silenced in the fifth wave feminist movement. As Maggie B. Gale would argue in *Resolute Presence, Fugitive Moments, and the Body in Women's Protest Performance* (2015) their unyielding presence generates disruption, through the placement of their bodies within an environment which has previously fostered the oppression of them as women in public spaces (Gale, 2015 p.313). As feminist scholar, Sandra Lee Bartky states in *Writing on The Body: 'Foucault, Femininity and the Modernisation of Patriarchal Power'* (2006), the way in

which a woman's body interacts with a space can become 'an enclosure in which she feels herself positioned and by which she is confined' (Conboy et al, 2006 p.129). And so, the participants in the 'human wall of misogyny' observed these patriarchal narratives inscribed into the architecture, specifically in reference to Trump's previous actions, and used the presence of their bodies to disrupt and challenge their confines, using the architecture that surrounds them to accentuate their message of solidarity. As Sara Ahmed writes in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017), this indication of solidarity comes with the acknowledgement that although the participants' lived experiences may differ, their fight towards equality remains united. Ahmed writes:

Solidarity does not assume that our struggles are the same struggles, or that our pain is the same pain, or that our hope is for the same future. Solidarity involves commitment, and work, as well as the recognition that even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground. (Ahmed, 2017 p.10)

The intention behind *Art Rising* using the Trump Tower as a location for their actions was to 'utilize the skyscraper as a living lab to educate voters and elected leaders about the risks of Trump's presidency' (#TakeTrumpTower, 2017) which could indicate a reason as to why this performance was feminist and not just a women's theatre project. Rosalind Coward's article *Are Women's Novel's Feminist Novels?* (1980), illuminates some of the differences between 'women's theatre' and 'feminist theatre', explaining that commonalities between women's experiences are not necessarily adequate grounds for the suggestion of unification. Coward explains that the feminist alliance comes from a group unified by political interest, not just its shared experiences (Coward, 1980 p.53).

Some of the key features of *Art Rising* can be traced back to the feminist theatre practice of the 1980s in the USA. As Charlotte Canning explains in *The Legacies of Feminist Theatres in the USA* (1996) the feminist theatre movement 'used spaces never architecturally intended to serve as theatres' (Canning, 1996 p.92). Canning also implied that details of performance work was communicated through word of mouth and often remained only within the feminist communities who shared similar experiences, such as class and race (Canning, 1996 p.92). Canning continued to explain that 'bringing in women who did not share their aesthetics or their experiences destabilized the artistic visions of the companies' (Canning, 1996 p.92) as there were no provisions for differences that could not be bridged without enormous changes (Canning, 1996 p.92). As suggested by Canning, word of mouth restricts the visibility of the performances to only certain networks and has potential to exclude intersections of the feminist community if they are not directly connected with the initiators in some way. Canning writes that feminist theatre companies began to break down during the 1980s, due to the changing attitudes towards the inclusion of intersectional feminist identities

contributing to the movement, which triggered momentous changes in the landscape of performance (Canning, 1996 p.92). In conjunction with some of the similarities stated by Canning, *Art Rising* tapped into the political potency of using the Trump Tower as a space to amplify their radical message. In relation to exposure, *Art Rising* used the possibilities of viral communication to extend their campaign to individuals outside of their personal networks, which shows that they have adopted one of fifth wave feminism's key principles of inclusivity. By using online communication, the group could evaluate the diversity of the individuals reached and therefore drive the campaign to target more marginalised groups with the intention of bringing them into the live space to actively participate. This signifies that *Art Rising* was influenced by fifth wave feminism's conscious attempt to include other intersects of identity, which do not prescribe to the white, middle-class, heterosexual, cis-gendered and able-bodied narrative, which has traditionally dominated the feminist movement. However, closer inspection of the event shows that some of the efforts connected with the politics of the space came at the price of accessibility. The action, which took place on the fifth floor of the Trump skyscraper, could have been problematic when considering the access needs of attendees. Also, for those who are unable to attend on the day, the group might have built upon the online tools used in the making process and harnessed its potential to live stream the event on social media or the collective's website. On a Wednesday lunchtime in the midtown Manhattan area, it is unlikely that this event would have the attendance of the expanse of intersections that exists within fifth wave feminism, considering the space is available 8am-10pm seven days a week. This raises questions about the potential conflict between maximum political impact and maximum accessibility and suggests that activism has a way to go to find creative alternatives that circumvent that tension.

A key part of fifth wave feminism is the enablement of agency and self-determination, which can also be concurrent with the sharing of resources. #TakeTrumpTower claims to promote self-autonomy by assisting the organisation of events, but also by creating a space for dialogue to happen in which spectators can actively participate (#TakeTrumpTower, 2017). The host group encourages participants to initiate their own events by providing support and resources, such as information on planning an event at the location. It describes itself as an open platform that anyone can be part of (#TakeTrumpTower.com), having volunteers with expertise in law, media relations, and photography (#TakeTrumpTower.com), the group offers the option to contact them if you require assistance planning an event. At the *Art Rising* event, lawyer Wylie Stecklow was on hand to represent the artists should they need assistance. The group was met with security staff who insisted the area was closed, in response, Stecklow had with him a copy of regulations outlining that the garden must be

open during the same hours as the building's stores and confirmed 'it's expressive speech activity protected by the First Amendment' (Steinhauer, 2016). This indicates that a collective unification is at work, which draws upon the contributor's expertise for the benefit of the political objective.

The performance itself invited and celebrated participation from the audience, which further enhanced the elements of liveness through spatial proximities, relationships, and bodies interacting in the space. Whilst performance artist Pat Oleszko, dressed as the statue of liberty, swung a beach ball modelled on the appearance of President Trump an incantatory chant of 'you've got to save the NEA' swept through the crowd (Steinhauer, 2016). Equally, when *Reverend Billy and the Stop Shopping Choir* sung alongside politician Robin Laverne Wilson, the accumulated crowd which increased to sixty people at its peak, began to join hands and sing 'keep your eyes on the prize, hold on, hold on' (Steinhauer, 2016). As mentioned above, these examples alone show spectators felt able and encouraged to interact and respond to the work as it was taking place. Although the staging area was initially demarcated at the beginning of the event, the final result was a mass of bodies chanting and moving in unison with another. The anticipated hierarchical structure and division between performers and spectators began to dissolve as the performance developed. *Art Rising* used these techniques in order to allow social commentary and invoke self-reflection in the spectators, which would initiate a continuation of the dialogue into their own worlds. Through the aforementioned examples, it could be understood that the discourse from the online event page had transcended into the live space, demonstrated through the physical participation of the spectators. To conclude, the online organisation of events such as this has the potential to mobilise interactions and political participation on a large scale. However, this level of engagement has to match the collective actions offline and in the live space in order to coincide with the aims of fifth wave feminism, as *Art Rising* has successfully proven. If fifth wave feminism suggests that the online momentum of feminist activism has now spilled into the live space, performance work has to imitate the accessibility, inclusion, and agency that the online platforms provide.

## CASE STUDY TWO: HOW IS FIFTH WAVE FEMINISM INFLUENCING AND SHAPING PUSSY RIOT'S PRACTICE?

Pussy Riot is a Russian feminist protest punk rock group who are known for staging unauthorised performances in public spaces (Moss, 2017 p.1049), in locations such as Red Square, for example. Pussy Riot is of interest to my analysis because of their affiliation with anarchy and feminist rebellion, which was a key concept in the practical section of this research. Pussy Riot's most notorious performance, *Punk Prayer* (2012), took place in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour and was the event which brought them international attention because it led to two band members' being arrested. On 17 November 2017, Pussy Riot performed their show *Riot Days* (2017) at Islington Assembly Hall in a retelling of *Punk Prayer*. *Riot Days* was also part of the exhibition *Art Riot: Post-Soviet Actionism* (2017), which was hosted by the Saatchi Gallery and was dedicated to Russian protest art over the past 25 years (SaatchiGallery.com, 2018). This case study will examine the ways in which Pussy Riot are intrinsically connected with the ideologies of fifth wave feminism and will assess the degree to which the aforementioned movement is shaping the band's body of work.

Pussy Riot's performances were created as a form of resistance against the laws in Russia, which the group perceived as discriminatory, and applied the principles of the Riot Grrrl movement to strengthen their message which I will expand upon later. The themes of the collective's lyrics include feminism and LGBTQI+ rights, and it is these subjects that categorically identify them as oppositional to the policies of the Russian President Vladimir Putin (*Art Riot: Post-Soviet Actionism*, 2017). By raising issues of feminism and LGBTQI+ rights, Pussy Riot inevitably had rebelled against the established socio-political, patriarchal regime and created an incident of international controversy by exposing the issues of injustice existing within the Russian Federation (Zabyelina and Ivashkiv, 2017). In justification of their actions, Pussy Riot said that they believed there was an authoritarian regime in Russia which caused them to become 'deprived of our basic right to participate in politics' (Zabyelina and Ivashkiv, 2018 p.3). They continued by explaining that the band only employ peaceful methods and use the striking metaphors in their songs only as artistic devices (Zabyelina and Ivashkiv, 2018 p.3). For example, the song *Punk Prayer*, which was performed at Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, has the line 'Freedom's phantom's gone to heaven, Gay Pride's chained and in detention...Don't upset his saint-ship ladies, stick to making love and having babies' (Rumens, 2012). When discussing their artistic 'devices', Pussy Riot has previously stated that their lineage is derived from the Western ideas of feminist protest particularly in reference to the Riot Grrrl movement of the 1990s.

Riot Grrrl combined feminist ideology and punk aesthetics to actively resist patriarchal hegemony (Dunn, 2014 p.317).<sup>6</sup>

The indication of fifth wave feminism not only comes from this idea of building upon the Riot Grrrl movement but also the distribution of the recordings of the performance actions through social media networks, which is the catalyst that sparked global attention. Although the original action occurred in 2012, the circulation of the online videos resulted in a spike of attention, which paved the way for their political impact online. Even if you were unable to witness the performance live you could view a recording on YouTube which illustrated that the intended audience was not just the churchgoers present at that moment but a larger cyber-audience (Dunn, 2014 p.317). The decision to further risk their incrimination by videoing their performance was not only to achieve a viral form of documentation but also to increase accessibility. An individual can view the action without leaving their home, regardless of access needs or geographical distance. This facilitated mass exposure to the work by reaching large groups of people directly through the Internet. When referring to their intentions behind viral accessibility, band member Nadezhda Tolokonnikova stated that they 'believe that our art should be accessible to everyone' (Pussy Riot, 2013) which is supported by the band's choice to perform in a range of diverse public spaces (Pussy Riot, 2013). The group had utilised their online presence by relocating their protest from physical to virtual spaces, which subsequently enabled them to elude political censorship (Zabyelina and Ivashkiv, 2018 p.3). The posting of the videos online gave them an international community which continued to support the group even after their detention in 2012 (Zabyelina and Ivashkiv, 2018 p.3). The international focus upon Pussy Riot also presented a form of transnational feminist collectivism, where feminists across the globe could support the needs of women in countries that are politically unstable or under threat from the regime of an extremely conservative government (Solga, 2016 p.36). Through the simplicity of a 'share' or 'like' on a social media site, transnational collectivism can signify a sense of solidarity between feminists, regardless of their country of origin. This viral communication enabled the group to connect with intersections of the feminist community which would have been absent to them if their performance was spread by word of mouth.

Although Pussy Riot successfully brought feminist issues to a wider and much more mainstream audience, their attentions have been centralised around the concerns of white,

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<sup>6</sup> The Riot Grrrl movement is traditionally associated with the third wave of feminism. The hybrid of political texts and distribution networks produced by feminists like the Riot Grrrls during the 1990s, are significant materials which contribute to the formation of third wave feminism (Garrison, 2000 p.141).

cis-gendered, women. This is particularly present in their influences which derive from third wave feminism, which as highlighted in chapter one, began as a wave which elevated the voices of women of colour but quickly became synonymous with the plight of white, young women from well-educated backgrounds. While the original focus on this particular section of women might be explained by the political context from which the early performances arose, the more recent iterations of their work do not show a great expansion of this focus. Pussy Riot is a group of four white women discussing issues of gender equality without regarding the other aspects of systematic injustice, for example, issues of class and race. However, fifth wave feminism requires individuals to embrace the struggles of all to construct a diverse, inclusive and intersectional movement. Reni Eddo-Lodge, the author of *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* (2017), explains that feminism involves a consideration of one's privilege and the ways in which it can enable structurally racist systems. In the online article *A Word to White Women* (2014), Eddo-Lodge says:

If you identify as feminist you must examine what it means to be white, and the problem of the dominance of a white feminism which presents itself as universal (Eddo-Lodge, 2014)

From Eddo-Lodge's writing, it could be implied that although Pussy Riot are using their recently acquired high profile for feminist activism, the location of their most recent performance and the selection of attendees show that the focus was centralised around a white, middle-class experience. The performance of *Riot Days* (2017) took place at Islington Assembly Hall, a grade II listed building on the affluent end of Upper Street in London. For a twenty-pound ticket, you could be standing amidst the mosh pit of a punk gig with top priced London IPA craft beer just a few meters away, not forgetting the range of expensive Pussy Riot merchandise framing the entrance to the venue. The middle-class audience which packed the venue was symptomatic of the performance collectives' choice to capitalise on their newly gained high profile identity and perform at a venue which has traditionally tailored to this faction of society. Yet contrastingly, one might argue that this was a premeditated tactic initiated by the group in order to intercept the privileged facets of society, the individuals who most require a confrontation with the realities of exclusion.

