

Sheffield Hallam University

The politics of neo-burlesque: an investigation into the performer–audience relationship

HALEY, Claudia Jazz

Available from the Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

<http://shura.shu.ac.uk/30602/>

A Sheffield Hallam University thesis

This thesis is protected by copyright which belongs to the author.

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

Please visit <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/30602/> and <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/information.html> for further details about copyright and re-use permissions.

The Politics of Neo-Burlesque: An Investigation into the Performer–audience Relationship

Claudia Jazz Haley

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

May 2021

Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.
2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
3. I am aware of and understand the University's policy on plagiarism and certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted has been properly and fully acknowledged.
4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy.
5. The word count of the thesis is 64,583.

Name	Claudia Jazz Haley
Award	PhD
Date of Submission	May 2021
Faculty	Dept of Humanities
Director(s) of Studies	Dr Sophie Bush

Abstract

The title of this thesis is *The politics of Neo-Burlesque: an investigation into the performer–audience relationship*.

The performer–audience relationship in live Contemporary Burlesque entertainment is carefully produced, developed, and maintained. All participants (compere, audience, and performer) understand and acknowledge that the performer has full agency, is aware of being watched, and is able to see and respond directly to the audience. Together, they are able to give consent to, contribute towards, and create an explorative environment. This interaction allows the potential for such a relationship to develop into one of mutual vulnerability, respect, agency, and trust. Within this curated space, unheard voices and narratives that are alternative to the societal status quo can be platformed and witnessed.

The aim of this research is to adequately articulate this specific relationship, where other researchers in this emerging field of research have not. To do this, specific research questions have been asked:

1. How are performer–audience relationships created across Contemporary Burlesque?
2. How are performer–audience relationships experienced across Contemporary Burlesque, in terms of vulnerability and voyeurism?

To address these questions, a methodology was designed to include theory, observational, and interviewing methods. I then created a Burlesque persona, Arabella Twist, to develop a reflexive, performance-led, practice-as-research method to discover and identify specific factors that create this relationship.

The ‘Burlesque script’ and the ‘dialogic gaze’ are two factors that contribute to the knowledge generated by this thesis, and together they form a new deeper understanding of the performer–audience relationship in Burlesque. The Burlesque script, as a sequence of performer-initiated, visual cues for the audience to follow and respond to, is a launch pad for the curation and development of the dialogic gaze. The dialogic gaze is the exchange of energy, power, and agency that

oscillates between the performer and audience based on mutual vulnerability and trust.

Similar phenomena may be experienced in other forms of performance, and this understanding may benefit those forms and be of interest to those studying theatre, performance art, and the theoretical analysis of live entertainment. It may also be relevant to those from other disciplines (such as psychology and gender studies) researching consent, agency, and the gaze.

For the Burlesque community, this thesis acknowledges and investigates the nuances of the art form beyond the 'them and us', 'audience and performer' structure of some traditional theatre, offering further distinctions in the mechanics of making and creating Burlesque performance as co-learning.

Key words and phrases:

Dialogic gaze, Burlesque, performer–audience relationship, vulnerability, trust, disability

Acknowledgments

I wish to express my gratitude to Sheffield Hallam University's Stage and Screen Faculty for funding the first three years of this PhD enquiry and enabling me to fulfil a goal I had had for a long time. I would like to thank my supervisory team for their support, guidance, thoughtful comments, and recommendations over the past six years: Dr Sophie Bush, Dr Dani Abulhawa, Dr Shelley O'Brien, and Dr Matthew Pateman. Thank you to Dr Frances Babbage, who sparked my desire to continue researching, exploring, and uncovering voices beyond my MA dissertation. A special thanks goes to Kate Salinsky, my Specialist Learning Advisor, who helped me to organise my thoughts and kept me on track with an endless stream of post-it notes.

I would also like to give a heartfelt thanks to the Burlesque community for their support, curiosity, and endlessly creative nature, and in particular to Lady Wildflower, who took me under her wing and showed me the ropes, and without whom the whole process of becoming a performer would have been much harder and less fun.

Thanks go to the producers and their teams who agreed to have me in their audiences and then on their stages as Arabella Twist. Special mentions go to Cherie Bebe, Heidi Bang Tidy, Minxie Coquette, Toots & Leigh. Of course, thanks to my interviewees, other audience members, and performers, who opened up to me about their experiences of Burlesque. Also, to Tab Kimpton, whose patience must have been tested when teaching me how to make my own costumes.

On a more personal note, thank you to my friends (old and new) and family, who have supported me through this journey. To my parents, Yvonne and David, who have always encouraged me to pursue my goals, thank you. Lastly, thank you Jules for supporting me every step of the way, even when you weren't entirely sure what I was doing, for the cups of tea (forcing me to take a break) and for making me laugh.

Photography Credits

A special thanks to all the photographers who allowed me to use their work to illustrate the highly Burlesque art form:

Ben Gwynne, at 159Photography, <https://www.facebook.com/159photography/>

Darren McGinn Photography, <https://www.darrenmcginn.co.uk/photography.html>

Hannah Freeman, at Betty Noir Studios, <https://www.bettynoirstudio.com/>

James Millar, jamestmillar.com

Jo Marshall, at Solstice Photography, formerly with Joust Photography

John Utton, <https://johnutton.smugmug.com/>

Neal Rylatt Photography, <https://www.nealrylattphotography.com/>;

Tony Heath Art, <https://www.facebook.com/TonyHeathArt/> and <https://tonyheathart.wordpress.com/about/>

Table of Contents

<i>Candidate Declaration</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Photography Credits</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Table of Illustrations</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>14</i>
Impetus for Research	14
Burlesque’s Reaction to Me	15
Global Context	16
A Brief History of Burlesque	18
Key Terms	24
Thesis Scope and Structure	30
1. Literature Review	34
Politics	37
Societal Theatre	37
Defining Politics in Theatre	40
Evolution of Terms: Politics	43
Is Burlesque Theatre?	43
The Question of Legitimacy	46
Popular Burlesque and (Novel-) Burlesque.....	48
Popularised Burlesque	48
Contemporary Burlesque – the Original 1990s Subculture	50
Voyeurism	51
Seeing is Believing.....	52
Definitions of Voyeurism	53
Mythology of the Voyeur - the Peeping Tom.....	56
Stigma, Shame and Secondary Objectification	57
Evolutions of Terms: The Dita-Effect	58
The Active Voyeur?	59

Evolution of Terms: Voyeurism.....	61
Vulnerability	61
Defining Vulnerability	61
Shame, Resilience, and Precarious Living	62
Evolution of Terms: Vulnerability	63
Vulnerability, Revelation, Empowerment.....	64
Evolution of Terms: Proximal Identification	68
Performer–Audience Relationships	70
Performer–Audience Relationships in Literature on Theatre.....	70
New Women and Chorus Girls – Spectacle, Agency, and Control	78
The Performer: ‘Awareishness’, Duality and Transformation.....	81
Visual Spectacle and Sound as Communication	83
Evolution of Terms: Trickster Space and Ritual	84
Evolution of Terms: Conduit	89
Evolution of Terms: Burlesque Script.....	91
Evolution of Terms: the Dialogic Gaze	91
Conclusion: The Gaps in Knowledge	94
2. Practice Review.....	99
Reflective Writings.....	100
Audience Subjectivity – Performance Review.....	101
Researcher – Semi-Structured Interviews.....	102
The Mechanics of Burlesque – Audience Perspective	103
The Law	104
The Event.....	105
The Venue	106
The Audience	108
The Framing of Burlesque – the Compere	110
The Compere – Stepping Over the Line	116
The Willing Participant.....	118
The Craft - Visual Styles and Content	119
Classic Burlesque	119
Neo-Burlesque	121

Virtuoso and Vernacular	127
Routine Types	128
Conclusion	131
3. Development of Practice	134
Reflective Writings	134
Performer Subjectivity – Practice-as-Research	136
Creation of Persona and Routine.....	137
Finding Arabella Twist: Attaining New Skills	138
Promotion, Branding, Marketing, and Social Media.....	141
Performance: First and Second Routine	144
Examination Performance	148
The Mechanics of Burlesque – Performer’s Perspective	149
The Event.....	150
The Compere – Framing of Performances	150
Performer’s Perspective – Audiences Overstepping the Line.....	151
The Craft – Practicalities and Function	152
Classes and Courses	152
Resources.....	154
Costuming.....	155
Getting a Gig	157
Castings.....	157
Payment	158
Rejection and Silence.....	159
The Craft – Communication and Interaction.....	159
Motivation	159
The Persona	160
Persona Concept.....	161
Burlesque Script.....	162
Improvisation.....	164
Intent and Gesture.....	164
Conclusion	166
4. Beyond Awareness – the Dialogic Gaze.....	170
The Short Cut to the Dialogic Gaze	170

In Detail: Perle Noire.....	175
In Detail: Dita Von Teese.....	184
Creating, Experiencing and Interpreting the Dialogic Gaze	187
In Detail: Arabella Twist.....	190
Conclusion	198
5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust	201
The Creation of New Spaces and Communities – Trickster Space.....	202
Global Community - Generosity and Learning	204
Community Bond	206
Defining Performance Strategies.....	210
Revealing of Self	212
Provoking	219
In Detail: Rubyyy Jones	222
Offering	230
In Detail: Arabella Twist – Making the Invisible Visible.....	232
Performing On The Edge – Proximal Identification	240
Conclusion	246
6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability.....	254
Framing and Instigating Trust.....	255
In Detail: Cinnamon Cheeks	256
In Detail: Arabella Twist – Trusting Self.....	263
Creating New and Inclusive Dialogues.....	269
Conclusion	283
Conclusion	286
Glossary.....	302
Bibliography	314

Appendices	344
Appendix 1: Examiners Invite.....	344
Appendix 2: Conference Papers and Supporting Creative Works	348
Appendix 3: Interview Participants Profiles.....	350
Interview Profiles - Audiences	350
Interview Profiles - Performers.....	353
Appendix 4: Information Sheet for Impromptu Conversations	358
Appendix 5: Information Sheet for Interview Participants.....	360
Appendix 6: Interview Consent Form	363
Appendix 7: Performer Semi-Structured Interview Questions	365
Appendix 8: Audience Semi-Structured Interview Questions.....	367
Appendix 9: Performances Reviewed	369
Appendix 10: Practice-as-Research Performances	372
Appendix 11: Burlesque Script Accounts of Routines.....	374
Appendix 12: Brief History Timeline of Burlesque	378
Appendix 13: Arabella Twist Biography.....	385
Appendix 14: Performer Links	386