In the past, Pussy Riot have received criticism following their decision to perform in high profile venues yet the profits from the performances have often been donated to various charitable causes. Original Pussy Riot band member Yekaterina Samutsevich has previously stated 'We've always said our band would never be commercial. To an extent, it was created to fight commercialism' (Astrasheuskaya, 2012). Many celebrities, for example, Madonna and Bjork, have previously tried to sell clothing displaying the recognised imagery of the Pussy Riot brand which the band was allegedly unaware of. In response to this,



Samutsevich went on to explain that they would not be against the idea as long as the money is used to help ‘anyone who suffered from repressions as a result of their creative activity’ (IN, 2018). Indeed, the group themselves have previously donated the proceeds from the publication of their book *Riot Days* (2017) to support the Ukrainian film-maker Oleg Sentsov who was sentenced to twenty years in 2015 for planning terrorist attacks in Crimea, an accusation which was extensively described as fictitious or exaggerated by the European film community (Palveleva, 2014). This particular cause was also reintroduced by Alyokhina on the evening of the *Riot Days* performance, suggesting that the money gained from the performances is used to support people like Sentsov who are being punished for their creative expression in Russia. In an interview I conducted with Kim Solga, author of *Theatre and Feminism* (2015) we discussed the relationship between Pussy Riot’s recent public exposure and how it could be suggested that they are gaining financial advantage from their world tour Solga stated:

I think we do ourselves a disservice to imagine that you can escape the capitalist or patriarchal framework, given that Pussy Riot’s context is Russia, they also have a very different sense of what capitalism is. Russian capitalism is exploitative and powerful it makes social change sometimes for the worst. I don’t think there’s an outside of patriarchy or capitalism, I think there are ways to engage differently with them. (Solga, 2018)

This notion of navigating capitalism as a way of accelerating feminist advancement relates back to Pussy Riot’s influence from the *Riot Grrrl Manifesto* in regard to retrieving the means of production, but through accessing the institution.<sup>7</sup> This is particularly poignant when considering the associated immersive theatre performance *Inside Pussy Riot* (2017), which was created by the immersive theatre troupe *Les Enfants Terribles* and performed at the Saatchi Gallery to coincide with the *Art Riot: Post-Soviet Actionism* exhibition. The choice to exhibit the work at the aforementioned gallery, located on the Kings Road in Chelsea, already inscribes a form of economic marginalisation and exclusion. With a reputation for catering to the most privileged people in the world (Parkinson, 2018) the high-ticket prices, along with a sense of mutual elitism, could be perceived as providing both economic and

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<sup>7</sup> ‘BECAUSE us girls crave records and books and fanzines that speak to US that WE feel included in and can understand in our own ways.

BECAUSE we wanna make it easier for girls to see/hear each other's work so that we can share strategies and criticize-applaud each other.

BECAUSE we must take over the means of production in order to create our own meanings.

BECAUSE viewing our work as being connected to our girlfriends-politics-real lives is essential if we are gonna figure out how we are doing impacts, reflects, perpetuates, or DISRUPTS the status quo.’ (Hanna 1991)

social obstacles for spectators of the performance. Conversely, some argue that in order to confront an institution, it needs to be done from within. As Sarah Childs' writes in *Women, Gender, and Politics: A Reader* (2010) when activism appears inside the institution it almost never escapes public notice, when institutional customs are disrupted and contested the public gaze is diverted to the institution and thus the institutional elites become exposed (Childs and Krook, 2010 p.32).

Contrary to this argument, a recent article submitted by an anonymous member of Pussy Riot, claimed that Tolokonnikova and Alyokhina have contradicted the principles of the band and therefore can no longer identify themselves as members of the group. The individual stated, 'we are anti-capitalist' (Pussy Riot, 2014) before explaining that Pussy Riot does not charge for tickets to their shows, all the material should be freely distributed online (Pussy Riot, 2014). Pussy Riot's original intent of mass exposure to their political activism in the online documentation of their work enabled the public to debate and deliberate their actions on their own terms. As Brian Rourke and Andrew Wiget describe in *Pussy Riot, Putin and the Politics of Embodiment* (2014) 'the value of Pussy Riot's performance lies in it making visible and thus making available for public debate' (Rourke and Wiget, 2014 p.234). It is through this consideration that Rourke and Wiget illustrate that the focus on political exposure and mass online coverage was fundamental in Pussy Riot's original performance process, and in fact, the vehicle behind their increased attention across the globe. The online sphere created access to channels of public discourse which otherwise would have been consciously denied to people outside of the Federation (Rourke and Wiget, 2014 p.234). In regard to their performances, and more specifically, their relocation into more conventional performance spaces in the UK, it could be implied that they are limiting the access to their work by moving away from the free online approach. By charging high ticket prices in environments notorious for catering to the privileged, upper echelons of society they are excluding certain members of the public from seeing their work. But considering how the profits from these performances are being spent, to support the aforementioned Sentsov for example, this implies that the work is not being capitalised upon for an individual's monetary gain but instead to further their activist accomplishments. However, having been criticised for relocating their performances to ticket sale focused venues, it could be suggested that Pussy Riot is directing their focus to only those who can afford it. Critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality by which she meant that 'the problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference...it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences' (Crenshaw, 1991 p.1241). Crenshaw would argue that Pussy Riot focusing their performances towards the most privileged individuals 'marginalises those who are multiply-burdened' (Crenshaw, 1989 p.140) and

creates opportunities only for those whose experiences represent only a subset of a much more complex phenomenon (Crenshaw, 1989 p.140). As Crenshaw explains:

These problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure. Because the intersectional experience is much greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which black women are subordinated. (Crenshaw, 1989 p.140)

Pussy Riot's identities had initially always been concealed under the mask of their iconic balaclavas but having their identities exposed to the world has now re-designated the power back to the Russian authorities. Pussy Riot had preserved their concealment up until the point of arrest in 2012, similarly to the art activist group, the *Guerrilla Girl's*, who have maintained their anonymity throughout their appearances since 1985 (Guerrilla Girls: Home, 2018). However, following the imprisonment of two Pussy Riot band members their identities were uncovered to the world by the Russian Federation. Peggy Phelan illuminates this point by maintaining that anonymity can be a way of deterring the gender objectification of the male gaze (Phelan, 1993 p.12), which seeks to enforce women into stereotypes of a patriarchal narrative (Mulvey, 1975 p.10). Here Phelan explains how the Guerrilla Girls are using the resistance strategy of 'active vanishing' (Phelan, 1993 p.10) to dismantle the power of the gaze:

By refusing to participate in the visibility-is-currency economy which determines value in 'the art world,' the members of the group resist the fetishization of their argument that many are, at the moment, quite ready to undertake. By resisting visible identities, the Guerrilla Girls mark the failure of the gaze to possess, and arrest, their work...Underneath the new representations, the racist and sexist 'facts' of the Guerrilla Girls' real continue to 'exist', while remaining obscured. Always failing to keep the real in view, representation papers it over and reproduces other representations. (Phelan, 1993 p.10)

By exposing Pussy Riot to the gaze, the Russian Federation could reallocate their power, causing them to become a globally fetishized image. With their identities now revealed, it would be near impossible for them to revert back to their invisible origination, although the image of the band in their colourful balaclavas still remains the most recognisable and one which people would pinpoint as the face of Pussy Riot. Fifth wave feminism is present in Pussy Riot's harnessing of the Internet as a tool to connect with spectators globally, document their activism in the virtual space to avert censorship and then bringing people together at their live performances. However, problems have begun to appear in their live shows in relation to who can gain access to the performances. Perhaps this is due to the rate of development of the feminist movement in Russia in comparison to the western world. Furthermore, the inclusive and diverse participation in online debate, which was the drive behind their global popularity, is an aspect which has not translated into the curation of their

performances. Therefore, in order to embrace one of the key concepts of fifth wave feminism, it becomes vital to implement more inclusive practices in the live events which reflect the online spaces which have become sites for political resistance. By transferring these socially engaged spaces online into the live space, this will create an embodied engagement with feminist issues as people are confronted with the reality of struggles other than their own.

### CASE STUDY THREE: HOW IS FIFTH WAVE FEMINISM INFLUENCING AND SHAPING LAUREN BARRI HOLSTEIN'S PRACTICE?

Lauren Barri Holstein is an interdisciplinary performance artist, dancer, researcher and educator. Live art practice is a dominant feature of Holstein's work, and for *The Anarchist Feminist Party* (discussed in chapter three) I received many submissions from feminist Live Art practitioners. Therefore, it became essential to investigate the relationship between Live Art practice and feminist social engagement. In performances such as: *How 2 Become 1* (2011); *How to Become a Cupcake* (2013); and *Splat!* (2013), Holstein examines constructions of gender and desire in the context of post-feminism (Holstein, 2018).<sup>8</sup> Using her own body at the centre of the work, Holstein interrogates 'the potential for the displayed female body to manifest accesses to power or control often denied to that body' (Holstein, 2018). In the following, I will specifically analyse Holstein's most recent performance *Notorious* (2017) by looking at the ways in which elements of Holstein's practice is in dialogue with some of the main concepts of fifth wave feminism.

During a performance lab I attended at the Barbican Centre in London, Holstein said that her performances are influenced by the feminist theoretical discourse from generations before her and described how she applied some of these key concepts to a feminist discussion today in order to strengthen the resistance of the current movement (Holstein, 2017). This method of devising and utilising already established information is comparable to the construction of fifth wave feminism, as described in chapter one. For example, Holstein's work often revolves around the notion of hyper-femininity in order to examine faux-feminist appropriation in celebrity culture, particularly when communicated through social media (*The Famous Lauren Barri Holstein*, 2018). Some of the discourse raised in *Notorious* (2017) paralleled the writings of critical theorist Rosalind Gill in *Gender and the Media* (2006), which

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<sup>8</sup> 'A notion of contemporary feminism influenced by neoliberalism and "by stark and continuing inequalities" related to the axis of intersectionality. Components of this awareness include:

- An obsessive preoccupation with the body
- The shift from women being portrayed as submissive, passive objects, to being portrayed as active, desiring sexual subjects
- The pre-eminence of notions of choice, 'being oneself' and 'pleasing oneself'
- A focus on self-surveillance and discipline
- A makeover paradigm
- The reassertion of sexual difference
- Media messages that are characterised by irony and knowingness' (Scharff and Gill, 2013 p.48)

looks at the articulation of feminist ideology in advertising. Gill argues that advertisers have created a 'commodity feminism' which uses the cultural power and energy of feminism whilst simultaneously taming the power it has to critique the advertising world (Gill, 2006 p.82). Holstein says that this tactic is also being used by celebrities on social media to undermine feminist gains, imitating the rhetoric of feminism and making it appear as though it is no longer needed (Holstein, 2017; McRobbie, 2009 p.48). In an interview with journalist Anna Watkins Fisher in 2017, Holstein explained that mass social media has become an unavoidable presence which has 'intensified a kind of experimentation with multiplicity and pluralistic subjectivities, but also produced powerful methods of policing identities' (Holstein and Fisher, 2015). This illustrates that Holstein is using the theoretical discourse from feminist critical thinkers such as Gill and demonstrating its applicability to the online world today. Furthermore, Holstein is reinforcing one of the concerns of fifth wave feminism by emphasising the necessity to bring these issues into the performance space and hold them under scrutiny with other bodies in the live space. By doing so, Holstein is facilitating an embodied engagement with fifth wave feminist issues by transporting the online discourse into reality. Holstein goes on to explain that her performances look to experiment with intervention methods in order to create distance from the 'self' and to 'explore the ways in which multiple selves are constructed' (Holstein and Fisher, 2015). It is with this technique of deconstruction and undermining, as Holstein referred to it in the session, that we come to recognise the act of resistance which presents itself in Holstein's performances. This resistance is what interlaces with points of contemporary feminist discussion, as Holstein stated in an interview I conducted with her, she uses pop-feminism 'in order to unmake it' (Mulvey and Holstein, 2018).<sup>9</sup> Holstein continued to explain how pop-feminism and mass online culture have influenced the content and subject matters addressed in her performances and stated:

It is this that I attempt to problematise, critique and disrupt in my work by presenting alternative modes of agency, of representation and of subjectivity. (Mulvey and Holstein, 2018)

It could be suggested that fifth wave feminism is present in the form of Holstein's work, but it also manifests in the content, which addresses some of the key aims of fifth wave feminism. One of the main concerns of Holstein's practice is the neo-liberal appropriation of grassroots feminist activism in mainstream advertising and pop culture. Holstein's stage persona, *The Famous*, is a post-feminist persona which she uses to probe the conflation of empowerment and individualism (Gorman and Holstein, 2017) being endorsed through advertising

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<sup>9</sup> A mainstream approach to feminism which suggests that women can attain equality without the need to scrutinise or question cultural establishments and prejudices (En.wiktionary.org, 2018).

strategies. Holstein uses her stage persona to play with and satirize the notion of post-feminism and the advertising of commercial feminism, for example by acknowledging the rise in feminist slogan t-shirts which has started to trend throughout most online clothing stores. She uses these examples along with celebrity figures as emblematic symbols of post-feminism, whilst holding them up for scrutiny and exposing the commodity capitalism at work. It is through this revelation that Holstein insists on the importance of the live space as a place to escape those narratives.