Table of Illustrations

Figure 1. A diagram of the definitions of Burlesque used in this thesis.....	26
Figure 2. (left) Comperes: Heidi Bang Tidy, HBBF 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	111
Figure 3. (right) Comperes: Amber Topaz, 2018. Photography: Neal Rylatt Photography. Amber Topaz, 2018.	111
Figure 4. Comperes: (left) Abigale Collins, March 2017. (right) Velma Von Bon Bon as Natalia Kalashnikov. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	113
Figure 5. (left) Comperes: Jonathan Mayor, December 2019. Photography: Darren McGinn Photography.....	114
Figure 6. (right) Comperes: Rueben Kaye, July 2016. Photography: Tony Heath Art.	114
Figure 7. Classic Burlesque: (left) Wonderful Ginger and (right) Oriana, HBBF 2016. Photography: 159Photography.	119
Figure 8. (left) Pinup Classic Burlesque: Seedy Frills, HBBF 2016. Photography: 159Photography.	120
Figure 9. (right) Pinup Classic Burlesque: Petite Pois, HBBF 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).	120
Figure 10. (left) Classic Burlesque: Havana Hurricane. Photography: Neal Rylatt.	121
Figure 11. (right) Classic Burlesque: Havana Hurricane, HBBF 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).	121
Figure 12. Neo-Burlesque: (left) Aurora Nova and (right) Misty Strange, HBBF 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	123
Figure 13. Neo-Burlesque: (left) UmA Shadow and (right) Cheski Kobler, HBBF 2016. Photography: 159Photography.	124
Figure 14. Boylesque: Tom Harlow, HBBF 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).	125
Figure 15. (left) Drag Queen - Dolly Trolley, HBBF 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	126
Figure 16. (right) Drag King - Rusty Von Chrome. Photography: Tony Heath Art.....	126
Figure 17. (left) Virtuoso: Vicky Butterfly. Photography: Tony Heath Art.	128
Figure 18. (right) Vernacular: Good Ness Gracious. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	128
Figure 19. (left) Feature Act: Anna Fur Laxis with her 'Viva Bettie' routine, 2018. Photography: Tony Heath Art.	130
Figure 20. (right) Bump and Grind: Millie Dollar, 2016. Photography: Tony Heath Art.	130
Figure 21. 'Who am I? The Burlesque Flip Book and Paper Dolls'. Created for TaPRA annual conference exhibition, 2017.	139
Figure 22. (left) Lady Wildflower performing 'Kinky' at HBBF Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.	141
Figure 23. (right) Velma Von Bon Bon performing 'Monkey Business' at HBBF Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.	141
Figure 24. Arabella Twist. Photograph by Betty Noir Studio, 2016.	142
Figure 25. Work in progress (a). From Kimpton's drawing to altering the black-sequined dress and creating a stand-up collar, 2016; just one of seven costume pieces we created.	145
Figure 26. Work in progress (b). From Kimpton's drawing to altering the black-sequined dress and creating a stand-up collar, 2016; just one of seven costume pieces we created.	146
Figure 27. Arabella Twist debut performance, March 2017. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	147

Figure 28. Arabella Twist exam performance, 'Frida', December 2019. Photography Darren McGinn Photography.....	148
Figure 29. Anne Addiction performing, September 2018. Photography: Darren McGinn Photography.....	156
Figure 30. Arabella performing STRIP with gloves, 2019. Photography: Darren McGinn Photography.....	163
Figure 31. Intent and gesture: Raven Noir, November 2017. Photography: Darren McGinn Photography.....	166
Figure 32. Perle Noire performing 'Boudoir Fantasy' and 'Jade Fantasy', HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.....	176
Figure 33. (top) Velma Von Bon Bon and (bottom) Lady Wildflower onstage at Todmorden Town Hall HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.....	177
Figure 34. Perle Noire performing 'Boudoir Fantasy', HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.....	178
Figure 35. Perle Noire performing 'Boudoir Fantasy', HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.....	179
Figure 36. Perle Noire performing 'Boudoir Fantasy', HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.....	180
Figure 37. Perle Noire performing 'Jade Fantasy', HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.....	181
Figure 38. Perle Noire performing 'Jade Fantasy', HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.....	182
Figure 39. Perle Noire performing 'Jade Fantasy', HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.....	183
Figure 40. Narrative script climax: killing the puppy, 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	191
Figure 41. Burlesque script climax: tassel twirling and revealing dalmatian G-string, 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	192
Figure 42. Reverse striptease for Peel of Fortune, 2019. Photography: John Utton.....	197
Figure 43. Reverse striptease for Peel of Fortune, 2019. Photography: John Utton.....	198
Figure 44. Rubyyy Jones, 'Potty-mouth Princess', HBBF Festival Gala 2017. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	222
Figure 45. Rubyyy Jones, 'Potty-mouth Princess', HBBF Festival Gala 2017. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	224
Figure 46. Rubyyy Jones, 'Potty-mouth Princess', HBBF Festival Gala 2017. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	225
Figure 47. Rubyyy Jones, 'Potty-mouth Princess', HBBF Festival Gala 2017. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	227
Figure 48. Rubyyy Jones, 'Tellinnng', HBBF Diversitease 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	228
Figure 49. Rubyyy Jones, 'Tellinnng', HBBF Diversitease 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	229
Figure 50. (left) Dirty Martini as Lady Justice. Photography: Tony Heath Photography.....	233
Figure 51. (right) Demi Noir as Josephine Baker. Photography: Neal Rylatt Photography.....	233
Figure 52. Part one of 'Frida'. Photography: Darren McGinn Photography (left) 2020, (centre) 2018; Neal Rylatt Photography (right) 2018.....	235
Figure 53. Part two of 'Frida'. Photography: Neal Rylatt Photography (left) 2018; Darren McGinn Photography (centre) 2019; Neal Rylatt Photography (right) 2018.....	235
Figure 54. Part three of 'Frida'. Photography: Neal Rylatt Photography (left) 2018; Darren McGinn Photography (centre) 2019, (right) 2020.....	236

Figure 55. Part four of 'Frida'. Photography: Neal Rylatt Photography (left) 2018; Darren McGinn Photography (centre) 2019; Neal Rylatt Photography (right) 2018.....	236
Figure 56. Mine and Hannah's homage to Muray's famous photograph of Frida Kahlo, Betty Noir Studio, 2016.	237
Figure 57. Cinnamon Cheeks performing 'Stroke Survivor', HBBF Diversitease 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	258
Figure 58. Cinnamon Cheeks performing 'Stroke Survivor', HBBF Diversitease 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	259
Figure 59. Cinnamon Cheeks performing 'Stroke Survivor', HBBF Diversitease 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).....	259
Figure 60. (left) Diva Hollywood performing her 'Drag King Pirate'. Photography: Neal Rylatt Photography.	263
Figure 61. (right) Millie Dollar, 2019. Photography: Darren McGinn Photography.	263
Figure 62. Live Panel Discussion: the Cultural Case for Diversity – the Burlesque Elephant in the Room. (Left to right) myself, Coco Deville, Rubyyy Jones, Sweetpea, Heidi Bang Tidy (co-producer of HBBF) and Jo Verrent (senior producer for WeAreUnlimited).....	266
Figure 63. The Figure 1. diagram of the definitions of Burlesque used in this thesis in the Glossary.....	303

Introduction

Impetus for Research

Both as a researcher and as subject of my own research, I need to be clear about where my perspective on this project originates from. I grew up in an arts/academic family setting, with both parents heavily involved in political street theatre (Welfare State International), and I trained at drama school as a theatre director. I can pass as a white able-bodied female, but am in fact of mixed heritage (English, Jewish, and Indian), and have two disabilities – dyslexia and multiple sclerosis (MS – see Glossary). I am a pro-choice, sex positive feminist, and this stance is one that has emerged from and been confirmed by this research. I am a theatre practitioner and most of my findings are rooted in the practice of performance rather than in critical theory. I have spent the majority of my life performing and being involved in community-based theatre projects, carnivals, and street performances. As a result, my practice draws upon circus skills, clowning, devising, improvisation, puppetry, DIY culture, community building, and storytelling as well as traditional ‘legitimate’ theatre techniques.

For the purposes of this research, I created, and have been performing as, my Burlesque persona – Arabella Twist – beginning in March 2017. Cabaret, as an art form, shares aesthetics with fringe DIY, and community, street, and carnival theatre, which are all art forms I encountered a lot when growing up and later worked in. From a young age I was aware of two cult musical films in particular: *Cabaret* (1972), the story of Berlin nightclub performer Sally Bowles, played by Liza Minnelli, set during the rise of Nazism; and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), which promotes self-expression and sexual and gender freedom with a camp twist on science-fiction B-movies. The concept of wearing underwear as outerwear was, therefore, not unusual to me and was later reinforced by fashion designer Jean Paul Gaultier during my teen years. My love for the Golden Age of Hollywood films and for *Cabaret* influenced my playful 1920s to 1960s vintage style, with particular reference to the brunettes Louise Brooks (1920s), Audrey Hepburn (1950s–60s) and pinup, fetish icon Bettie Page (1950s). This aesthetic inspires Classic Burlesque (see 2. Practice Review), but it was not until I moved to Manchester and studied for my master’s degree at the University of Sheffield that I started researching the history of

women entertainers and clowns. Discovering circus and cabaret performers such as Josephine Baker inspired me to consider developing my own solo act. As a result, from the time I began this investigation, I wanted my own performance to be integral to the research.

Originally proposed as historical research, the focus quickly became a contemporary topic that led to Neo-Burlesque. The experience of seeing Neo-Burlesque for the first time was electric. I saw the performances and styles of the historical women clowns, fools, entertainers, and performers converge on the contemporary Neo-Burlesque stage, in North West England. The performers of the past – Baker, Marie Lloyd, Evetta Matthews, even the French court fool Mathurine – would have found their equals on that stage, with the comical wit, political agenda, and theatrical craftsmanship that was on show there. However, it was the performers' relationship with the audience that struck me most: lively and inclusive, you would be forgiven for not knowing who was a performer and who was an audience member, due to the level of participation the performers created with their audiences. In all my reading about Neo-Burlesque I had not found an adequate articulation of this exhilarating, performer–audience relationship. This thesis, along with my performance examination (8 December 2019, see Appendix 1: Examiners Invite), aims to fill that gap.

Burlesque's Reaction to Me

From the very beginning I was honest and open about my research interests in Burlesque with people at events, workshops, and shows. In accordance with the ethical agreement made with my university, I made producers, and subsequently the performers, aware of my attendance; when talking to people I would give them my contact details and on 16 April 2016 I publicly announced my intentions and research on Burlesque social media forums – the then globally used Facebook group Burlesque Big Sister/Brother Project (see 3. Development of Practice; Appendix 5: Performances Reviewed; and Appendix 10: Practice-as-Research Performances). The responses from people within the Burlesque community towards my presence as a researcher and my research were varied, ranging from those who were more than willing to share their art form with me, to those who were guarded due to past

experiences with academia and secondary objectification (see 1. Literature Review). Those who were wary accepted me once they realised that I was sincerely researching the art form by participating in all the roles available to me and that I intended to perform (2015–2017). They appreciated that I did not expect them to confide in me without my putting in the work to properly understand Burlesque. I did not want to investigate from an external viewpoint *about* Burlesque and its community, but rather to investigate from *within* as a part of the Burlesque community – hence the need for performance-based practice-as-research (see 3. Development of Practice; Appendix 5: Performances Reviewed; and Appendix 10: Practice-as-Research Performances). Due to the intertwining of my personal/academic identity as Claudia Jazz Haley and my Burlesque identity as Arabella Twist, I quickly became identified as the person to talk to or debate with at events, workshops, and other associated gatherings. One photographer nicknamed me “the intellectual Burlesquer” (impromptu conversation, 2019), even though there are at least four performers I have identified during this study who have or are currently working towards doctorates on Burlesque in the UK (Dr Gypsy Charms, Trixie Blue, BriTshit HeTart, and Scarlet Rose – I use their stage names as they identify publicly as performers). However, the early ethics agreement required by the university made my position and intentions public and therefore more visible. Whilst this intertwining of identities has led to issues regarding my safety as a researcher, it has also allowed the community to acknowledge and accept me in this role, with a lot of people being eager to hear and see developments throughout the process, and to trust me as part of the community.

Global Context

During this investigation (2015–2020) several global events had an impact upon the research and on me as a researcher and performer.

Discourse concerning gender, particularly pertaining to women’s agency, consent, and ‘everyday performance’ (Goffman, 1990) moved up the agenda with high profile media coverage of the Harvey Weinstein sexual harassment cases, ‘pussy grabbing’ Donald Trump’s laws against abortion, and the then UK female prime minister, Theresa May, discussing the gendered division of labour in a household on the

BBC's *The One Show*: "boy jobs and girl jobs" (Gillett 2017). Indeed, the 2017 TV production of Margaret Atwood's science-fiction book *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) looked more plausible than ever.

Other events that year included the US Women's March, which was three times larger than Trump's inauguration (Wallace & Parlapiano, 2017), and the social media campaign #MeToo, which raised awareness of daily sexual harassment in all industries and of all genders, together with the follow-up action campaign #TimesUp that aims to support those victims in gaining justice. Women's issues (including the gender pay gap, abortion rights, family planning, sanitary product taxing, and sexual harassment) remained in the public spotlight throughout 2018, as the 100-year anniversary of the emancipation of all men and some women in the UK was celebrated in the four nations. These themes of gender equality and agency are hotly debated within Neo-Burlesque and have a huge impact on how it is produced and created as women and minority voices are championed and foregrounded on the Burlesque stage.

From 2018 to 2019 Greta Thunberg galvanised youth globally with her School Strikes for Climate, her message reinforced by other environmental activists, such as Extinction Rebellion, to focus the minds of world leaders. However, most importantly for me, she highlighted through her actions how interconnected and interdependent we are as a species, despite the Brexit referendum (2016), which led to a rise in hate crimes founded on individualism, racism, homophobia, and far right politics that promoted a sense of isolation, segregation, and intolerance (Albornoz et al., 2021; BBC (h), 2019; Booth, 2019; Carr et al., 2020; Ladak, 2019; Quinn, 2019; Stop Hate UK, 2016). 'The Greta Thunberg effect' (Watts, 2019) made me consider what it means to be part of a community and what that community can achieve when motivated by a unifying goal or ethos. This will be discussed further in chapters 5. Strategies for Practising Vulnerability and Trust, and 6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability.

Globally, the year 2020 was extremely eventful. Extreme climate change events with mass flooding and forest fires prompted the declaration of a Climate Change Emergency, declared by thirty countries at the time of writing (Climate Emergency

Declaration, 2020). President Trump undermined democracy and the electoral process of the USA as he refused to concede the presidency and incited an attack on the Capitol Building. One can argue that Trump lost popularity by his mismanagement of Covid-19 and dismissal of the George Floyd murder by a white police officer. A video of George Floyd's murder went viral, and the Black Lives Matter campaign went global. Whilst the Covid-19 pandemic forced the whole world into social restrictions or lockdown, with over thirty million cases and over nine hundred thousand deaths (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2020), in the UK the Conservative government eased restrictions for the Christmas 2020 holidays. Despite having imposed lockdowns for all other equivalent religious festivals, the government placed the importance of the economy over the health of the population and subsequently issued a series of muddled catch phrases that confused the changing restrictions. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on some sectors in the UK, particularly the UK theatre industry, with many venues remaining closed from March 2020 to July 2021. Consequently, Neo-Burlesque moved online, and these changes are referenced throughout the thesis.

I propose that Burlesque and its community, are needed now more than ever. Burlesque as a space has the potential to amplify the voices of campaigns such as #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, and Extinction Rebellion, just as women and people of minority groups use the platform in order to be heard and to raise issues.

A Brief History of Burlesque

The history of Burlesque is vast and difficult to map due to the many crossovers with different genres of entertainment, cultural understandings, oral histories, and definitions of what Burlesque is (the working definition for this thesis is discussed in Key Terms). My range of sources come from historical studies of Burlesque performance and imagery, academic studies into Neo-Burlesque and 'stripping', performer's educational websites, PhD research theses, and writings in the popular press publications. As I traced the growth of and changes in Burlesque chronologically, I discovered certain prominent locations for Burlesque: London, England; Paris, France; and New York, Chicago, and Las Vegas in the US. Appendix 12 provides a timeline of these events.

Burlesque in its original form of lampooning and satirising society can be seen as far back as Ancient Greece (Ronnie, 2015; Von Teese, 2005; Von Vixen, 2017). Women in the seventh century performed comedy as Dorian Mimes: female clowns known for their mimicry of others (Johnson, 2000; McKechnie, 1931; Parker & Parker, 1975). However, for the purposes of this brief contextual view of Burlesque, I will focus on events from the 1800s to 1990s Neo-Burlesque (referring to the time period not the style of dance), then to the 2000s, ending in 2016, when my practice as research began.

There is a general consensus in the literature on Burlesque that Burlesque as we know it today started in the Victorian era as illegitimate entertainment in music halls, variety shows, pantomime travesty, extravaganza, or 'Burlesque' (Allen, 1991; Banks & Swift, 1987; Farson, 1972; Gillies, 1999; Glenn, 2000; Laudanum, 2015; Nally, 2009; Parker & Parker, 1975; Stedman Jones, 1974; Von Teese, 2005; Von Vixen, 2017; Weldon, 2010; Willson, 2008). During intervals between the billed headliners, women would perform dances or skits to deter audiences from leaving before the final act. In these interval dances the women performers may have shown a little ankle or shoulder, but they also used the pantomime tradition of the 'breeches' role, and in doing so they built up routines and sketches that were eventually billed. Judging by the fame and controversy that built up around music hall performer Lydia Thompson (and her troupe of British Blondes), she could be heralded as the 'mother' of Burlesque. She and her troupe performed to sell-out shows when they exported this form of entertainment to America in 1868 (Allen, 1991; Banks & Swift, 1987; Farson, 1972; Gillies, 1999; Laudanum, 2015; Montgomery, 2013; Nally, 2009; Parker & Parker, 1975; Von Teese, 2005; Weldon, 2010; Willson, 2008). They wore men's attire that revealed their female form to perform sketches in which they lampooned the classics, such as Shakespeare, and everyday politics. Meanwhile, in Paris, the Folies Bergere, founded in 1869, was followed by the, now infamous, Moulin Rouge (1889) (Parker & Parker, 1975; Von Teese, 2005). At these establishments the women performers lampooned upper-class fashions by performing extravagant dances in outfits that were designed to manipulate, hide, and restrain their figures (Adlington, 2015; Lynn, 2010; Nally, 2009). Towards the end of the nineteenth century the Western world saw a shift in perceptions and expectations

of women as a gender, with the creation of the 'new women', who had their own voices, opinions, and, potentially, their own agency (Glenn, 2000). The US opened up to new freedoms, importing and exhibiting discoveries from around the world at the World's Columbian Exhibition – a fair in which the performer Little Egypt (Fahreda Spyropolos) performed the 'danse du ventre', now known as the 'belly dance'. (Cheng, 2010; Von Teese, 2005; Weldon, 2010,). However, in the UK the entertainment industry, particularly music hall, underwent a sanitisation process due to pressure exerted by the Purity Party and the implementation of the Theatres Act 1843. Many performers were brought to trial on charges of indecency, including Marie Lloyd. (Banks & Swift, 1987; Farson, 1972).

The twentieth century was a roller coaster ride for Burlesque, with freedoms being explored in large-scale productions, which were then restrained by censorship, resurrected through ingenuity, and then lost to other forms of media, only to be rediscovered and channelled into the mass media once again.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Burlesque became, for the US, more and more about the extravagance of luxury and the fantastical decadence of set pieces, beauty, costuming, and, potentially, the lack of costuming, with the Ziegfeld's Follies opening in New York (1907). The choreographer of the Ziegfeld Follies, Ned Wayburn, created several dances and "Legmania", as the costumes followed "a less-is-more philosophy" (Glenn, 2000; Redniss, 2006, p. 28, p. 40; Weldon, 2010, p. 11). Later, in 1913, Billy Minsky produced Burlesque at the Winter Gardens, New York, with a focus on the curvier American girl (Glenn, 2000; Weldon, 2010; Von Teese, 2005). However, such indulgence, particularly the showing of skin and flesh, was soon reined in as censorship laws were introduced (1920s–50s). These laws dictated what a woman performing could and could not show on stage (which varied from State to State). The performers became very creative, finding loopholes in the form of nipple pasties and nipple tassels (Fraser, 2015; Von Teese, 2005; Weldon, 2010). In 1926, the now infamous Gypsy Rose Lee took up Burlesque and became known as the "Intellectual Stripper" (Blessing, 2013, p. 53). Harking back to Lydia Thompson's British Blondes, she talked to her audience whilst parading and peeling (Steinbeck, 1957; Willson, 2008). Prior to this, in 1925, the American all-Black cabaret (at the time of strict segregation laws in the US) Revue Negre, took

Josephine Baker to Europe. Baker made a huge impact in Paris and across Europe, bringing *Danse Sauvage* to the Folies Bergere. (Baker & Boullion, 1977; Damase, 1962; Jules-Rosette, 2012; Svendsen, 2013). Baker returned to the US in 1935–1936; however, American critics were not ready for such a sophisticated Black woman (Louck & Hamberman, 2002; Jules-Rosette, 2007). Baker returned to France and Europe where her career continued to flourish. Not long after this, censorship in the US saw Mayor Fiorello La Guardia shut Burlesque theatres in New York. (Weldon, 2010; Von Teese, 2005).