Holstein's online presence is also largely dominated by her alter ego, whom she describes as 'part-time sex object, part-time flailing mess, part-time feminist' (Holstein and Fisher, 2015). In the introduction to her website, she makes insulting remarks about herself and her work in the third person, mimicking the online act of trolling. This brings attention to some of the insidious sides of the Internet which can be used to demoralise the online efforts of feminist activism. When asked about her interaction with social media, Holstein explained to me that she was resistant to it and usually had a member of her team operate the accounts 'partially to create content, but also to protect me from harassment' (Mulvey and Holstein, 2018).

This disclosure of vulnerability Holstein portrays is also exhibited through the delivery of the content of her performances, which uses the medium of theatre to undermine the spectator's gaze. In *Notorious*, an internalised critique of herself was woven throughout the material as she alternated between remarking on the progress of the show and ways to improve it. Holstein depicted the use of self-criticism as a way of distorting 'the boundaries between 'artifice' and 'reality'' (Holstein and Fisher, 2015) through dealing with the 'critical vulnerability of the work' during the performance itself (Holstein and Fisher, 2015). Holstein specified:

By exposing the critical process of the work, we attempt to undermine criticism's expected or assumed function. (Holstein and Fisher, 2015)

When examining Holstein's usage of self-criticism during the performance, similarities can be drawn from the ideas of Holstein's feminist predecessor Laura Mulvey in the essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975) in relation to the gendered nature of the audiences' gaze (Mulvey, 1975 p.12). By employing the ideas of Mulvey, Holstein is subverting the traditional narrative of the woman as passive, raw material for the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975 p.12) and introducing a new layer of agency in which she challenges the role of 'active' voyeur and reclaims her autonomy by questioning her own representation.

This also provides the audience with an opportunity for agency, as she openly asks for their opinions and contributions, stating that she ‘encourage[s] audiences to think critically about their own accesses and uses of agency’ (Mulvey and Holstein, 2018). Through doing so, Holstein is using strategies analogous to fifth wave feminism, by compelling the audience to confront their own expectations and including them in the process. Holstein exposes herself to the gaze purposefully in order to undermine it, while in the previous example of Pussy Riot, the gaze is violently re-claimed by the authorities through the act of de-masking. This practice not only refracts the male gaze but contradicts the spectators’ expectations, by challenging any simplistic ways of seeing theatre or gender representation (Solga, 2016 p.36). In Diamond’s analysis of Brechtian methodology in *Brechtian Theory/ Feminist Theory: Toward a Gestic Feminist Criticism* (1988), she examines how feminist practice aims to revert ‘[the gaze] back to the spectator’ (Diamond, 1988 p.82). This tactic is demonstrated in Holstein’s work through both her running commentary and excessive fluctuation between characters, which is delivered through the lens of the grotesque. Diamond suggests that when spectators view gender on stage, they are seeing a reproduction of cultural signs (Diamond, 1988 p.82) and thus:

Feminist practice that seeks to expose or mock the structures of gender usually uses some version of the Brechtian A-effect, that is, by alienating (not simply rejecting) iconicity, by foregrounding the expectation of resemblance, the ideology of gender is exposed and thrown back to the spectator (Diamond, 1988 p.82)

In *Notorious*, the consistent evaluative dialogue was further exacerbated by the acts of self-flagellation during the show, which saw Holstein being suspended and whipped by two members of her ensemble holding a dead squid.



Figure 1: Screenshot from Fierce Festival Vimeo channel (2018)

As Holstein’s naked body hangs contorted from the suspension ropes, Diamond’s notions of gestic feminism bring to light the social, historical and physical conditions which frame the



depiction of the female body on stage (Solga, 2016 p.36). Holstein's physical exertion is never hidden from the audience and invites them to question their own expectations of the representation of the female body on stage. Holstein explains that this image was a metaphor for society's notion that a woman is only allowed agency following an act of punishment, and consequently, the narrative of redemption in representations of women have permeated throughout social media (Holstein and Fisher, 2015).

Holstein exemplifies features of intersectionality in her performances, through interrogating her own identity and the privilege that it inherently bestows in the context of feminist discourse. Holstein states that she pushes herself to find ways to 'critique the whiteness and privilege of post/pop-feminism' (Mulvey and Holstein, 2018) within her practice. This includes her workshops, where she seeks the opportunity to facilitate 'critical thinking for young women of various races in regard to their own politics, their own representation, their own subjectivities' (Mulvey and Holstein, 2018). Holstein uses various signifiers, such as song samples from the artist Nicki Minaj, to accentuate Holstein's criticism of her own white privilege. One example of this is her obvious acts of appropriation through dance moves, illuminating mass media's push for black women to comply with white, westernised beauty standards. Referring to herself as 'Barbie', the aforementioned rapper has often been accused of bleaching due to the drastic lightening of her skin tone (*Skin Light Skin Bright*, 2017). Nicki Minaj demonstrates the paradigms of an internalised race-based negative evaluation of the black body within mainstream media (Charles and McLean, 2017 p.783). The issue of race representation in mainstream media was discussed in the workshop in relation to 'twerking', a dance move which originated from the New Orleans's 1990s bounce scene (*The Progress*, 2018). However, in March 2013 a video of the artist Miley Cyrus 'twerking' went viral and questions began to arise around the subversion of the history and complexities of the traditionally black social dance (Gaunt, 2015 p.244). During *Notorious*, Holstein used the move throughout the entirety of Minaj's track *Starships*, which presented us with a self-sexualising white body appropriating cultural traditions for audience gratification. This decision to incorporate twerking not only opened up a discussion surrounding the commodification of the female body for fetishistic pleasure but also issues of racialisation by white individuals in the media.

Holstein explicitly states that she is influenced by the feminist performance practice of the 1970s, but both the medium she uses and the content of her shows illustrate how she amalgamates feminism from the present moment. Holstein's approach to performance art harks back to the methodologies of artists such as Carolee Schneemann. For example, in *Splat!* (2013) the onslaught of food poured over many bodies recalls Schneemann's

performance of *Meat Joy* (1964) and at Spill Festival (2011) Holstein extraction of a scroll of paper from her vagina was analogous to Schneemann's performance of *Interior Scroll* (1975). By revisiting the work of foundational artists like Schneemann, who shaped our understanding of feminist performance practice, we come to realise that these introductory artists are now becoming older and more physically vulnerable (Solga, 2016 p.36). By reintroducing the work to a contemporary audience, Holstein is bringing the context of Schneemann's aging body (Solga, 2016 p.36) along with exposing the vulnerability and ways in which age affects women's bodies through durational physical exertion. Holstein affirms that discourse concerning previously established theoretical ideology is central to her making process, by attempting to theorise a mode of feminist agency that portrays and exhibits feminist artwork generated since the 1960s as a newly significant outline for challenging the anti-feminist present (Holstein and Fisher 2015). Holstein explains:

The theoretical work is the most important part of my process. Neither can live without the other. My company would tell you that most of our rehearsals are spent ...just dealing with the ideas and theoretical concerns that I'm looking at the moment. (Holstein and Fisher 2015)

By utilising the ideas of feminist artists dating back to the 1960s, and applying them to current feminist predicaments, Holstein is exercising the act of building upon already established ideology from the feminist thinkers of the past. Fifth wave feminism becomes traceable through Holstein's restoration of these radical interventions, introduced by her predecessors in earlier waves of feminism, and using it to raise the consciousness of feminists today. By bringing the online discourse into the live space, Holstein is facilitating a space for resistance in which issues, such as post-feminism for example, can be scrutinised. By the spectators being present in the space, Holstein is enabling the embodied engagement with socio-political discourse and fifth wave feminist concerns.

In the next chapter, I will reflect on findings from the practical investigation, *The Anarchist Feminist Party*, and examine its affinities with fifth wave feminism, as outlined in chapter one.

### CHAPTER THREE: ANALYSIS OF PRACTICE

In this section I will review how the practical component of my research, *The Anarchist Feminist Party*, addressed some of the key concepts of fifth wave feminism, as suggested in chapter one. Firstly, I will discuss my intentions behind the choice of the word 'anarchist' for the title of the event. I will then examine five examples of performance which demonstrated feminist rebellion, anarchy and reflect upon ideas from feminist critical theorists to consider how these examples illustrate an affinity with fifth wave feminism. The following is a list of the particular artists I will be focusing on: *Grace Grace Grace*, a collective who created a live performance installation on women's relationship to ageing; Maj Ickle, a poet who recalled her experiences of being a punk lesbian in the 1980s; Lizzie Masterson and Natalie Wearden, who performed a BDSM ritual; Azara Meghie, who communicated her perspective as a black, lesbian through dance and spoken word; and lastly Paola de Ramos who performed a ritualistic dance addressing global sisterhood. I have chosen these specific examples because they do not look at gender in isolation but demonstrate an insight into broader notions of feminism which are based on intersectional struggles. On the USB stick provided with this dissertation, I have included video footage of the performances at the event. The footage was recorded by the filmmaker Natasha Mwansa and in order to align with the self-organisational elements of the event, I did not prescribe any method or preconceived ideas about what to shoot. Instead, I wanted Mwansa to have full autonomy over her work and allow the filming to become entirely self-led. Mwansa chose which clips were included in the final film and sent me the individual videos of the performances she was able to capture. The footage on the USB stick is a culmination of this material, and as a result of this process, not all artists included in this reflection have corresponding video footage. I would advise the reader to watch the clips as guided in the footnote instructions of this reflection, and on completion, to watch the clip titled *Entire Film of The Anarchist Feminist Party* to gain an overall sense of the event. A full list of artists, performers and contributors can be found in the appendix section. Finally, I will reflect on aspects of the organisation and structure of the event.

*The Anarchist Feminist Party* took place on March 17 at the Ugly Duck building, London Bridge. I curated the event in order to determine whether feminist performance practice in London was in dialogue with fifth wave feminism and to what extent it was in sympathy with the principles of the movement. As a curator I was aware that to enable principles of fifth wave feminism to manifest in the event, these principles needed to be considered not only in terms of the content of the artists' work, but also in terms of the context within which it was situated, for example, in the organisational structures of the event. I recognised that as a white, able-bodied, cis- gendered feminist I must actively work to include the voices of

marginalised women in the event, and that it is of the utmost importance to get diverse perspectives on feminist issues so not to repeat the mistakes of previous waves.

I released a call-out online which asked for submissions from creatives who invoke feminist rebellion, anarchy and activism in their work. I stated that all disciplines, styles and forms were welcome and that the event would be self-organisational and non-hierarchical. I explicitly articulated that submissions from *all* self-identifying women, trans sisters, non-binary and gender non-conforming artists were welcome, in order to emphasise the trans-inclusionary premise of the event. I described *The Anarchist Feminist Party* as a punk feminist performance rave, where artists of all disciplines would unite in feminist rebellion. I will return to aspects of the online organisation in more detail later in this chapter. The event took place in two spaces in the venue; the foyer space which was used to display the work of visual artists and zine makers working with punk themes; and the garage space which was where the music bands and a majority of the performers presented their work. My reason for calling the event anarchist was to emphasize to the artists that the event intended to follow a non-hierarchical organizational structure. By using this framework, I was building on previous feminist performance explorations of creating work through collectives and cooperatives in the late 1960s, 70s and 80s, which challenged traditional theatre hierarchal structures (Wandor, 1984). Fifth wave feminism illustrates a determination to remove oppression by creating inclusive spaces and dismantling hierarchical structures. This suggests an ideological link to anarchism, a political philosophy which aims to achieve a self-governed society by rejecting institutions based on authoritarian hierarchy, and instead, looks to form a society based on free associations or non-hierarchy (Suisa, 2010 p.10). When considering anarchism through the lens of feminism, the ideas regarding the deconstruction of systematic oppression are comparable in both movements, as James Joll explains in *The Anarchists* (1964):

For the anarchist, freedom is not an abstract philosophical concept, but the vital concrete possibility for every human being to bring to full development all the powers, capacities, and talents with which nature has endowed him, and turn them to social account. (Joll, 1964 p.145)

As L. Susan Brown identifies in *The Politics of Individualism* (1993) it is the anti-oppressive stance combined with a resistance against unequal relationships of power which makes the anarchist movement intrinsically feminist (Brown, 1993 p.146). Strands of feminism have developed from this shared ideology, such as anarcho-feminism, which seeks to end domination, hierarchy, capitalism and utilises the organisational structures of leaderless anarchistic groups (Tanenbaum, 2016). An example of anarcho-feminist belief systems can

be identified in the feminist direct action group *Sisters Uncut*, who recently said on the podcast *The Guilty Feminist* (2018):

How do you unlock women's potential in a white, supremacist, heteronormative world? Because all you're doing is bringing them up to the standard that men have, which has been really problematic... So why would you want to unlock women's potential in that? Let's dismantle it and start again. (Frances-White, and Sisters Uncut, 2018)

These values can also be recognised in the online activity of various grassroots collective organisations who use social media as a resource to expand their message of resistance, as in the examples of *Art Rising* and *Pussy Riot* discussed above. The intent behind *The Anarchist Feminist Party* was to emulate a self-organisational, non-hierarchical framework in the creation of the event, which was in solidarity with models of egalitarian praxis. I also chose to raise money for the charity *Feminist Fightback*, using the opportunity to support a grassroots activist organisation which shares ideals of anarcho-feminism.<sup>10</sup> As I had set myself the aim of following principles of fifth wave feminism, it was important to affiliate the event with an organisation that aligns itself to an intersectional feminist approach and is inclusive towards trans people and all self-defining women. Also, by donating the profits to a charitable cause, this eradicates any notion that the event is being used for capitalist gain and signalled to both participants and attendees the anti-capitalist formation of the event.