Meanwhile, in the UK, as the legal restrictions placed on music halls increased, performers became ever more creative in the way they performed the material their audiences wanted to see. The 1912 Royal Command Performance was the “final kiss of death” (Steadman Jones, 1975, p. 496) for music hall, as the desire to gain royal favour led to further censorship. Lloyd countered the Royal Command Performance with her own sell-out show “for the British Public” (Banks & Swift, 1987, p. 43). Her action was later mirrored by Burlesque producers throughout the twentieth century: protesting against censorship proved to be a good marketing tactic for those producers, who were as well making a public stand.

In 1931 The Windmill Theatre opened in London and to circumvent theatre licencing laws Vivian Van Damm’s performers posed as nude tableaux. These nude tableaux led to the coining of the phrase: ‘If it moves, it’s rude’, and exemplified the contrast between high and low attitudes to art (Mort, 2007; The Windmill Theatre, 2015). Once again, loopholes bred creative ways of working and between 1939 and 1941, during WW2, The Windmill Theatre became known for their boosting of home-front morale as “the show that never closed” during the Blitz. (Mort, 2007, p. 33; Sutherland, 2018; The Windmill Theatre, 2015). Elsewhere, Burlesque performers from the UK, the US and Europe performed for the troops both abroad and at home; such performers included Josephine Baker, who also became a French Resistance spy (Baker & Boullion, 1977; Follies Bergere, n.d.; Jules-Rosette, 2012).

By the 1940s, American Hollywood films heavily influenced performers (e.g., Lili St. Cyr, Tempest Storm) in the creation of what we now refer to as the ‘Classic Burlesque’ style (see 2. Practice Review). Focusing on the glamour of the upper

classes and on the tease (due to nudity laws), they looked for inspiration to film actors such as Marilyn Monroe, Betty Grable, Rita Hayworth, Hedy Lamarr, Vivien Leigh, and others. (Burlesque Bible special, 2016; Weldon, 2010; Von Teese, 2005) However, Burlesque performers were still being arrested, put on trial, fined, and, in some cases, jailed. Website writer Femme Vivre La Rouge illustrates this with at least seven articles on such incidents for Pin Curl web-magazine (Pin Curl, n.d.) and other sources confirm this (Street Swing, n.d.; Pin Curl, n.d.; Pulp International, 2018; Weldon, 2010). Even though performers were navigating the precarious censorship laws of live performance in the US, *Playboy* magazine was created in 1953, giving rise to more easily accessible pornography (Burlesque Bible special, 2016). With the emergence of new forms of media and ways to see performers, Tempest Storm and Bettie Page took advantage of the situation to perform in the film *Varitease*, 1954, and then in *Teaserama* in 1955 (Burlesque Bible special, 2016). In the US, Baker returned to performing, stipulating one condition: she demanded Black and white integrated audiences and stage crews. This was granted and was a huge success (Jules-Rosette, 2007; Dudziak, 1994).

In the UK, Raymond's Revuebar opened in London in 1958, advertised as the 'Worlds Centre of Erotic Entertainment' (Heathcote, 2019). Due to its status as a private member's only club, it was one of the few venues legally allowed to present full frontal nudity and moving performers, thus it was able to evade the Lord Chamberlain's scrutiny (Mort, 2007). This was significant, as The Windmill Theatre closed in 1964. The Raymond Revuebar presented a Festival of Striptease, which later became a Festival of Erotica (1967), hosting international performers including dance troupes such as Crazy Horse from Paris (Mort, 2007, p. 50; Thames News, 1988; Truman, 2015). Three years later, the Lord Chamberlain's theatre censorship was abolished (1968) and the musical *Hair* (with its controversial brief nudity and overt themes of free love) opened in London's West End (Montgomery, 2013).

As technology and mass media developed during the twentieth century, films such as *Gypsy* (1962) (based on the memoirs of Gypsy Rose Lee), *Cabaret* (1972), and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975), which explored sexuality, gender politics, and gender performance were highly popular and gained widespread distribution. By the 1980s, striptease Burlesque was no longer in demand, as full frontal nudity was

easily accessible in theatre, film, magazines, and strip clubs. However, the performance arts, film, theatre, and music performance took on some of Burlesque's attributes (Montgomery, 2013; Weldon, 2010).

The 1990s saw Burlesque re-emerge. In the US, born out of a need for alternative entertainment and derived from punk and party-scene dance troupes, clubs such as The Velvet Hammer and The Blue Angel Cabaret opened. Performers such as World Famous Bob, Jo Weldon, Tigger!, Dirty Martini, and Dita Von Teese (who would later be seen as the queen of the Burlesque resurgence) began to make their mark (Carr, 2008; Dodds, 2013; Weldon, 2010). The Exotic World Burlesque Museum (now known as The Burlesque Hall of Fame – BHoF), founded by Jennie Lee, was taken over by Dixie Evans in 1990 and began hosting the Miss Exotic World Pageant (now a part of the BHoF Weekender) in 1991 (Burlesque Hall of Fame, n.d.; Weldon, 2010). Meanwhile, in the UK and Australia, politically conscious performer Immodesty Blaize (later to become 'Queen of Burlesque' at the 2007 BHoF Weekender) and Australia's Lola the Vamp (also known, in this thesis, as Dr Meghann Yavanna Montgomery) led the Burlesque resurgence, often termed as performance art (Sexhibition, 2016; Willson, 2008). By 1995 Burlesque had been appropriated by mainstream media, through music videos (Madonna, Pussy Cat Dolls Revue), performance art (Blaize), and fashion (Jean Paul Gaultier); later, Dita Von Teese published *Burlesque/Fetish and the Art of the Teese* (2005) establishing herself as the modern icon for Burlesque (Nally, 2009; Weldon, 2010). This renaissance of Burlesque (known as Neo-Burlesque, see below in Key Terms), revived the so-called 'Classic' style of performing. This was retro-sexual, retro-nostalgic (as promoted by Dita Von Teese) and was performed alongside political, edgy, and contemporary Neo-Burlesque performance style (Dirty Martini, Trigger!).

Film continued to keep Burlesque and cabaret in the public eye throughout the 2000s, with *The Moulin Rouge* (2001), *Chicago* (2002), *Mrs Henderson Presents* (2005), and *Burlesque* (2010), and featured moments such as the undercover Burlesque scene in *Charlie's Angels: Full Throttle* (2003). As the 1990s 'girl power' movement (Taylor, 2019) progressed into the 2000s, Burlesque took on the ethos that anyone could perform Burlesque, and that it was empowering for women to reclaim their sexuality and gender. In her film, Blaize discussed how this

empowerment comes from having the space to be seen and heard creatively, rather than from the removal of clothes (Blaize, 2010). Burlesque festivals were created throughout the 1990s and 2020s to celebrate the art form with local and international talent. This included the Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival (HBBF) in 2013, which later received funding from Arts Council England, who recognised the art form as ‘theatre’ in 2016. This, in turn, had been pre-empted by Equity, the actors’ union, recognising and accepting Burlesque performers in 2015 (Arts Council England, 2016; Equity, 2015; Weldon, 2010).

Key Terms

Throughout this investigation I have created a few key terms to clarify my process and key discoveries (see 1. Literature Review). There are two key terms that require defining from the outset: ‘politics’ and ‘Burlesque’. In 1. Literature Review I have provided more detail regarding these and other key terms.

Politics? What Politics in Entertainment?

In using the term ‘politics’ I am referring to ‘informal politics’: the practice and use of power and influence in everyday contexts, as articulated by Painter and Jeffery (2009). This informal politics (Painter & Jeffery, 2009) is also referred to as ‘personal politics’, ‘everyday politics’, or by the phrase ‘the personal is political’. This latter term was coined during second-wave feminism (Donovan, 1997; Man Ling Lee, 2007) and was credited to Carol Hanisch in 1969 (Donovan, 1997), who used it to describe the politics and power balances that play out in daily life, as distinct from the formal politics of governments, states, and ideologies. Hanisch’s paper “The Personal is Political” (1969), addresses the construction of society and the maintenance of power in relation to the vulnerability of women. Hanisch uses the word ‘political’ to describe these broader power dynamics that are involved in the context of the everyday. This definition of politics will be adopted throughout this thesis and applied in relation to Burlesque and to the audience–performer rapport. I also discuss politics in relation to theatre in 1. Literature Review.

What Is Burlesque? - Exploring Definitions and Societal Contexts

As previously mentioned, the term 'Burlesque' is complex; historically, it meant to theatrically lampoon or satirise and has developed to include the performance of a 'striptease': the removal of clothes and revealing of skin, (Oxford English Dictionary, 1995). However, Dr Meghan Montgomery stipulates that it is the self-awareness of the performer that is, in fact, Burlesque, and that no striptease is required (2013). My definition combines the ideas of the self-aware performer (aware of the audience and of the context in which they perform) and of their revealing an element of themselves (not necessarily skin) to the audience using a direct gaze. Burlesque is a genre of entertainment within theatre (see 1. Literature Review).

Figure 1 is a visual explanation of the definitions of Burlesque used in this thesis and how they work together. 'Novel-Burlesque', a term I created for this thesis, is highlighted in pink as this is the focus of this thesis. The definitions are explained in more detail following the diagram (Figure 1.), giving a more nuanced understanding of each term (also see 1. Literature Review; and Glossary).

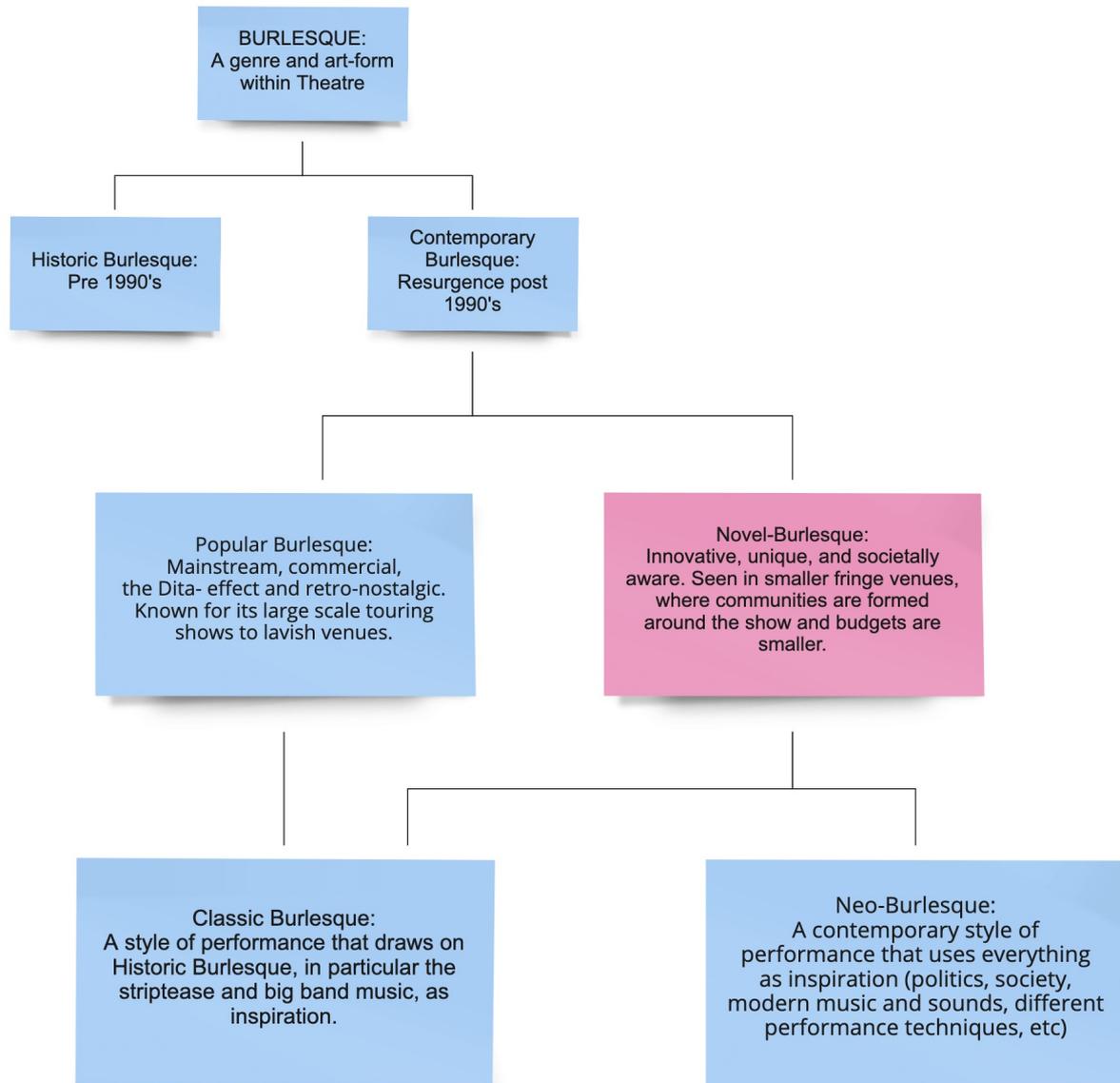


Figure 1. A diagram of the definitions of Burlesque used in this thesis.

The term 'Neo-Burlesque' as used in everyday language has two definitions: firstly, it is the name given to the resurgence of Burlesque performance since the 1990s, which was born out of alternative club nights and performance art that has a high DIY ethos (Weldon, 2010); secondly, Neo-Burlesque also describes a style of Burlesque performance that draws on contemporary influences (as described briefly above and further in 2. Practice Review). The terms 'Neo-Burlesque' and 'Classic Burlesque' in relation to performance styling have developed through communal understanding over the years, so there is no singular source for these terms (see 2. Practice Review; Montgomery, 2013; Weldon, 2010). From this point on I refer to the

resurgence of Burlesque as ‘Contemporary Burlesque’ and the performance style as ‘Neo-Burlesque’ to avoid any confusion (please see Glossary for full definitions).

Novel-Burlesque and Popular Burlesque

It should also be noted that the now-popularised Burlesque that is seen in mainstream media (to be referred to from now on as ‘Popular Burlesque’) is, in fact, an offshoot from the 1990s resurgence termed Contemporary Burlesque. This created two types of Contemporary Burlesque: 1/ Popular Burlesque, championed by Dita Von Teese, which is seen in large-scale theatres and has a heavy retro-nostalgic aesthetic (Classic Burlesque) and an element of fantasy; 2/ Novel-Burlesque, a term I created for clarity, which is seen in fringe venues such as small theatres, bars, and clubs, and has a strong DIY aesthetic combined with contemporary influences (also known as Neo-Burlesque in conversation; however, in this thesis Neo-Burlesque refers to the style of performance). Novel-Burlesque often contains overt, politically charged content, as well as elements of fantasy and Classic Burlesque. This thesis is focused on Novel-Burlesque, which is dynamic, emergent, and nascent; however, the thesis will draw upon Popular Burlesque for comparison and contextualisation, as this type is often the first point of contact with Burlesque for many people.

Novel-Burlesque, as I discovered through this research, is comprised of many diverse identities, and thus contains many types of diverse material. It may be claimed that due to the variety of perspectives brought to Novel-Burlesque (including, but not limited to, those of: feminism, race, ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+, age, disability) that this emerging and constantly evolving art form displays the potential for transdisciplinary knowledge. I felt it was necessary to create a new term, Novel-Burlesque, to distinguish it from mainstream, contemporary Popular Burlesque and from the style of performance known as Neo-Burlesque. The term ‘Novel-Burlesque’ represents the area I wished to research. In everyday conversation, however, people interchange these terms fluidly.

In other words, because Burlesque has the potential to draw on such a wide scope of experiences and issues, it provides a space for knowledge to potentially emerge “across, between, and above all disciplines” (Nicolescu, 2008, p. 2). This

can be seen not only in the use of different performance proficiencies onstage (including singing, playing instruments, gymnastics, magic, theatre, circus skills), but also regarding the material addressed onstage. The routines performed in Novel-Burlesque, particularly those of a Neo-Burlesque style, often draw on contemporary material and address contemporary subject matters including politics, critical thinking, and various different perspectives that are not considered to be the norm or the status quo. This thesis will acknowledge these different political, critical thinking and experienced perspectives but will not pursue them in depth. Although one of these perspectives is the development of a feminist critique that runs through the entire thesis, as it is a hugely influential element of Novel-Burlesque. The 1990s resurgence (here termed Contemporary Burlesque), was created by and for women, and challenged theatre, feminism, and society as well as concepts of gender performance, vulnerability, and voyeurism. The way in which Novel-Burlesque refuses to be restricted and constrained by society is both its appeal and its risk. I discuss this further throughout the thesis (see also 2. Practice Review; and 3. Development of Practice).

Popular Burlesque oozes glamour, extravagance, and luxury: with its huge venues, rhinestone costumes, and an air of nostalgia for a more decadent time, it is pure escapism. The performer line-ups are beautiful, slim, white, and perfectly proportioned – characteristics personified by Dita Von Teese (what I will later term the ‘Dita-effect’, see 1. Literature Review). These productions are usually Classic in genre, with fan dances, troupe dances, parade and peels, and bump and grinds (see 2. Practice Review). While the grittier Novel-Burlesque that happens in pubs, music venues, and basements, also oozes glamour, rhinestones, however, are not a requirement. Here, the performers are diverse in shape, size, and ethnicity. Novel-Burlesque challenges reality and society, as well as offering escapism. Its routines include Neo-Burlesque as a style and are more contemporary in their influences, including overt politics and sideshow skills as well as Classic routines (Weldon, 2010). This latter side to the art form still holds onto the values and aesthetics of the 1990s resurgence of inclusivity and DIY, as described by Carr (a.k.a. Valentina Violette), producer of *The Velvet Hammer*, in her book of the same name (2008) (see 2. Practice Review). Writer Clare Nally argues that mainstream culture simplified and appropriated Burlesque, thus creating Popular Burlesque, to make the

art form easy to commodify and sell (Nally, 2009). These two different types of Contemporary Burlesque lead to varying assumptions, misunderstandings, opposing viewpoints, and readings of the art form. Further discussion on this can be found in 1. Literature Review and 2. Practice Review.

It is important to note that Contemporary Burlesque, stripping, exotic/lap dancing, and sex work are all professions with different skill sets that are similar to one another but are not the same. In discussing these professions I am not attempting to conflate one with another, particularly since wider broadcasters of information do not attempt to understand the distinctions between the professions, nor those of individual cases. UK law is very clear about which activities are classified as adult entertainment, with specific licences being required for each type of performance (see 1. Literature Review; and 2. Practice Review). The audiences who frequent these entertainments are usually aware of the differences in performance, intention, and their role as audience, even if these are subtle. However, wider society often considers any performance of the naked body to be adult entertainment, sexually taboo, risky, morally dubious, and even shameful (see 1. Literature Review; and 2. Practice Review).

During the period of this study, there has been a slow rise in events educating the general public around sex work and work that involves sexual performance. This included an episode of the ITV daily talk show Good Morning Britain, which posed the question: “Can Strippers be Feminists?” This was broadcast on 22 October 2019 and covered the different laws for entertainments and discussed the agency and consent of the women performing willingly; the women’s consent is often overlooked. I have given four presentations on Burlesque to retiree groups and Women’s Institute meetings. Setting their preconceptions to one side, the participants engaged in conversations around society, religion, law-making, agency, and gender, as well as the burning question: “How do the nipple pasties stay on?” (Haley, In Q & A, 2017, 2018, 2019). During numerous conversations about my research subject, Burlesque, people have been fascinated and curious, and wanted to understand more about it.