A key feature of creating inclusive spaces is to represent diversity so that marginalised groups do not feel excluded by any dominant narrative of representation. One facet of this was to include a balance of intergenerational voices within the line-up of performers: *Grace Grace Grace*, are a group of women who identify as older and 'experience [their] power and daring amplified through collective exploits' (*Grace Grace Grace: Manifesto*, 2017).<sup>11</sup> Their performance interventions are centralised around themes of ageing and the ways in which the ageing body is presented or concealed from public view. Their performance at the event began unannounced in the foyer space of the venue, audience members arriving stopped in their tracks to watch the silent construction of a hanging installation *The Seven Signs of Ageing*. As they climbed in their underwear, boots and hats they suspended four paper statements from a string line marked with '#1 Looking Older' which was repeated up until '#6 Not Giving a Fuck About Looking Older' (*Grace Grace Grace*, 2018).

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<sup>10</sup> *Feminist Fightback* is an activist collective who developed out of a series of conferences in 2006 and 2007 (*Feminist Fightback: About Us*, 2016). They work on a non-hierarchical, consensus basis and are inspired by "the politics of a range of anti-capitalist feminist struggles and believe that no single oppression can be challenged in isolation from all other forms of exploitation that intersect with it" (*Feminist Fightback: About Us*, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> At this point I would advise the reader to watch the clips titled *Grace Grace Grace* installation to support the visual context of the reflection.



Figure 2: Delprato, G. (2018). *Grace Grace Grace*.



Figure 3: Delprato, G. (2018). *Grace Grace Grace*.

What *Grace Grace Grace* confronted in their performance installation was the paradigm of women's ageing bodies as the subject of invisibility or hypervisibility (Woodward, 1991 p.21), coupled with the idea of the hashtag. The portrayal of women's ageing bodies in mass media is virtually non-existent and this absence perpetuates a narrative of 'successful ageing', in which achievement is measured by the ability to retain youth (Sandberg, 2013 p.12). These correlations of youthfulness with desirability fail to challenge the hegemony of ageism and rely heavily on neo-liberal imperatives by way of capitalising upon the sales of 'youth retaining' beauty products (Sandberg, 2013 p.13). The consequent 'invisibility' or 'ubiquity' of ageing female bodies presents us with one of the strands of feminist discourse concerning ageing bodies. *Grace Grace Grace* subverted the pressures of commercial marketing and the degradation of women's ageing bodies by confronting the audience with

the 'un-retouched' live body, without online filters or Photoshop treatment. By instigating the performance in the foyer space, the collective demanded that their presence is acknowledged, and it is through the insistence on the actual presence of the living body that the urgency of the piece matched the urgency of the subject matter. The symbolism of the hashtag in their performance illustrated a crossing of languages, bringing the online vernacular into the space and showing this older generation of feminists asserting the importance of bringing real bodies into the live space. The use of 'hashtivism' online; particularly in campaigns such as the *#MeToo* and *#EverydaySexism* movements have become methods which allow women to mobilize digital media technologies in order to stimulate political transformation (Keller *et al*, 2016 p.23).<sup>12</sup> Grassroots activist campaigns have now become viral phenomena due to the use of hashtagging on social networking sites, which has enabled them to spread their message to a considerably larger audience, regardless of budget or resources (*Grass Roots Activism*, 2016). However, there are debates surrounding the impact and efficiency of hashtivism and whether the social media movement generates a form of slacktivism or virtue signalling, rather than creating a transformative effect on society (*Internet Transformations*, 2017). *Grace Grace Grace* conveyed the importance of liveness and the meeting of *real* bodies within the space. The collective demonstrated that witnessing the live body is inescapable, and cannot be simply 'clicked past', in contrast to our online experiences. Furthermore, the way that the performance was constructed constituted a wholesale refusal of these living, older female bodies to be rendered invisible. In Helene Cixous' seminal text, *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1976), the feminist philosopher wrote: 'woman must put herself into the text —as into the world and into history— by her own movement' (Cixous, 1976 p.876). *Grace Grace Grace* are using the medium of their bodies to write themselves back into public consciousness. Their performance also suggested that our online activities can be employed to establish a broader resistance against oppressive patriarchal structures but should only be used as a launchpad to popularise social motion within the live space. By bringing bodies together, the performance can be used to activate an embodied engagement with the socio-political discourse and act as a catalyst for emotional contagion with other spectator's present, thus strengthening the acts of resistance following the event.

One of the main principles of fifth wave feminism is to include LGBTQ+ feminists and to remember the artists and activist who fought for the freedoms we have today, and who laid the foundations for contemporary feminist practice. Self-titled 'Dykwewriter' Maj Icke

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<sup>12</sup> 'Hashtivism' the use of hashtags on social media to express and advocate a political or social position. (*Op-Ed: Hashtivism*, 2017)

performed a poem called *Out in the City*, which she explained is a portrayal of her experience of 'being a dyke in the 80s and dressing up in department stores to have sex' (Ickle, 2018 B). Ickle's stories have been used in a documentary film called *Rebel Dykes* (2016), which draws upon the histories of being queer and punk during this period and warns that the 'London Rebel Dykes of the 1980s are in danger of being forgotten' (Williams, 2018). This warning mirrored the message Ickle conveyed in her poem, which was to remember the original LGBTQ+ feminists who fought for the rights we have today. Ickle's performance embodied two key concerns: remembering the fights that allowed us to be where we are now, and leading on from that, not permitting feminism to be governed by heterosexual discourse. Ickle demonstrated gratitude to, and an awareness of, the genealogical web of feminist performance artists that laid the ground for contemporary practice. This insight is frequently found in contemporary performance work, for example, through specific visual references to seminal breakers of form and expectation.<sup>13</sup> Ickle however makes this 'remembering' the central feature and message of her poem. During the 1980s, two events stand out as being instrumental to the oppression of LGBTQ+ people living in Britain; the arrival and sensationalism of HIV AIDS; and the introduction of Section 28 (*Personal Relationships: Homosexuality*, 2016).<sup>14</sup> Homophobia-fuelled headlines such as 'Alert over 'gay plague'' reinforced oppressive rhetoric and demonised the LGBTQ+ community (*History of HIV and AIDS Overview*, 2017). However, despite the societal discrimination of LGBTQ+ groups, venues such as the English punk club *The Roxy* became a space where hegemonic systems of segregation and suppression were dissolved, and communities of resistance grew (Ensminger, 2010 p.55). Ickle's performance was an embodiment of the traces of historical communal resistance against systematic oppression. It served as a reminder for onlookers that Ickle was part of that resistance and should not be ignored in today's movement, reinforcing the notion that we must not forget the 'rebel dykes' of our past. Lines such as 'all resisting the shame regime, by cumming, fucking together' (Ickle, 2018 A) conveyed both a critique of the social problems as well as an inspirational acknowledgment of the solidarity formed from the fight against supremacist ideology. When

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<sup>13</sup> As discussed in the Lauren Barri Holstein case study, the artist has used references from the work of 1970s performance artist Carolee Schneemann to illustrate an understanding of how these original works shaped contemporary feminist praxis. This was explicitly demonstrated in *How 2 Become 1* (2011) performed at Spill Festival, London. Holstein pulled a scroll from her vagina and dedicated the action to reviewers saying, "I'm a Plagiarist. Sorry, Ms. Schneemann. It's only because I love you" (Holstein, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 specified that local government "shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality" or "promote the teaching in state schools of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship" (*Personal Relationships: Homosexuality*, 2016).



Ickle introduced the poem by blowing into a large conch, it evoked a rallying of troops as spectators drew close to listen to Ickle's manifesto. This action encapsulated and recognised the historical subject of progress by collective achievements produced as a result of radical organisation, but also accentuated the importance of acknowledging these accomplishments of our predecessors. It served as a reminder to fifth wave feminists not to forget the activism and achievements of the older generations, and to utilize their experiences and advice to strengthen the current movement. As feminist theorist Sara Ahmed writes in *Living a Feminist Life* (2017):

A significant step for a feminist movement is to recognize what has not ended. And this step is a very hard step. It is a slow and painstaking step. We might think we have made that step only to realize we have to make it again. (Ahmed, 2017 p.10)

In addition, the stories Ickle shared mapped out a trajectory of communal organisation and collective activism which originated from the social realities of her past. Much like the message portrayed in the *Rebel Dykes* documentary, Ickle's determination to encourage an expansion of fifth wave feminism through promoting collective organisation, also demands a recognition of the battles fought by her contemporaries. Ickle's poetry also draws upon her experiences of multi-layered discrimination as a result of both her gender and her sexuality and demonstrates defiance through enhancing the visibility of lesbian sexuality, but not as the subject of pornographic fetishization used for the titillation of men. Judith Butler would suggest in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999) that this disclosure becomes an act of resistance, as heteronormative perspectives observe lesbian sexuality to be a refusal of 'normative' sexual practice, only because sexuality is presumed to be heterosexual (Butler, 1999 p.35). By Ickle refusing to modify her sexuality to the framework of patriarchal subjectivities, she is also opposing the hegemonic narratives of prescribed sexuality and encouraging a current concern of fifth wave feminists.

Lizzie Masterson and Natalie Wearden continued this discussion on the representation of sexual desire through an exploration of dominance and submission in their performance *Utterance // Ache*, showing that further discussion of power dynamics is essential in fifth wave feminist practice in order to create an awareness of the ways in which they infiltrate our most personal interactions.<sup>15</sup> The piece centred upon a ritualistic act of applying ice against skin 'activated by queer BDSM power dynamics: specifically, the practices of consensual submission and domination, bondage, and selective sensory deprivation' (Masterson, 2018). In doing so, the work also illustrated an acknowledgement towards the

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<sup>15</sup> At this point I would advise the reader to watch the clips titled Natalie Wearden and Lizzie Masterson to support the visual context of the reflection.

issue of consent, which has become a prevalent subject in mainstream feminist discourse (Lazar, 2007 p.142). In addition, Wearden identifies as non-binary which added a layer of agitation against the presumed heteronormative and binary depictions of BDSM relationships in mainstream media (Beres *et al*, 2015 p.419). The duo entered the space with Wearden blindfolded and Masterson leading the way wearing a sharply, jagged crown on her head, instantly establishing a hierarchical relationship between the two bodies. In email correspondence, Masterson and Wearden insisted that a feminist setting would be crucial in providing a critique of BDSM power designation, and with consent being a major concern for fifth wave feminists at present, it provided a safe space to raise the discussion and allow an analysis of the issue. As Masterson applied ice blocks to Wearden's exposed skin, spectators recoiled at the distressing action and thus the application of power and subordination was demonstrated before our eyes. This was countered by the evident pleasure with which Wearden received the ice blocks. Polarity in opinions between feminists on the subject of BDSM practice began in the 1970s, when different divisions of the feminist movement emerged, and conversations began to focus on the topic of sexuality (*The Sex Wars, 1970s to 1980s*, 2017). The two factions comprised of those who believed that feminism and BDSM are incompatible beliefs, and those who believed that BDSM practices are an essential manifestation of sexual freedom (*The Sex Wars, 1970s to 1980s*, 2017). Theorists such as Audre Lorde would suggest that Sadomasochism is not an equal distribution of power, but rather a reiteration of the 'old and destructive dominant/subordinate mode of human relating and one-sided power' (Lorde, 1980 p.4).<sup>16</sup> bell hooks has also argued against BDSM in *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love* (2004) stating that when a culture is grounded on models of dominators, not only will violence and power struggles occur, but it will frame all relationships (hooks, 2004 p.116). Conversely, cultural anthropologist Gayle S. Rubin has defended the practice by explaining that 'most people mistake their sexual preferences for a universal system that will or should work for everyone' (Rubin, 2012 p.154). As *Utterance//Ache* developed we witnessed the intensification of the consensual experience of desire amplified through an increased amount of ice being applied to Wearden's skin. This combined with the icy temperatures of the venue, caused these actions to become increasingly uncomfortable to watch. In this sense, Wearden and Masterson had facilitated an examination which fused both the dialectics of subculture practice and a feminist analysis of power domination, allowing the one to question the other. Wearden and Masterson's piece conveyed that alternative sexual

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<sup>16</sup> 'Sadomasochism is an interaction, especially through sexual activity, in which one person enjoys inflicting physical or mental suffering on another person, who derives pleasure from experiencing pain' (*The Definition of Sadomasochism*, 2018).

practices such as BDSM are a vital feature in the feminist discourse, not only because of the potential to provoke probing of power relations, but also for the benefits in analysing societal structures and means of pleasure. Their performance served as a provocation which asked audience members to question, not only their sexual interactions, but also their attachment to the power structures which exist within their daily lives. Masterson and Wearden offered an observation of conceptualised power, as a source to be re-distributed for the purpose of emancipation and empowerment, requiring a constant and ongoing negotiation of consent and questioning of the realities of choice.