Thesis Scope and Structure

The first chapter, **1. Literature Review**, is Burlesque and theatre specific, although I also engage with wider related disciplines and topics in order to articulate the discoveries I made and developed; this, therefore, positions this research firmly alongside other theories and practices that it contributes to and builds upon with an original contribution to knowledge. Using this literature, I define and expand on the new key terminology used within this thesis, such as vulnerability, voyeurism, and the dialogic gaze. Emerging from the literature review, gaps in knowledge reveal the themes of vulnerability and voyeurism, which form the basis for the research questions for this thesis:

- How are performer–audience relationships created and maintained across Contemporary Burlesque?
- How are performer–audience relationships experienced across Contemporary Burlesque, in terms of vulnerability and voyeurism?

The questions and points of discovery dictated the structure for this thesis.

Therefore, chapters 1–3 focus on the observations, the processes used, and the context of the research conducted into Contemporary Burlesque and its position within society and entertainment (see 1. Literature Review; 2. Practice Review; and 3. Development of Practice).

Chapter **2. Practice Review** outlines the methods used in the investigation and endeavours to answer the research questions from the perspective of an audience member. Looking at the creation of the event, who attends, and what types of performances there are goes some way to articulating an answer that fills the gaps in knowledge, but it does not go far enough. It is an incomplete picture of the audience–performer relationship as it is missing one perspective – that of the performers.

The following chapter, **3. Development of Practice**, delves into the creation of the Burlesque persona, the elements required to make a routine, and the process of performance during the event. Through this process and its methodologies, along with audience, performer, and literary perspectives, I can begin to fill in some of the

gaps in knowledge regarding the performer–audience relationship in Contemporary Burlesque.

The first three chapters set up and frame the next three chapters, which focus specifically on the discoveries made regarding the performer–audience relationship: 4. *Beyond Awareishness – the Dialogic Gaze*; 5. *Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust*; and 6. *The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability*. In these chapters I examine in detail three performers chosen specifically as examples of Novel-Burlesque and one performer who represents Popular Burlesque (see 2. *Practice Review*; Appendix 9: *Performances Reviewed*; and Appendix 10: *Practice-as-Research Performances*). Having seen these performers as an audience member I draw upon that experience as well as on my own experiences as the performer Arabella Twist (including the examination performance, 8 December 2019), in order to analyse and critique the performances. In doing this, I look closely at the relationship that is created between the audience and performer from a practice-as-research perspective.

In **4. *Beyond Awareishness – the Dialogic Gaze*** I discuss the crux of the matter, arguing that when the frame and context of Burlesque is at its best the performer–audience relationship creates what I have called the dialogic gaze (see 1. *Literature Review*; and *Glossary*). This is where the power oscillates between the performer (who initiates the dialogue) and the audience, without removal of agency. I examine the work of Classic performers Perle Noire and Dita Von Teese, as well as my own experiences onstage as Arabella Twist (performing ‘Cruella Wants It All’ – based on the fictional character Cruella de Vil) to illustrate how and when the dialogic gaze is created and utilised effectively for everyone’s pleasure.

This leads into **5. *Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust***, where the discussion revolves around mutual consensual vulnerability for both performer and audience member. In this chapter I also examine how Novel Burlesque and the community around it provide the crucible for this mutual vulnerability and the trust that develops. I explore how performers such as Rubyyy Jones create performances that reveal not only themselves, but also sensitive issues and provocative topics, and, in addition, how these performers can offer their audiences an increased

vulnerability and trust when performing and creating autobiographically inspired routines. The performer's heightened vulnerability and trust in their audience during the event, and in the space of Novel-Burlesque, can be matched by that of the audience's openness and willingness to be transformed from one state to another. The exploration of this phenomenon led to a brief examination of the space and community created around Novel Burlesque. Burlesque, as a space for exploration, play, and learning, has built local and global communities that offer the potential for new ways of learning and ritual, thereby adhering to the archetypical qualities of the trickster. I posit, therefore, that the space of Novel-Burlesque could be termed a trickster space (see 1. Literature Review; and Glossary). As a performer–audience, in order to fully understand the vulnerability and trust that is built, I needed to reveal a vulnerability of my own – my disability, multiple sclerosis. In order to visually depict an invisible condition, I created and performed a routine that celebrated the life of disability icon Frida Kahlo. Here I enter the debate regarding cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation, which should not be avoided but has yet to be resolved. As a result of this ongoing conversation, I offer a term: 'proximal identification' – where a person identifies with a quality or element of a person without denying the rest of their identities (please see 1. Literature Review; and Glossary). As Dr Montgomery stated in her work, Burlesque asks questions and can offer various solutions and perspectives but never gives ultimate answers as it blurs and plays with the edges of exploration (Montgomery, 2013).

The dialogic gaze comprises consensual mutual vulnerability and trust, as discussed in 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust, and tackled in more detail in **6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability**. With the realisation of the many layers of trust that are necessary in the performer–audience relationship for the dialogic gaze to work effectively, I needed to address how I achieved this through performing my vulnerability by the revealing of my disability. It was through watching performers such as Millie Dollar and Diva Hollywood, who both have invisible disabilities, that I ventured on this path. However, it was witnessing Cinnamon Cheeks perform her explicitly autobiographical routine 'Stroke Survivor' that changed the way I thought about my identity in relation to multiple sclerosis and my future. From experiencing that performance, and through performing 'Frida' I began to accept multiple sclerosis as a part of who I am as a person, performer, and

researcher. I began to truly trust that I knew my body and the performance I was delivering, and that I had the ability to improvise in the moment should my disability require it; I also trusted that my audience would trust in me to give them an experience that transformed their state of mind when I was on-stage. Finally, I address how all the previous discoveries helped and supported this development and realisation, both about myself and about Novel-Burlesque performer–audience relationships in the context of disability. Disability and performance is an area of research that I had not anticipated, and is not, therefore, part of 1. Literature Review. A by-product of my original research inquiry and intentions, my research into disability and performance is limited and is brought into discussion as it emerged. More research is needed in the future to fully explore disability and Novel-Burlesque.

The **Conclusion** draws all these discoveries together: from interviews, audience-researcher experiences, and practice-as-research (including my examination performance – see 3. Development of Practice; Appendix 9: Performances Reviewed; and Appendix 10: Practice-as-Research Performances). I highlight the original contribution to knowledge and place it in the context of present academic literature: the performer–audience relationship is an oscillation of power and agency that can only be achieved with mutual vulnerability, trust, and respect for each other through the creative unfolding of the performance, and this can be achieved in several ways. This is what I have called the dialogic gaze (see 1. Literature Review for theoretical context). The Conclusion also features other elements of original knowledge and discoveries. Looking to the future, it highlights areas of further research and investigation, including: Burlesque performance and disability, Burlesque as a space of exploration and new rituals, development of the notion of a trickster space, and other possibilities.

1. Literature Review

This inquiry was born out of a need to know how my work as a woman performer is positioned in relation to contemporary theatre and theatre history, in particular since my work tends to take place outside the traditional theatre venues, as I work using carnival, street theatre, and community theatre – what historically would have been termed “illegitimate” forms of theatre (Gilles, 1999, p. 4; see Introduction and further explanation below). Some of these so-called illegitimate forms of theatre were explored in my earlier MA research, *Invisible Fool: A Critical History of Women Entertainers* (2014). The MA thesis brought together two key areas of fascination: the archetype of the trickster, and the role of women in theatre within society. With several questions remaining unanswered, this PhD research was originally going to explore the agency of these past performers and bring the research up to date. From my understanding at that point, historically speaking, the agency of the performer was dubious. It could be argued either that the performer was often the puppet of their agent, and their audiences ranged from the supporting, to the curious, to the voyeur; or that the performers used and developed unusual and what were sometimes perceived as freakish abilities and skills to knowingly entice their audiences (Davies, 2015; Durbach, 2009; Potts, 2015). Consequently, as part of the initial research for this PhD I began to ask where the historic women tricksters I explored in my MA thesis were performing today, which led me to Contemporary Burlesque and cabaret. Here, the agency was undoubtedly with the performer and the relationship with the audience was not what I expected. Women dominated this art form and used it to explore their own agendas. The relationship between the performer and audience member was, therefore, unique because it was more equal, and, as such, more spontaneous, yet also dangerous.

Academic enquiry into the art form Contemporary Burlesque is in its infancy in comparison with enquiry into other entertainment art forms. Analytical literature on Contemporary Burlesque falls into two camps: those researchers who are from the audience, such as Nally (2009), Willson (2008), Carr (2013), Siebler (2014), Brownie (2017), Walter (2010), and Levy (2005); and those researchers who write from a performer's perspective, such as Dodds (2013), Montgomery (2013), Regehr (2012), and Sally (2009). These writers describe their own experiences, often in an objective

tone, and seek secondary sources (using other people's perspectives, usually gained from interviews) to answer questions regarding the perspective that they have not personally experienced. Interestingly, those researchers who write from a performance perspective embrace their experiential knowledge as a performer but do not often acknowledge their own experience as an audience member, therefore not connecting both perspectives. Other literature on Contemporary Burlesque, written for the general public, includes that by Dita Von Teese (2006) and Weldon (2010). Allen (1991), Buszek (1999), and Glenn (2000) will be considered in relation to Historic Burlesque and its influences on the contemporary art form. This investigation is an exploration into both sides of the performer–audience relationship in an attempt to marry both of these perspectives together.

It should be noted that most of these authors do not attempt to define different aspects of the Burlesque art form and, therefore, often refer to all the various types with the blanket term 'Burlesque', except when referring to styles of performance (Classic Burlesque and Neo-Burlesque). Some authors do acknowledge that there is a mainstream element of Burlesque (Popular Burlesque). I will be using their terminology throughout this section, which will illustrate the need for the clarificatory explanation briefly started in the Introduction, and the understanding explored here in 1. Literature Review and further in 2. Practice Review, for this thesis and the discoveries made to be fully comprehended.

In order to establish a wider context, literature from other disciplines will be considered. When investigating the developing forms of theatre and performer–audience relationships, I will look to Bennett (2003), Freshwater (2009), Heim (2016) and Sedgman (2018). To address the constructs of society, literature from Goffman (1959), Schechner (1985, 1988, 1995, 2004, 2013) and Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 2003) will be discussed. Versions of feminism and of 'raunch' culture, with reference to Burlesque and stripping will also be considered: Levy (2005), Liepe-Levinson (2002), Walter (2010), and a TED Talk by Clare (2015). Texts by Carr-Gomm (2010) and Brownie (2017) will be presented in relation to nakedness, nudity, and underdressing, as too will theories around shame, stigma, vulnerability, and precarity by Brown (2006, 2010), Butler (1990, 2015), Ashforth and Kriener (1999) and Bilthe and Wolfe (2016). These issues lead to literature that debates the issue of

empowerment (Regehr, 2011), agency (Lintott & Irving, 2015), and alternative spaces for growth and diversity (Ahmed, 2017; Boal, 1974; Bakhtin, 1984, 1999; Hyde, 1983, 1999; Philip 2017; Ranciere, 2011, Wynter, 2000). These sources will all be referenced throughout the thesis.