Azara Meghie also addressed key concerns of fifth wave feminism in her performance of *Ladylike*. By confronting the audience with her dancing, black, lesbian body and words she emphasized the urgent need of contemporary feminism to dig deeper into the way in which sexuality and race form part of its discourse. Through a progressively more adventurous dance routine, Meghie's exhaustion began to parallel the retelling of her repressive experiences, due to identifying as a black lesbian in London. *Ladylike* conveyed a fusion of spoken word with breakdancing and as Meghie progressed through each move, the poignancy of her words became amplified. Lines such as 'is it shameful and vile, so bad you want to put me on trial' (Meghie, 2018) potently resonated throughout the gathering crowd, circling Meghie as the breakdancing escalated in its audacity. The dancing which accompanied her text provided spectators with a physical confrontation, of which throughout her bodily exertions, Meghie's message became inescapable. The black jumper with an inverted question mark, also known as irony punctuation, worn by Meghie induced an additional dimension to the story being articulated.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Irony punctuation was first introduced by the French poet Alcanter de Brahm in *L'ostensoir des ironies* (1899) to signify that a sentence should be understood at an additional level, taking into account irony or sarcasm (Houston, 2014 p.45).



Figure 4: Delprato, G. (2018). *Azara Meghie*.

Audre Lorde advocated the importance of examining additional levels in regard to identity politics through the evaluation of multiple oppressions including white supremacy, corporate capitalism, patriarchy and homophobia. In the article *Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference* (1984) Lorde explained 'I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self' (Lorde, 1984 p.120). By Meghie using the symbolism of the irony punctuation to underscore a discussion on gender expression and sexuality, it could be implied that she is urging the onlookers to perceive her identity and sexual expression as complex and multi-layered, one which counteracts any assumptions of 'normative', fixed binaries. Meghie's performance also suggests that our understandings of feminism should be based on accepting these interconnections and acknowledging that feminism does not belong to anyone in particular, but conversely is in solidarity with the struggles of many. As the author Rene Eddo-Lodge writes in *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race* (2017), white feminism has become a dominant narrative which denies black feminists to vocalise their experiences:

White feminism is a politics that engages itself with myths such as 'I don't see race'. It is a politics which insists that talking about race fuels racism - thereby denying people of colour the words to articulate our existence...A white-dominated feminist political consensus allows people of colour a place at the table if we're willing to settle for tokenism, but it clamps down if they attempt to create accountability for said consensus - let alone any structural change. (Eddo-Lodge, 2017 p.72)

As Meghie drove through her routine with unrelenting focus saying, 'questioning my choices, like what I'm feeling can't be true, that I should just be normal like you' (Meghie, 2018), the exhaustion could gradually be heard in her voice. Much like Lauren Barri Holstein's performance in *Notorious*, as mentioned in the previous case studies, Meghie's physical exertion began to illustrate the physical and emotional labour that goes into battling against

patriarchal ideas of heteronormativity. Although Meghie presented her perspective as a black woman in her performance at *The Anarchist Feminist Party*, the audience was predominantly formed of mainly white, middle-class attendees, which reflected that some aspects of fifth wave feminism still lack diversity and is constrained by dominant perspectives of the white, cis-gendered woman. Embracing an intersectional feminist approach is a responsibility which fifth wave feminists must accept so as to incite systematic change and to expand the movement in recognition of a range of multifaceted struggles. Meghie's performance clearly emphasized the need for an intersectional approach to feminist organisation and destabilised the dominance of a white presence by evoking her own experiences and challenging the dominant narrative. Like Ickle and *Grace Grace Grace*, Meghie insisted on her right to be present in feminist spaces, whilst simultaneously highlighting that there is still much work to be done before she can do so without exhaustion.

Finally, performance artist Paola de Ramos, shared experiences of her Brazilian heritage in the performance of her danced installation piece *Madonna Vagina*, a performance which expanded the frame of the whole event by reminding the audience that a global feminist coalition is fundamental for creating large scale feminist action. Ramos' costume, which modelled the intricate details of a vagina, was flourished with carnival materials, doused with intense colours that floated as she moved hypnotically against the trance-like soundtrack.



Figure 5: Delprato, G. (2018). *Paola de Ramos*.

The perpetually entrancing movement piece conveyed features of the Brazilian traditional dance capoeira and indicated that the spectators had been invited into a ritualistic ceremonial discourse on global feminisms. As Ramos demarcated the performance area with her movement, she also took brief moments to weave into the crowd for one to one encounters.

As the intimacy of these encounters permeated, the urgency to form a global feminist support system with Ramos became irrefutable. As time went by, the repetitive movements combined with the bodily restrictions of her costume, developed into an endurance piece reminiscent of the generation of radical performance artists from the 1970s. Fragments of the performance echoed the work of artists such as Ana Mendieta for example, who used her body as material for social discourse.<sup>18</sup> Ramos had also ensured that her performance would be read in the context of current events. In the lead up to the event, Ramos posted on the social media event page that a rally would be happening outside the Brazilian embassy in London as a vigil to commemorate Marielle Franco, a young, queer, Black woman who represented city council for Rio de Janeiro and was brutally murdered on her way home from a human rights event on March 14, 2018 (*The London Latinxs*, 2018). Ramos described her performance as a 'movement of transformation, joyfulness and integration' (Ramos, 2018) and in light of the persecution of political campaigners in Brazil, such as Marielle Franco, it becomes imperative that fifth wave feminism must actively work to insight global integrations. However, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan advise in *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices* (1994) that in order for feminists to form a global alliance, they must first recognise their differences, which includes the concept of 'woman' in different cultures (Grewal *et al*, 1994 p.48). Grewal and Kaplan explain:

In working to construct such a terrain for coalition and cooperation, however, we have to rearticulate the histories of how people in different locations and circumstances are linked by the spread of and resistance to modern capitalist social formations even as their experiences of these phenomena are not at all the same or equal. (Grewal *et al*, 1994 p.48)

It is possible, therefore, that whilst Ramos introduced feminist geopolitical issues to *The Anarchist Feminist Party*, she was also advocating that when forming global alliances, we must also remain conscientious towards cultural sensitivities. Ramos' injection of the global feminist discourse explicitly challenged the London-centric perspectives which dominated the event. However, the co-existence of both intimacy and group gathering in the liveness of Ramos' performance shows that the circulation of global feminist discourse can instigate cross-border feminist solidarity and provoke social motion on a global scale, but in order to activate these solidarities, first it requires fifth wave feminism to gain an understanding and acknowledgment of cultural differences.

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<sup>18</sup> *Madonna Vagina* conveyed similarities to Mendieta's performance piece *Body Tracks* (*Rastros Corporales*, 1982) in which the artist created large marks on white paper sliding down it with painted limbs, all to a pulsing soundtrack of Cuban music.

## SUMMARY OF REFLECTION ON THE ARTISTS

The previous section has shown that the diverse range of topics the artists covered at the event reflected ideas rooted both in punk subculture and particular notions of feminism. The types of feminism apparent in the performances reinforced some of our current understandings of the movement, but also offered suggestions for the transitional steps necessary to allow for the evolution and expansion of fifth wave feminism. As discussed in the analysis above, the notions of feminism which the artist focused on comprised of the following: Intergenerationality and cyber activism by *Grace Grace Grace*; collective organisation and a warning to current feminists not to forget their activist predecessors by Maj Ickle; power structures, sexuality and consent by Natalie Wearden and Lizzie Masterson; sexuality and race by Azara Meghie; and global feminist solidarity by Paola de Ramos. Within these discussions', commonalities began to arise surrounding the concept of feminist communal connections, particularly in the work of *Grace Grace Grace*, Maj Ickle and Paola de Ramos, which indicated an urge for fifth wave feminism to embrace a feminist community and network. Through sharing physical space with these artists, sometimes with more intimate proximity, the spectators were compelled to confront issues that they would not necessarily usually confront in the form of living bodies. Intersectionality requires people to engage with 'the other' and move outside of their comfort zone, which arguably can only happen in the live space. In the online world, one can create a space tailored to their own interests and create 'echo chambers' which reflect their own biases, whereas encounters with 'the other' are almost unavoidable in the real world.<sup>19</sup> However, this also exposed some of the issues which remain unaddressed and the work which fifth wave feminism has to do in order for certain voices to become heard. For example, Ramos' exploration into transnational feminism indicates that the movement still needs to be interpreted from a global perspective, instead of reinforcing divisions of 'western women' and 'third world women'. This stifling of voices also underpins aspects of Meghie's performance, which communicated the interlinks between race and gender, reiterating that issues of injustice exist at varying levels. Overall the artists, from their different vantage points, served up a reminder that the current definition of fifth wave feminism, despite its already existing efforts at intersectionality, needs to make much greater efforts to acknowledge — and take the lead from — feminists whose

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<sup>19</sup> 'Echo chambers' in relation to social media is the way in which information can be filtered and tailored to the specification of the users interests and belief systems. (Barberá, P. *et al.* 2015 p.1531).

identity currently still renders their activities invisible in order to escape a representation limited to white and middle-class women. It also suggested that the live space induces exposure to experiences and identities other than our own, allowing audiences to confront their own prejudices and work towards a more egalitarian movement.

Nevertheless, the set-up and framing of the event specifically invited anarchy and feminism, and so it was to be expected that this was reflected in the artist's work. The most interesting space to examine in terms of a live dialogue with mainstream fifth wave feminism is then perhaps the space where the various subcultures and identities of the artists confronted what ended up being a primarily white, middle-class audience. In general, therefore, it seems that working outside of the constraints of mainstream culture has always allowed artists to confront topics marginalised from the mainstream discourse. A further implication of this is the possibility that *The Anarchist Feminist Party* was in convergence with punk subculture, which itself emboldens disruption and radical conduct. However, as the spectators were predominantly white, middle-class women this could suggest that the event had attracted a mainstream audience, and so it had facilitated a space where they could be confronted with issues they were not used to seeing. Therefore, this could enable the discourse on particular issues to percolate into the mainstream, which is a key part of fifth wave feminism.

Next, I will look at some aspects of the pre-event organisation and audience attendance at the event which illustrated a dialogical relationship to fifth wave feminism, and how various alterations could be made to further strengthen and improve this connection.

## ORGANISATION

In preparation for *The Anarchist Feminist Party*, I learned the ways in which the online space can be used to increase the exposure of an event, and how it can produce new networks and online connections. By employing technology as a promotional tool, I attempted to reach a greater number of spectators, external to my social media circle, and to connect with a diverse range of online users in order to implement the fifth wave feminist concerns for intersectionality and accessibility. Therefore, my priority was to use my social media platforms as a vehicle for the artists who are affected by multiple systems of oppression and to offer them the space to be heard and acknowledged. By actively using these online platforms to further the exposure and promotion of the art of these artists, I was hoping to present fifth wave feminism as a movement which compulsorily considers equality through



the lens of intersectionality. Furthermore, I used this approach to illustrate that intersectional feminism must actively engage with inclusive actions, in order to enact fundamental change.