I would like the reader to be aware, when reading this literature review, that the process of this investigation was not linear. The literature research and practice-as-research fed into each other creating a cyclical feedback loop. My reading fed into the practice I conducted and the practical discoveries led to further reading. This resulted in the discovery and experiencing of new knowledge which needed to be grounded in both practical and theoretical contexts (see 2. Practice Review; and 3. Development of Practice). All the 'evolution of terms' came out of this combined methodology and would not have been developed through either theory or literature alone. The evolution of terms is placed within the literature review, rather than elsewhere in the thesis, in order to show the theoretical underpinnings and articulation of the new knowledge discovered through practice-as-research. In the subsequent chapters I focus predominately on the practice-as-research methodology and further explore these terms from a practical experiential perspective.

This review establishes the research to date, highlights gaps in knowledge and proposes the potential for original knowledge. Consequently, this review uses texts from a range of different disciplines to help articulate and contextualise the discoveries and new knowledge I propose. I assert that the performer–audience relationship is worthy of further examination and can lead to new thinking.

Throughout the literature review I work using a funnel technique. This can be seen not only as the overarching structure for this chapter – starting with the concepts of politics, voyeurism, and vulnerability, and then focusing specifically on the performer–audience relationship – but also as the structure within each section. I discuss wider societal concepts, and then narrow my focus to discussions regarding institutions and definitions in the context of the text. Narrowing my focus further to talk specifically about theatre and other related literature, I then progress to literature on Contemporary Burlesque. Finally, I begin to identify new knowledge from the gaps discerned, through the defining of new terms created, or the evolution of terms,

considering the previous discussion and debate to articulate the new knowledge I discovered.

The reading around disability in performance is situated in the final chapter (6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability) as I came to this research area very late in the investigation.

Politics

As briefly discussed in the Introduction, I define politics in accordance with Painter and Jeffery's 'informal politics' (2009) and Carol Hanisch's 'personal politics' (1969), where I am referring to the power dynamics and influences in everyday life rather than the politics of government. In "The Personal is Political" (1969) Hanisch tackles the construction and maintenance of society's power concerning the vulnerability of women.

Societal Theatre

Before we can tackle the question: 'Is Burlesque theatre?' we must address society as a construct, the individual's place within it, and how information and control is distributed. The concept of society as a cultural construct, with conventions that govern behaviour, codes of conduct, and systems of belief may use 'theatre' as a metaphor, as in the work of Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), many texts by Richard Schechner, including *Performance Theory* (1988, 2004), and in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's, *Metaphors We Live By* (1980, 2003), as well as in the work of theatre practitioners Bertolt Brecht (his entire oeuvre) and Augusto Boal (1974). Indeed, in Boal's preface to the 2000 edition of *Theatre of the Oppressed*, he succinctly establishes the historic place of theatre within society and society within theatre.

Goffman, a North American sociologist, used the metaphor of theatre to place the individual's actions and motivations within society. Focusing on the role-play that leads to socio-theatrical conventions enacted by small communities and organisations, he stops short of analysing society as a whole, prefacing his book with: "A set of features will be described which together form a framework that can

be applied to any concrete social establishment” (1959, p. 9). Schechner’s many essays and theories build upon Goffman from a performing arts perspective (Schechner, 1985, 1988, 1995, 2004, 2013). Stemming from a holistic approach to performativity, Schechner’s work connects ethology, anthropology, and the aesthetic to reveal that “there are ‘realities’ at all levels of human endeavour: biological-evolutionary, cultural-social, individual. These overlap and interplay” (2004, p. xii, p. 324). To define ‘performativity’ Schechner (2013) combines Goffman’s (1959) work on ‘fronts’ with notions from many performative theorists, including J. L. Austin’s ‘speech acts’ (1962), Judith Butler’s gender performance (1988), Allan Kaprow’s ‘happenings’ (1966), and Carol Hanisch’s famous 1969 essay entitled “The Personal is Political”. Schechner further asserts that “performing onstage, performing in special social situations (public ceremonies, for example), and performing in everyday life are a continuum” (Schechner, 2013, p. 170). Through linguistics and philosophy, Lakoff and Johnson deconstruct our means of communication, language, and enactment, to reveal how concepts and belief systems are created. They further explain how these concepts and belief systems construct society and can also be used by society to manipulate and promote certain rhetoric and beliefs. In their 2003 afterword Lakoff and Johnson succinctly state: “there appear to be *both* universal metaphors *and* cultural variation” (p. 274). Theatre practitioner Boal offers a perspective of society from Greek theatre, where the purpose of the protagonist was to challenge society, but the legitimacy of such a performance was itself subject to political control. As Contemporary Burlesque challenges cultural norms and also experiences societal constraints and pressures, the Burlesque performer could be seen as Boal’s “unruly protagonist”, who provides another view of society as society provides differing views of Burlesque (1974, pp. x–xxii; see *Evolution of Terms: Conduit*). These texts offer different ways of seeing society, and consequently varying ways of how the performer–audience relationship in Burlesque may be perceived.

I now briefly narrow the focus to the individual in society and what roles they perform due to societal constructs, according to Goffman (1959). This is what Caroline Hanisch (1969) termed ‘personal politics’ and Painter and Jeffery (2009) called ‘informal politics’, referring to the power balances enacted by, and constructed around, the individual in everyday interactions.

Goffman starts with the individual and expands his attention to small communities and then organisations of larger groups of people. Goffman writes that an individual performs a “front” (1959, p. 32) that signals to others their position within society; particular signifiers can identify an individual with a certain social group or community, and be understood by those members – Goffman describes this as a “social front” (1959, p. 36). There are many factors that build this ‘front’, and an individual can have many ‘social fronts’ depending upon the situation, how it develops, and the individual’s personal goals or motivations (1959, p. 28–32). When applying his theory about fronts to groups, Goffman quotes Radcliffe-Brown’s “descriptive-kinship system” (1959, p. 37). Goffman explains that when a person is given a role within a group they claim that specific identity or front, and when the group becomes larger more people are given that specific identity or front within the group. Those performing this specific identity or front become a subgroup when the community gets bigger. Those within the subgroup are given certain information and treated according to this specific identification (1959, p. 37). These fronts can perform many tasks and routines as part of their role and therefore become “institutionalised in terms of the abstract stereotyped expectations. The front becomes a ‘collective representation’ and a fact in its own right.” (1959, p. 37). This in turn creates stereotypes (which are different to archetypes, see below in Vulnerability; and Glossary) with usually generalised and often misleading assumptions presented as facts and can lead to offensive or dangerous implications for that community or individual. Goffman’s use of the medical and military professions as examples implies that as the subgroups are formed (and treatment, identification, and information decided) there is a hierarchy of authority that perpetuates its own rhetoric to maintain the status quo and control.

As previously mentioned, whilst stopping short of analysing society as a whole, Goffman suggests that we can extrapolate his theories to wider society, in an up-scaled version with various social establishments as subgroups, within which there are many more subgroups requiring different identification, treatment, and information; inside each of those there are specific fronts which the individuals perform. This extrapolation of Goffman’s theory gives us an understanding of the societal structures put in place to maintain the status quo, which impact upon us in

our daily lives. This framework enables other interrelated theories, ideas, and understandings to exist within a context rather than in a vacuum: for example, about how and with what intent information is created and broadcast; and about how this then impacts upon the social consciousness that in turn impacts upon the individual and how they live their life.

Understanding how information is distributed, subgroups are created, and assumptions and expectations are perpetuated is important in understanding how social conventions and morals are created, what the impact and pressures on the individual are for their social fronts to conform, and how, therefore, the dominant culture and society maintain power and influence over the populace. The dominant culture can apply hierarchy to art forms and promote common beliefs about certain professions, as well as influence moral and ethical judgements regarding what is and is not suitable behaviour. This brings us to the hierarchy of entertainment, and, later on, to secondary objectification.

Defining Politics in Theatre

When thinking about politics in relation to theatre and performance, Lizbeth Goodman's introduction to *The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance* (2002) points out, interestingly, that understanding of the word 'politics' is subjective. Like many of the terms I have encountered in this investigation, there are many understandings and applications of the word, particularly so when placed in relation to theatre, as the compendium of essays from a variety of authors and perspectives in *The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance* (2002) demonstrates. In the foreword Sarah Daniels rightly articulates that you can neither separate politics from life, nor from theatre. Politics is intrinsically woven through theatre, although Daniels suggests that politics is now a "dirty word" (2002, p. xxv). From the subject matter performed, or not performed, onstage to the subsidising of theatre buildings and theatre makers, politics (more specifically, money) influences what is produced and seen by audiences (Daniels, 2002; Goodman, 2002). This line of debate and discussion can be found throughout literature on theatre and politics and also in discussions on the performer–audience relationship by Bennett (2003), Freshwater (2009), Heim (2016), Sedgman (2018), and others.