Firstly, I created a Facebook event page in order to widen its popularity and to generate interest about the night. Although the profits were being donated to *Feminist Fightback*, I set up a ticketing link through *Eventbrite* which enabled me to monitor the event traffic and keep informed about the estimated number of attendees through ticket sales.<sup>20</sup> The ticket link was included in the description on the Facebook event page and was copied into every promotional post. Each post was dedicated to a particular contributor, and integrated information about their work and images or links to their previous performances. The posts were scheduled to appear on the event page every two days, sending a notification to the prospective attendees' Facebook accounts and thus reminding them to purchase their tickets. I also learned that posting at particular times can escalate the number of views a post gains, Sunday and weeknight evenings between nine and eleven PM are advised as the most active periods online (*Facebook Analytics: Drive Growth to Web, Mobile & More*, 2018). To increase the event's publicity, I requested that all contributors shared the event page and invited their network to click 'attending', so that we could expand our reach and engage with new groups of Facebook users. As mentioned in chapter one, Courtney E. Martin and Vanessa Valenti's 2013 report *#FemFuture: Online Revolution* illuminates some of the strategies feminists can use to harness the possibilities of the Internet. The emphasis upon collective collaboration in the report reflects the online approaches we undertook for *The Anarchist Feminist Party*. As Martin and Valenti suggest, one of the most powerful benefits of online feminism is its community (Martin and Valenti 2013), and so with the participants coming from a wide variety of artistic disciplines, it enabled us to reach out to many networks on a far-reaching expanse. Through this, we had found a collaborative method of promotion in which we drew from our personal networks to mobilise people from an extensive range of communities. This methodology also helped us to further realise the multiplicity of the feminist movement. It demonstrated that there is not one unified feminist movement, but instead, many intersectional movements operating in tandem learning from one another's experiences (Martin and Valenti 2013). On the day of the event, the page had been shared 249 times and 1237 people had clicked interested or attending. This result indicated that through each contributor contacting their personal online network, we had gained access to groups that would not be available to us as individuals, and thus had achieved a collective approach to online promotion and increased our viral reach beyond our expectations. Much like the use of the Facebook event pages for the *Women's March* and

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<sup>20</sup> A tool which allows organisers to learn the number of visitors clicking on a particular event page.

the *Art Rising*, as discussed in the case studies, these viral spaces promote egalitarian modes of organisation, strategizing and consensus building by creating a non-censored forum based on new models of grassroots activist organisation. This allows the creation of a collective voice in an online platform before its transition into the live space. *The Anarchist Feminist Party* was an event which purposely set out to transition from the online space into the real world, and thus encouraged the prospect of liveness, intimacy and spatial relationships with other living bodies, as envisioned by fifth wave feminists in the 5.0 manifesto described in chapter one.

Before organising the event, I met with George F from the activist performance collective *Reboot the Roots*. George F facilitates theatre workshops using the methodologies of Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* and also maintains prominence within the London feminist punk scene. George F has organised similar events to *The Anarchist Feminist Party* in the past and by meeting, I was interested in learning about their methods of maintaining a non-hierarchical and self-organisational ethos at an event like this. George F explained that by using Boal's techniques, I would be able to create a non-hierarchical and self-organisational environment successfully, but this approach requires trust and mutuality with both performers and attendees (F and Mulvey, 2018).<sup>21</sup> *Theatre of the Oppressed* uses performance techniques as means of promoting social and political change in association with radical left politics, which links to notions of anarchism and thus corresponds with the main premise of the event (Boal, 1993 p.11). George F suggested that as the main facilitator, I should adopt Boal's concept of the 'Joker' character (F and Mulvey, 2018).<sup>22</sup> I adopted this approach at *The Anarchist Feminist Party* and discovered that the neutrality of this role allowed me to facilitate the smooth running of the event without dominating. Another suggestion from George F which assisted this process was the implementation of a team to support all elements of the event (F and Mulvey, 2018). Three volunteers assisted me with supporting the artists as well as guiding attendees to the next performance. The delivery of the audience guidance was a crucial component of the non-hierarchical elements. Our aim was to inform the audience of what performances were happening in the spaces without forcing them to follow, again this required the adoption of the 'Joker' neutrality.

I wanted to let the acts choose their moment to perform in a spontaneous fashion without a pre-determined 'performance slot' in order to encompass the self-organisational aspects of

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<sup>21</sup> Boal was influenced by the theorist Paulo Freire's book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), and the theatre practitioners techniques reflect the egalitarian ideologies presented in the text.

<sup>22</sup> This involves a neutral party to be at the centre of proceedings and to take responsibility for the logistics of the process and fairness of proceedings (Boal, 1993 p.28)

the event. However, I found that due to the technical demands for both the music bands and performers, I needed to create a running order so that there were smooth transitions into each act. My need to create 'smooth transitions' exemplified a reluctance I may have had in regards to potential moments of silence or indeed, anarchy breaking out. This was also guided by my impression of the artists' unease with not knowing their performance times, my technician's panic at the suggestion of an absent running order and the venue managers fear of the event overrunning. It also became clear that the artists were gravitating toward me whenever there were issues, which implied that they were seeking the 'leader' of the event. Although I felt I had been explicit in my description of the event regarding its self-organisational and non-hierarchal basis, this illustrated that more work needed to be done to further realise these ideas in the event itself. If I were to organise the event again, I would change aspects of the technical set up so that more spontaneity and autonomy could happen in relation to performing. I would let the artists choose their moments to perform, even if two performances happen simultaneously, and I would create 'performance zones' in which a mic is set up and anyone can take the opportunity to speak. This would promote a self-organisational model as well as contributing to the deconstruction of a hierarchal relationship and separation between performers and audience. Furthermore, this would build upon Boal's concept of 'spect-actor' enabling the audience the freedom to contribute to the discussion and be part of the action (Boal, 1993 p.45).<sup>23</sup>

## AUDIENCE

I will now briefly examine the dynamics between the audience and artists at *The Anarchist Feminist Party*. I will be looking at examples of misogynistic behaviour which occurred at the event, such as one particular incident of a male gaze avidly documenting certain performances and demonstrate how this was symptomatic of the audience demographic. I will investigate how this relates to the issues of consent, as discussed in the section above, and suggest points of review for fifth wave feminism.

During the event, it became apparent that certain cis-gendered, white, male spectators were filming performances which specifically included nudity. This conveyed some of the

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<sup>23</sup> '[The concept of 'spect-actor'] invites spectators to participate in the performance - not through suggestions, advice or discussion, but by replacing one of the characters in the play, and 'acting' in his/her place- that is, by becoming spect-actors. They are not 'acting' in the sense of 'performing', but simply 'taking action' as they do in real life.' (*Techniques - Centre For Community Dialogue And Change*, 2018)

voyeuristic and sexualised usages of photography and film and demonstrated an example of objectification of the explicit bodies in the space. The act of capturing the two-dimensional image, conveys a form of participation which is determined by sexual voyeurism and encourages the act to continue, but only for the purpose of the individual's sexual satisfaction. The compulsion to take the photograph is not only a manifestation of surveillance and control, but also becomes a way of seeing. As Susan Sontag explains in *On Photography* (1977), its ramifications can symbolically annihilate its subject:

It turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed. Just as a camera is a sublimation of the gun, to photograph someone is a subliminal murder. (Sontag, 1977 p.22)

Although all contributors were asked of their permission, the enablement of photography at the event allowed spectators to take possession of the images, with the potential of sharing the material online in a sexualised manner, removed from its original context. It also encouraged a level of disengagement with the experiential components of the event, for example being gathered together in the live space, and therefore allowed them to disinvest from the communal aspects of the event. The purpose of *The Anarchist Feminist Party* was to create a collective congregation which moved beyond the online organisation and activism, and so if I were to organise a similar event again, I would request that all attendees leave their electronic devices at a specifically designated bag drop on the entry points of the venue. As mentioned earlier, another significant aspect which signalled some discrepancies with the aims of fifth wave feminism, was the presence of a predominantly white, mainstream feminist audience. This could be as a result of the increasing presence and appropriation of feminism for mainstream gains by popular culture (Desmond-Harris, 2017). One could argue that because the movement has now become part of the dominant culture rather than pushing in from the margins, *The Anarchist Feminist Party* has affirmed that systematic change needs to occur in order to truly grasp the intersectional struggles of contemporary feminists. This also illustrated that the event was perhaps not as radical and subcultural as envisioned, but instead required further work to diversify the attendees and to avoid the presence of a predominantly white, middle-class audience. Furthermore, this result demonstrated that instead of creating performances and spaces which are shaped for the palatability of mainstream feminist gains or work which is defined by the agenda of certain individuals' needs, it becomes vital to develop structures of feminist organisation which acknowledge broader, more inclusive notions of feminism and interrogates frameworks which are dictated by ideological supremacy.

The next chapter illustrates an overall evaluation of my findings and concludes my investigation on how performance practice is in dialogue with fifth wave feminism.

## CONCLUSION

One of the main findings to emerge from this dissertation, is that although online organisation plays a crucial role in the exposure of socio-politically rooted feminist performance projects, it is the gathering of bodies in the live space which becomes the manifestation of fifth wave feminism's aims to create an intersectional, inclusive movement concerned with current feminist issues. In the analysis of *The Anarchist Feminist Party* in chapter three, the elements of liveness required the audience to be confronted with issues which they may not ordinarily contend with, and thus challenged the spectator to question their own biases and relative positionings in the room. The event emphasized that following online galvanizing with an embodied encounter is a crucial factor in the 'devising process' of fifth wave feminism. This was demonstrated through an understanding of technology as a tool for live engagement, but not necessarily just as a vehicle for online engagement alone. Performances such as Ramos' examination of global sisterhood for example illustrated that, other than direct political protest, performance continues to arguably be the optimal medium through which to have a dialogue about the issues that feminism raises. As Shami Chakrabarti writes in *Of Women* (2017), 'We are ultimately social creatures; and achieve our best lives and potential in solidarity with others. Intimate solidarity equals love' (Chakrabarti, 2017 p.123). Therefore, it still remains that the transition into the live space is what creates the real transformation, generating bonds of solidarity and ultimately revealing an affinity with fifth wave feminist practice.

It is also important to note that fifth wave feminism is being constructed as part of a live, ongoing process, which includes this research and *The Anarchist Feminist Party*. By performance practice responding to the activism presently happening globally, the identity of feminism has also become a devising project as a result of being shaped by contemporary feminist, socio-political discourse. In order to build upon the momentum, which Walker writes in her launch statement referenced in the introduction, it is important to acknowledge the afterlife of feminist work, which is not just located in the theatre. Within the case study section of this dissertation, we come to recognise how Holstein brings the online discourse into the live space and facilitates an environment in which issues such as post-feminism and contemporary culture can be examined and scrutinised. Holstein uses different techniques of performance, such as rapid fluctuations between personas and a fully present dialogue with

the audience addressing an awareness of her own practice. Holstein uses the tools of the moment to raise questions about women's rights, intersectional concerns and the tenacity of the patriarchy through these various evocations of participatory engagement in the live space and creates a dialogue which transcends the walls of the theatre. However, Holstein demonstrates that her work contains influences from feminist methodologies of the 1970s, both in the medium and content of her shows, which illustrates the idea of fifth wave feminism building upon previous movements and coming into the fight on the shoulders of the people who went before.

Some of the key concerns raised in particular performances at *The Anarchist Feminist Party* centred upon the idea of remembering the fights that allowed us to be where we are now. For example, Ickle's performance acknowledged the battles fought by a lineage of feminists that laid the ground for contemporary performance practice and activism. Ickle applied these principles to the aftermath of *The Anarchist Feminist Party*, when requesting the creation of a page dedicated to the continuation of the community formed at the event. *Grace Grace* also insisted that we should not forget the labours of our predecessors and in fact build upon their achievements. However, one could argue that by building a movement based on a model generated by previous feminists, we could potentially be excluding the involvement of *all* who identify as women as well as anyone who is not white, middle-class and able-bodied, which was also considered in the Pussy Riot case study. It could be suggested that by using older models of practice in contemporary feminism, you are implying that all women should assimilate to the earlier categories of woman, which have traditionally been epitomised by the voice of cis-gendered, middle-class, white women. This was also evidenced in the work of Meghie and Ramos during *The Anarchist Feminist Party*, who were urging for their voices to be heard and not overlooked in the fifth wave. As suggested by Sisters Uncut and Sara Ahmed earlier on, one could also argue that in order to create an unequivocally inclusive feminist movement, it demands the destruction of the current movement in order to start again. I believe that because the fifth wave is focused upon creating access and inclusivity as well as placing diversity and intersectionality at the core of its aims, it will provoke activists and performance practitioners to question how they are creating pathways to the movement. By using previous models of feminist movements, fifth wave feminists can use the tools of their predecessors, both as an example and a critique, of how we can acknowledge difference to build a stronger movement of solidarity.

As I conclude this research, I attended a protest against Donald Trump's visit to the UK on July 13, which saw more than 250,000 protestors (Together against Trump - for a safe climate, 2018) gather together on the streets of London in a mass demonstration. The

protest was named 'carnival of resistance' (Together against Trump - for a safe climate, 2018) and organisers of the Women's March joined forces with the demonstration and initiated #BringTheNoise (Bring the Noise, 2018). As protesters were encouraged to greet Trump with this 'wall of sound' (Bring the Noise, 2018), a six-metre 'angry Trump baby' balloon flew overhead and a Drag Protest Parade which called 'all kings, queens, queers and our allies to DEFEND DIVERSITY' (Drag Protest Parade for the Trump UK Visit, 2018) marched alongside in solidarity. The performative aspects of this demonstration further illustrate and exemplify the intrinsic link between performance and protest, as illuminated in chapter one, showing that embodied actions and face to face encounters still remain essential in the mobilisation of activism and will continue to support the actions of fifth wave feminism. As these events occur, the construction of the fifth wave continues to develop, although it is important to note that the findings of this dissertation are predominantly centred upon the experiences of London-based feminist performers. However, this analysis lays the groundwork for future research into the progression of fifth wave feminism and its dialogical relationship to contemporary performance practice worldwide. Therefore, a natural progression of this work is to analyse the landscape of contemporary feminist performance practice on international platforms in order to gain deeper insight and to understand the current shaping of fifth wave feminist praxis on a global scale.

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## **Appendix A**

The full list of artists and makers who contributed to *The Anarchist Feminist Party*, including the time slots.

### **Zine Fair**

Open from 17:30 until completion of the event

Grrrl Zine Fair

Ladz Zine Collective

The Upper World: Fanzines

### **Art Exhibition**

Open from 17:30 until completion of the event

Rosina Godwin

Julia Maddison

Oneslutriot

Caineruable

Jude Kendall

Vita Sunter

### **Performance Rave**

18:30-22:00

Alpha Bites

Azara Meghie

Bella & The Lordwarfs

Majikleperfing

Natalie Wearden and Lizzie Masterton

Paola de Ramos

Ruby Lane

Grace Grace Grace

Glittasphyxia

Jade-Ashleigh Jeffrey and Selena Rowe

### **Music Bands**

18:30-22:00

The Upper World

Belle Scar

Quim Smashers

Shitsick

**Photography**

Giulia Delprato

**Film**

Natasha Mwansa

## Appendix B

**Interview with Lauren Barri Holstein on December 12, 2017. This interview was conducted through email correspondence.**

*How is Fifth Wave Feminism, or Current Feminism, in Dialogue with Performance Practice?*

Shannon Mulvey: How is 5<sup>th</sup> wave feminism (or current feminism) influencing/shaping your practice? Is this 'shaping' already taking place in the making-process, or mainly in the final product?

Lauren Barri Holstein: I usually use the term 'pop-feminism', or 'post-feminism' to refer to the way in which current feminism is very much shaped by popular culture and commodity capitalism. I believe this is a kind of 'faux feminism'. I'll refer to this in my response here. I often say that I inhabit the world of pop-feminism in my work in order to unmake it. Pop-feminism is the cultural context which my work presses against. It is a system that strongly shapes the way women are represented, how we represent ourselves, and the way we perceive our potential subjectivities. It is this that I attempt to problematise, critique and disrupt in my work by presenting alternative modes of agency, of representation and of subjectivity.

SM: How do you think feminist performance practice is now changing as a whole, in response to fifth wave feminism?

LBH: I'm not sure it's changing enough.

SM: How do you incorporate intersectionality? Is there an effort to reach an intersection of audiences?

LBH: This is something I am more recently confronting in my work. I find it incredibly important and also incredibly difficult. Because I make work on my own body, I find it difficult, and often inappropriate, to critique representations of other bodies, e.g. black female bodies. I do, however, try to approach this problem in a couple of other ways at the moment. One is to push myself to find ways to critique the whiteness and privilege of post/pop-feminism within my practice. I don't think I've done that publicly enough yet. The other is to explore intersectionality through workshops and conversations, and this I'm finding very fruitful. The Creative Learning workshop we did at the Barbican felt like an opportunity to facilitate critical thinking for young women of various races in regard to their own politics, their own representation, their own subjectivities.

SM: Do you attempt to give audiences opportunities for agency?

LBH: I think I try to create something that would encourage audiences to think critically about their accesses and uses of agency.

SM: How do you harness the online elements of your work and take them into the live space?

LBH: I'm not great at participating in online anything. I find social media nauseating, but I feel forced to make use of it in order to access wider audiences. I don't think I do that very well because I'm so resistant to it. I generally have someone else on my team monitor my social media spaces, partially to create content, but also to protect me from harassment.

## Appendix C

**Interview with Lois Weaver on November 18, 2017. This interview was conducted through audio files on email correspondence.**

*How is Fifth Wave Feminism, or Current Feminism, in Dialogue with Performance Practice?*

Shannon Mulvey: How do you feel that your practice interweaves with your presence online? I know in the past you have used an online persona on Twitter, how has this enabled you to move your practice into a digital space?

Lois Weaver: I think primarily I used my online presence, in the beginning, to promote my work and to let people know when I was performing and what I was performing. I think in the last two years, and certainly in the last year, since Trump was elected I began to use my online platforms much more as a way of voicing my opinions and also gathering people around a particular issue or a particular event as with the Bad and Nasty group of women who got together and did the *Not my President's Day* performances and of course with my Tammy Whynot YouTube channel and then my Twitter and my Facebook page, I've used that persona as a platform for my performances as much as it is a platform for my political work. I suppose you could say I get to advocate for elders, I get to advocate for lesbians, I get to advocate for a more just world in the current climate. I guess the other way that my online presence has begun to merge with my live performances is my use of certain kinds of public engagement protocols like the Care Cafe and the Long Table, Porch Sitings and things like that I've begun to use online presence as a way to open up those discussions. And for me, those practices are a true expression of my sense of what a democracy is and that we all deserve a place at the table, and I also believe that that work is inspired by my feminist methodologies, how can we make the world equal and make it a safe and just place for everyone.

SM: How has it had an effect or what effect has it had on your processes of making work?

LW: I think the effect it had on my work is a larger sense of community, whereas I am able to interact with people globally and I'm also able to let people know when I'm working globally where I'm working globally. And I think it's had an effect on how I decide what is used to talk about and how to bring those issues into my on-stage performance work of course it's also had an effect with my YouTube channel, Tammy's YouTube channel, because it's given me a new venue and the ability to make very quick shorts performance pieces to perform for an online audience

SM: What are the primary principles of your practice? How have you used your practice to facilitate your feminist activism?

LW: One of the primary principles of my practice is working from fantasy and what I mean is trying to address those desires that are deep within us. The things we always want to do, the things we always want to say, the people we've always wanted to be, and I think that's probably at the root of my feminist activism is that I believe that everyone has the right to achieve their potential and to follow their desires and to be the biggest and the best and the brightest they can be and I think that the work itself literally uses that principle. When we come to make work those are the principles that we ask ourselves and so they are both in explicit and implicit sense of empowerment in the work that you can make things you want to make, you can say the things you are saying, you can be the things you want to be certainly in a performance mode and for me that transfers into my feminist activism. Alongside that of course not just about making work, I've applied that principle to my work with women, women in prison, women at WOW, many of the times I come to teaching situations I've opened up that door to allow us to address our potential, to work with principles of equality and to be the best and the most fabulous we can be.

SM: In what ways do you feel your work has achieved public engagement? Has the internet transformed this relationship?

LW: It's interesting because probably since 2003 and certainly in the last 10 years or 7 years my work has basically been based on public engagement, it is public engagement. Most of my work has been participatory, my solo work has been participatory, I've created ways to enable conversations that are happening in public. I've incorporated domestic formats, domestic architecture, into more public situations to have the unfamiliar conversations in familiar places. I've created Long Tables for sitting, Care Cafes as ways to engage public with different subjects in some ways I've been more concerned about the structure and the architecture as a way of having equal accessible conversations in public than I have about what those conversations are actually about. So that's been my commitment to public engagement, of course, my work with Tammy Whynot is also all about public engagement. When I did *What Tammy Needs to Know about Getting Old and Having Sex* (2014) I used Tammy as my facilitator of public engagement to get people to have those conversations. What does it mean to get old? what does it mean to have sex or to not have sex? What does it mean to be lonely? What does it mean to want intimacy and not be able to have it? So I would say that even though in the past I did work with Split Britches that was around subjects that I would hope inspire conversation or inspire the need to think about

important subjects, the work that I'm doing most recently is really about public engagement itself and in fact at the moment I am a public engagement fellow at the Wellcome Trust where I'm looking at ways to use my own public engagement what I call protocols as a way to get people to think more carefully about health and well-being and mainly medicine and science in general.

SM: If you were to describe the next generation of feminism, what would you say?

LW: If I were to describe the next generation of feminism, I'm going to call it this generation of feminism, because it's a generation that is active now and, in the present, I think it is extremely fierce and fearless generation. I'm excited by the intersectionality, it's a feminism that's led by black lesbian feminist women of colour, disability activists, it's a real true mixture of activisms coming together under the heading of feminism and they are strong and they are questioning, they are fearless and fierce and I think they, whether as a generation want to admit this or not, they have the advantage of coming into the fight on the shoulders of the people who went before. So, there is a different kind of confidence and a different kind of strength and a different kind of intelligence and a different kind of sense of what it means to be public as feminist women and I think that's incredibly crucial. I mean yes, we were all public in the 70s and so on, but we didn't have the same kind of stage. I think the virtual stage and the media stage and the information generation, and the skills that are associated with that, have given this particular generation a big step up to achieve their goals and they are extremely visible and we are coming out of the time when feminism was a little bit hidden, not hidden but a little bit on the down low, and now it's gone right into public focus and so I would say now they are a visible, diverse, strong, fierce and fearless.

SM: How do you think performance practice will be shaped by the mass momentum of feminist cyber-activism?

LW: It is a difficult one to answer I guess but the first couple things that come to mind is that in the beginning and since I've been practicing as a feminist performance artist the notions around what feminist performance work was or what constituted feminist performance work was very much about autobiography. It was about telling the stories that haven't been told about making women, feminist women, lesbian women, various women of colour, disabled women etc visible and telling their stories in primarily a positive light although at the same time challenging certain kinds of binaries and challenging set instructions of not just gender but behaviour that's associated with gender and those are the kind of things that come from a very, very personal point of view and I also think that some of the considerations of

performance art leading up till now has been very body based about what our body images are, what our bodies can do, what they should do, about how people think about those bodies, how we think about those bodies ourselves and I think maybe what the practice of the future would be, will be much less about that, but that would be again building on that platform that's there. We have a culture now, we have a history, we have expressions of who we are, where we've been. I think now there will be stories centred upon lot more things like sexual harassment, equality in the workplace and philosophical considerations of other kinds of methodologies for making work. I think there's a certain kind of position now that feminists are in as a result of the internet in general and the amount of information and exposure that we have. We have people who are not only doing performance work but who are also doing political activism, we have a much vaster resource for coming up with ideas. I think that in some ways perhaps the performance art, the feminist performance art of the future will be a kind of, how do we perform as citizens in an equal and just society and how do we perform our feminism in our everyday life as well as in the extraordinary places of art and culture. How do we make those performances into the sort of brickwork I suppose of a better society I think that we will have many more ways of making work to choose from and many more subject matters to work from and have a much more diverse expression of exactly what it is to be a feminist.

SM: Do you see any similarities between previous waves of feminism and the current surge of political activism? Can you identify any similarities in recent performance practice?

LW: This is a particularly difficult one, do I see any similarities in previous waves of feminism. Well it's hard not to think about the suffragettes, as I watch the conversations online and also in the street particularly about the Women's March that happened in the winter and the early part of the year, it feels much as the same kind of urgency that we are fighting in a lot of ways for our lives, certainly in relation to the kind of onslaught of oppression that we are feeling now certainly in Trump's America and post Brexit in the UK and that there is a real urgency and a real fight and we fighting for our lives, so I think that's a big similarity. And we're fighting for feminism politically as well as culturally and in the same way I think that the suffragettes were and that way for feminism I will in terms of different like what I said before I think it's much more diverse and I think that diversity and intersectionality is really fundamental to the definition of feminism and that we are looking at various ways that we pull together our different threads of oppression, whether they be gender identity, sexuality, ability, class, race, ethnicity we pull all those things together and that is as hard as it might be at the moment because that creates a lot of tension. I think the tensions are ultimately going to make us stronger, able to sit in those differences and work



with those differences particularly, I think the suffragettes of the past were a bit of the sameness whereas we're a lot of differences, and that's going to be the strength of the future.

In terms of recent performance that's a difficult one I think, I guess I have to go back to the diversity issue again and back to the position I took earlier that the young feminist performance artists at the moment have the advantage of looking at the methodologies of the women who came before and who are in some ways creating those methodologies and so I'm thinking of Ship Theatre who is a feminist group who use incredible performance skills, they don't eschew the skills they actually embrace the skills they have musically, comically in terms of their timing and they address big issues through the lens of their feminism, such as housing for example. I think of Lauren Barri Holstein who looks and refers to loads and loads of feminist art-making that has gone before and by using that and referring to those strategies from the past she moves forward and investigates the monstrous feminine, which is against something that we are now able to look at more critically than we might have been to in the 70s. I think of maybe Figs in Wigs who I'm pretty sure they would see themselves as a feminist group and their considerations are purely aesthetic and are not political by the book by the virtue of the fact of their collective work practices and the kinds of work that may make and the kind of things that they address aesthetically. Lucy McCormick is another one who comes to mind, who has looked at in the last piece the canon of the Bible stories and is trying to retell those through the monstrous feminine of her own body amongst other things, again with her skills her dancing, her singing, so I think that women are really honing their practice and they are applying their practice to bigger more broad subjects by using the critical lens of feminism to address those subjects.

## Appendix D

**Interview with Kim Solga on February 18, 2018. This interview was conducted through Skype.**

*How is Fifth Wave Feminism, or Current Feminism, in Dialogue with Performance Practice?*

Shannon Mulvey: How do you think feminist performance practice is now changing as a whole, in response to fifth wave feminism?

Kim Solga: Part of it is about an invitation provided by an artist but part of it is also people will just talk shit about it on the internet anyway. So, if they see interesting work they're going to talk about that, they won't talk shit about it, but they're going to talk about it.

Um, it might be worth thinking really carefully about to what extent this is work that is enabling particular kinds of online discourses and to what extent this is work that is simply located in a moment in time and space and technology where a dialogue via that technology is inevitably emerging.

So, I think there are probably lots of different ways that individual artists do that and also different places on that spectrum that they position themselves. So, like, the artist takes full advantage of technology to shape audience's engagement, artist assumes technology will take care of that and doesn't focus on that, so it's interesting to think about how different artists position themselves in that way.

I think about it's interesting I just had a tea on Friday with Lois Weaver who is over here in Toronto doing a bunch of work at a couple of different festivals and so she and I had a chance to hang out because we used to teach together at Queen Mary and I've known Lois since 2005 when she in Peggy chance of the residency in Texas when I was there We were talking about the different ways that her practice is evolving even if she's getting older and thinking about retiring. Partly because there there's a kind of renewed impetus towards the kinds of work that she does that's made visible online and so on but also, she's not someone who, she and Peggy don't make a huge deal of their social media presence 'Tammy Whynot' have a YouTube channel and she posted things there but they're not super online people. A lot of their practices are face to face thing, I actually caught her after a workshop she was doing with LGBTQ+ elders and then they were going to be in her show the next day and so it's interesting to see her practice evolving live and using technology in the most basic way, but not necessarily as a tool of engagement so...

SM: That's interesting because I actually interviewed Lois as part of this dissertation

KS: That's great and what did she say? I'm forever tagging her in Facebook posts and she never replies because she never checks her Facebook.

SM: A form of active resistance you think?

KS: No, I just think she can't be arsed! She is committed to making dialogue a lot of the long table format public address systems is a live conversation and I really value the long table format as a kind of, and I've seen it used in multiple ways, most of the Long tables I've participated in haven't involved Lois at all. I think I've only done one or two with her, and the thing that I find really remarkable about it is it's a kind of like a live internet because there's a topic but there's no active curation of the discussion- it's like here you go! But because we are, because there are rules and there are limited rules around discussion, but there are some rules and because we're all at the table together and were given the opportunity to speak but also write it's like we have to, we have no choice but to take responsibility for what we're saying in a way that you don't necessarily need to do online. One of the ones I participated in with Lois at LADA in I think 2014, that got really intense, there was some real fighting in the room I think we could all feel the tension but the thing that was important is that you can't just be an asshole and entrench and walk away you are in front of, at the table with the person that you're talking to. It never occurred to me before right now to think about that in that way that a lot of the stuff that Lois, especially in the Tammy persona but not exclusively, a lot of the stuff that Lois does is forcing us to have the kind of conversations that have become typical online in a face-to-face way and to recall the ethics of conversation and take that seriously. I wouldn't say that Lois is a fifth wave feminist, but I would say that she is making work at this moment

I have to say that since moving back to Canada, I've spent a lot of time going to what one would call conventional theatre because there's a lot of stuff happening here is what we might be called conventional theatre in terms of thinking about intersectionality in terms of thinking about the complexities of race in a country that doesn't necessarily take race as a thing that it needs to worry about even though we constantly bombarded by reminders that we are not the pure Anti-Americans that we like to fetishize.

I can tell you that there are some people here whom there are some very significant, politically engaged, quite young feminist company, people running companies here including someone called Nina Lee Aquino who was a student with me in the 90s at the University of Toronto and now runs the Factory Theatre which is an established, it has a kind of Young

Vic status. It wasn't always an established Theatre now it is it came of age in the 70s and 80s trying to produce new Canadian work and get away from colonial attitudes towards to what should be good quality Canadian work and Nina's made her mission for the work to be as not white as possible she's Filipina she's actually part of the Aquino family, so she's a very privileged Filipina, but she's a really interesting artist and she programmed the last season. The entire season was called 'Beyond the Great White North' and was about an entirely non-white artist making work, some of it was super successful and some of it was so pedestrian and I'm like it makes me think about the ways in which success is still measured by a conventional yardsticks around what quality dramaturgy is but there also some really great a lot of really young people running interesting companies here Evalyn Parry runs Buddies in Bad Times, which is a queer outfit and she was involved in this really fascinating projects performance lecture called Kiinalick: These Sharp Tools, which she made in conjunction with an Inuit artist who is in the same age as her I think they're in their early 40s. That was a really fantastic beast which was technologically sophisticated but also was all with the drive to engage all of the people in the room and engaged in a conversation. So, there's one point where they're talking about when they met when they met on a science vessel in the Arctic. They make this show about discovering each other and trying to work together and at one point it have this big globe up on the screen and all these really great screens all around the space and live music and they put the globe up and the house lights up and everybody has to talk to their neighbour about the furthest place North that they've ever been and a few people weigh in and they've got a live feed which will move the globe so we can pinpoint the people that they are talking about and that moves onto a segment where the screen goes blank and Laila brings in an overhead projector with acetate and she turns on the bulb and she proceeds to use the edge of a knife to create Inuit tattoos on the acetate. So she replicates on the acetate, by carving on the acetate, she replicates the tattoos on her arms and her legs and talks about the relationship between her tattoos and ancestry because while we think of tattoos as representational of the people inside particular cultures tattoos are actually evocations to ancestors, they are not a representation, they are a presentation, a making manifest which is a mind fox and a lot of Western viewers following on from this making manifest.

Following on from this, they talk about Greenlandic dancing as a way of adopting the mask and then the dancer becomes the ancestor. So, she does that and then starts climbing into the audience and starts getting as sexually explicit as you can with clothes on with all of the people that she's performing inside of the persona of this mask and she's an expert in Greenlandic dancing so she's doing it by the book. But this is a freak-out moment so there were people of the company planted throughout the audience to escort people who were

becoming viscerally unable to continue watching. So, it's really interesting to me how it's a young, dynamic performer running this company who makes a whole bunch of different work all the time. But I was really interested in the fact of these two women used the occasion of their meeting as a cultural bonding, as a moment of cultural positioning: as western, as not western, as Canadian, as not Canadian. It's really interesting to think about how they used technology in a variety of different ways to generate engagement in the room and to question our relative positionings in the room.

For me, the most interesting thing about the show is the way that it asks the audience to take real responsibility in their participation it wasn't like going to You Me Bum Bum Train or going to a Punchdrunk show or even going to a regular show that has a talk-back afterward. It was there was a demand that we all engage, it was framed in the form of an invitation, but it was not, it was mandatory and the interesting thing about it too is that everything got debriefed. So after Leila finished her Greenlandic dance, whether people freaked out or not, she sat at the lip of the stage and she started to take all of her makeup trappings off (she had put them on in front of us so she had to take them off) and as she was doing that she narrated the nature of the dance and what it's meant to do and how it functions and why it's in the show. So, there was a real sense of they take responsibility for what they've done to us and we take responsibility for the way we reacted to them, it was a genuine conversation.

Anyway, all of this to say that a lot of the work that I'm seeing, although it's not fifth wave, it is engaged in feminist politics, intersectionality and understanding technology to be a tool of live engagement, not necessarily of online engagement, not that that's absent of course. But my own experience has been that and what I find that really fascinating, and I think it's necessary because if we're seeing anything right now if the fallout from an American election and a Brexit referendum that was sought using false information and traded off online often perpetrated by those who goal it is to fuck up functioning systems for their own game. So, it's necessary to, I think to use technology in a way that calls out those internal processes that both takes advantage of their ability to reach wider audiences and to galvanize movements like #MeToo Movement, but also to question the way we talk online and how we pass information online and how bandwagon behaviours develop. I find it fascinating to see how quickly 'Me Too' hit a kind of peak and then started getting questions and how also demonstrably it is demonstrating rifts in feminist communities reminding us that we are all still subject to patriarchy. I am very fond of Margaret Atwood and I think of her as a very sensible human and what's really interesting to me is how some very, very context-specific comments that she made in relation to one specific case that was actually incredibly badly handled by the university at the centre of it, and for her as far as I've been able to work out,

her engagement with that issue has been very much about process at that University, the fact that universities are panicking when these kinds of allegations happen and doing the wrong thing in every way and how those context specific comments that were very controversial inside the literary community in Canada then got blown up, taking completely out of context, and then she's placed in this sort of swathe of older feminists who don't understand, and I'm like actually all the nuance is now gone, and so how can we, I think that's a question that's urgent and that a lot of feminists that I know and that I follow are wondering now how do we maintain nuance and the momentum of this movement and how do we work together given that the nature of things the nature of information shared on the web is based on the mean how quickly can we share the simplest polarized things so how can we use this form effectively for a nuanced critique of cultural practices, that's a big question.

SM: I was going to say I think it's interesting, I think you're very right when you're saying that it's as much about the online space as it is about the liveness. It's about bringing people into the room together and perhaps using the online space as a tool of organisation but then once you're in the room together you're almost brought to account for your comments, so it's not completely anonymised.

KS: yes I think so, and I've been thinking about Lauren's work and one of the things I quite love about her work and I've written it in the book too, is the way she flashes back and forward between the persona of someone who is fully confident in her presentation of a feminine self and someone who is fully there and in the moment with the audience and aware of the way her practice and could maybe be aware of the gaps. She moves between pure heart of this and honesty. I think that inevitably make me as a spectator go: what am I thinking about? What am I judging her for? How am I judging her? And that's again, it's a very specific kind of participatory engagement where I don't need to get on stage and clear the tampons off. But for the rest of us in the audience, we have to react, and we are like what is she doing? Did she rehearse this? Oh no I'm looking at her vulva or now she's talking to me and there are those points of all those manifestations. And we're used to some of them from porn and some of them from Keeping up with the Kardashians and some of them cringe-worthy and she's just like hi let's see what we thought about that. What do we think about that? It's incredibly instructive for audiences you're just going away, and you can't not think about your reactions because your reactions are visceral and dramaturgically the goal is the opposite of trying to make the audience feel comfortable with that particular thing. And if that means having a consistent audience experience Lauren fucks that right up

by transforming our experiences from moment to moment and engaging with us as sentient audiences.

In some ways, it's kind of the opposite to the show that I described earlier. Although Lauren's not crawling on us, she's not shutting us down. When Lauren's doing her thing on stage you're reacting as though you were at a conventional play, you're in your seat, you're protected to some extent, you're called out maybe, but you're not come at. And I think there might be more room maybe for unpacking that afterward if you're the kind of person who might shut down and not engage, yeah, I don't know.

It's interesting to me that the kinds of work that you're making and teaching and following. To me, the interesting thing is what are the different practices of audience engagement that are useful? Those things contract. What's an intentional creation on the part of the artist and what's just an evolving practice on the part of the audience? And to what end? Because all feminist work cares about an afterlife, right? None of its located just in the theatre. So how are we using the tools of this moment and how are we using the kinds of questions about women's rights and intersectional concerns and the tenacity of the patriarchy, how are we using those things to create the afterlife of the work?

SM: Just going off what you said about the afterlife of the work, I'm actually looking at Pussy Riot as well, as part of a case study for this dissertation and I went to see their show Riot Days and I'm interested in how much you think they are giving over their image to the capitalist machine and how much of it is actually creating momentum and creating the afterlife of those stories?

KS: I don't think it's ever one or the other. I think we do ourselves a disservice to imagine that you can escape the capitalist framework or capitalist patriarchal framework. It's interesting given that the Pussy Riot team, their context is Russia, so they have a very different sense of what capitalism is and does than we do. Russian capitalism is exploitative and powerful it makes social change sometimes for the worst, often for the worst, but also potentially for the better. So, I think it's a context worth keeping in mind for them, but I don't think there's an outside of patriarchy and I don't think there's an outside of capitalism. I just think there are ways to engage and navigate it. I don't think there's necessarily anything wrong with taking the money and running. I had a student writing a paper on Punchdrunk and one of the questions is what their profit margins are, and the answer is not very much. So, I think following the money can be very valuable, rather than being like 'you're a capitalist sell out'. Get the Michael McKinney approach where you follow the money see

who's putting up the money, what they're doing with it, what good it is achieving or not. Michael's most recent work, because he's more of a political economist of theatre, and his most recent work has been about the ways in which real estate and property transactions include social components. What those social components look like, what they find how they are used for the good and what are the latter outcomes of this sort of Faustian bargain that a lot of arts companies in an age of austerity are forced to take advantage of.