Particularly when looking at the political and radical theatre of the 1960s–80s (Kershaw includes the 1990s), there is a consensus that theatre was “both an art form and a platform” (Goodman, 2002, p. 1; Kershaw, 1992; McGrath 1990). McGrath’s book *The Bone Won’t Break: On Theatre and Hope in Hard Times* (1990) echoes Daniel’s assertion that politics is interwoven into the production of theatre, but tackles this from the perspective of how alternative radical political theatre can affect and support audiences whilst challenging society and dominant cultures:

Firstly, it can contribute to a definition, a revaluation of the cultural identity of a people or a section of society, can add to the richness and diversity of that identity. Secondly, it can assert, draw attention to give voice to threatened communities, can, by allowing them to speak, help them to survive. Thirdly, it can mount an attack on the standardisation of culture and consciousness which is a function of late industrial/early technological ‘consumerist’ societies everywhere. Fourthly, it can be and often is linked to a wider political struggle for the right of a people or a section of society to control its own destiny, to ‘self-determination’. Fifthly, it can make a challenge to the values imposed on it from a dominant group – it can help to stop ruling class, or ruling race, or male, or multinational capitalist values being ‘universalised’ as common sense, or self-evident truth: as such, it presents a challenge also to the state’s cultural engineers, and ministries of culture, arts councils, universities, schools and the media. (McGrath, 1990, p. 142)

The five elements that McGrath sees in alternative radical theatre can also be seen in Novel-Burlesque, as this thesis will go on to discuss in relation to Judith Butler’s understanding of “precarity” and the enactment of desired change (Butler, 2015) (for further discussion see Vulnerability). Kershaw calls this movement “British alternative theatre” in his book *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention* (1992, p. 5). Kershaw adds to McGrath’s list with his own observations for this movement: firstly, these theatre makers respond to and challenge the status quo; secondly, they create their own framing and context both physically in terms of venues and audiences, and in creating new structural systems and infrastructures within which theatre can operate; lastly, the movement’s paradoxical aim is to expand its audience through popularity yet at the same time resist and oppose the

status quo and dominant cultural practices (1992). Kershaw proposes that through cultural intervention and community action, ideological views can be not only understood but also enacted through engaging with this type of radical theatre, and can thereby potentially have “a significant impact on social and political history” (1992, p. i). Burlesque could perhaps be seen as British alternative theatre using Kershaw’s requirements: it is galvanised by ideology, often oppositional to the status quo, performed in a range of different spaces for different types of audiences, and answers the need to explore alternatives and to be heard. Novel-Burlesque, I later argue, is “both an art form and a platform” (Goodman, 2002, p. 1). However, this requires more scrutiny (see 2. Practice Review; and 3. Development of Practice).

To complete this historical political picture, we need to consider Thatcherism during the 1980s, which used divide and conquer techniques – such as the segregation of different art forms and subsidising of certain buildings, companies, and events – making collaboration, and the sharing of ideas difficult; this forced theatre makers to think about (as theatre company Welfare State International put it) ‘bums on seats’ rather than ‘eyes on stalks’ (Daniels, 2002; Fox, 2002; Goodman, 2002; Kershaw, 1992; McGrath, 1990). According to Daniels, Goodman, and Kershaw this shift meant the art form of theatre sought to survive by making money through escapist spectacle, rather than using the art form as a platform from which to interrogate life, truth, and issues that impact the individual, community, and perhaps even society. Arguably, this shift can be seen throughout theatre history, previously with the Theatres Act 1843, and later echoed within Burlesque during the late 1990s, when popular retro-nostalgic mainstream Burlesque establishes itself as separate to its gritty, political, DIY-aesthetic counterpart. In this way, politics in relation to theatre practices appears to be cyclical through the linear progression of time. At the end of *The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance* (Goodman, 2002; Kozel, 2002) Goodman and Kozel look to the future of theatre, suggesting and describing a post-linear replay culture, where live performance meets the endless possibilities of digital and virtual technology, with the audience’s reading, engagement, and replaying of theatre being under their own control rather than under that of the creator. Thus, Goodman returns to Boal’s term “Spect-Actor”, where the power dynamics are weighted towards the audience as they watch the play, pause the action, cross the fourth wall, and perform and alter the narrative on stage with their actions (see

below, Performer–Audience Relationships; and Glossary), and Goodman acknowledges that a theatre performance is never truly finished until it encounters the audience (2002).

Evolution of Terms: Politics

Politics intertwines with and around theatre on several levels. The first level is the everyday politics of our personal and individual interactions, which have an impact on what theatre we, both as individuals and collectively as audiences, want to see and how we engage with it. Second is the systemic level, which relates to the decisions made behind the scenes by organisations and producers, who can manipulate, curate, or respond to audiences' desires for the theatre they wish to see and, ultimately, to pay for. The second level also includes the producers' and organisations' decision-making about who their intended audience is and, consequently, who the productions are accessible for. The most overt level at which we see the intertwining of politics and theatre is in the content and subject matter of a piece of theatre that is performed, particularly when it directly tackles a political topic or issue in society. These same levels can be seen in Contemporary Burlesque: first, in how audiences engage with events and performers; second, in how producers create line-ups, book venues, and promote marketing material; finally, in what routines performers create and the topics they engage with.

Is Burlesque Theatre?

Having established the politics involved in society, and in both the material produced and structures in place for theatre, we turn our attention specifically to the question of whether Burlesque is theatre. I have already suggested that following the requirements posited by McGrath and Kershaw, Burlesque may be considered as having the potential to become radical alternative British theatre.

When looking at 'Theatre' with a capital 'T', culturally we understand this to be the building in which the act of 'theatre', small 't', is created and for which 'theatre' is intended. This building houses the curtains, the lights, the auditorium seats, and the stage, which facilitate the act of 'theatre'. As director Peter Brook acknowledges, in his seminal book *The Empty Space* (1990), the word 'Theatre' is "messy" and is a

confusing “one all-purpose word” (Brook, 1990, p. 11) which changes depending upon the perspective theatre is viewed from. For example, Brook, before acknowledging the vastness of the word ‘theatre’, describes the act of ‘theatre’:

I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged. (Brook, 1990, p. 11)

From Brook’s perspective as a director, theatre is the engagement between the watched and the watcher within a performance frame (“call it a bare stage”, Brooks, 1990, p. 11) that could be anywhere. There is a need for framing and intention in the creation of theatre, as well as a need for at least two participants/roles being enacted. Some would argue that this is, in fact, the act of ‘performance’ (looking to the 1970s development of the term in relation to the visual arts and theoretical written works, including those of Richard Schechner – see Societal Theatre) and that it is the house with its curtains and seats that creates theatre, particularly in Western traditions and culture (Carlson, 2014). Others would say that the restrictions and limitations described above create clear expectations and assumptions about what is expected for the production and reception of theatre in relation to its audience, particularly when in reference to the performance of naturalism in theatre (Bennett, 2003; Sedgman, 2018).

In *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (2003), author Susan Bennett discusses the production and reception of theatre as a constructed cultural practice evolving and developing throughout history up to contemporary theatre (2003). Even though key elements that are identified as a requirement for the production of theatre (both capitalised ‘T’ and small ‘t’) may evolve and develop different meanings, they mostly stay the same: a limited time span; a narrative arc or journey (beginning, middle, and end); activity within the time span involving performers and audience; and a specific place and occasion (Bennett, 2003; Brooks, 1999; Carlson, 2014; Fusco, 2002; Goodman, 2002; Heim 2016; Kershaw 2002; Sedgman, 2018).

To this I would add the idea that the intention of the performers is important in defining ‘theatre’ because this becomes crucial when considering entertainment in

the context of UK law (see 2. Practice Review). Legally speaking, in the UK there are different licences for venues depending on the intention of performances that include nudity. In theatre, staging full-frontal nudity is accepted as part of the creative narrative; live entertainment venues can have semi-nudity as part of the creative narrative (with all reproductive organs covered); in sexual entertainment the 'sole' intent is seen as being to sexually arouse the audience and, therefore, a licence must be held for full-frontal nudity (see 2. Practice Review; Gov.UK, 2016; Home Office, 2010). Burlesque can span across all three legal categories depending upon the venue, the licences, and the performers' intent. However, to sexually arouse the audience is only part of Burlesque's intention, particularly when other elements frame and contextualise Burlesque (see 2. Practice Review; and 3. Development of Practice), and Burlesque, therefore, tends to straddle legal definitions across live entertainment and theatre.

The validity of Burlesque's categorisation as theatre is constantly questioned (Dodds 2013; Nally, 2009; Regehr, 2011; Siebler, 2014), and Burlesque is still considered by many to be of lower status than theatre. This could be seen playing out amidst the HBBF controversy in 2013, where the producers tried to hire a larger local council venue for the following year (2014), due to an increase in interest and potential ticket demand after the success of their first festival. However, the local council refused the booking and banned HBBF from using the venue, leading to further protests regarding sexual entertainment and women's agency (further discussed in 2. Practice Review). In addition, there are thousands of opinion pieces on the internet that either elevate Burlesque above stripping, or condemn both types of performance, often along with pornography and prostitution (a term that sex workers do not use due to the negative and often violent connotations attached to the word), rather than considering that "Burlesque and stripping are sisters but not twins" (Revealed, n.d.). The division between mainstream Burlesque and Burlesque's subculture also adds fuel to the fire and will be discussed later in this chapter as well as in 2. Practice Review (Nally, 2009; Siebler, 2014).

Interestingly, as previously mentioned, since I began researching for the literature review there have been recent changes in the stances of the actor's union Equity and Arts Council England, moving from maintaining silence to actively supporting

Burlesque, thus supporting legitimisation of the art form; there have also been alterations to the definitions of voyeurism in contemporary law (Arts Council England, 2016, 2017; Equity, 2015). This change in classification for Burlesque can also be seen as destabilising the status quo which views female sexuality and partial nudity (unless part of a longer narrative such as a play) as morally dubious, and therefore this change could be seen as morally dangerous (see above; and 2. Performance Review for entertainment licensing laws). This shift begins to erode the entrenched binary opinions favoured by mass media representations that sculpt society's perceptions and assumptions (see Voyeurism), enabling us to view adult entertainment as encompassing a spectrum.

The impact of these changes on Burlesque have, as yet, not been discussed within academic literature. As a gap within knowledge, this needs to be explored further and will be addressed in the main body of the thesis, specifically in relation to how legitimate institutions such as Arts Council England and Equity impact on Burlesque and on those involved.

The Question of Legitimacy

Historically, theatre was split into high and low – legitimate and illegitimate – entertainment by the Theatres Act 1843, a distinction upheld by the Lord Chamberlain until the late 1960s (Gillies, 1999; Evans, 2001; see Introduction). In contemporary theatre, traces of this division can still be felt, particularly when it comes to using nudity and sexuality in performance. With this in mind we turn our attention to the hierarchy of entertainment, binary divisions, and information distribution and to how these factors can be seen in literature on Burlesque.

Both Kay Siebler's article "What's so feminist about garters and bustiers? Neo-Burlesque as post-feminist sexual liberation" (2014) and Natasha Walter's book *Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism* (2010) are highly critical of Contemporary Burlesque, seeing the art form as degrading women who, in their view, are manipulated by the idea that feminist empowerment can be achieved through stripping. Both authors rely on limited sources to evidence their claims: Siebler has no first-hand empirical data and Walter has one first-hand account. Unfortunately, to

support her claims Walter conflates several professions where women's sexuality is performed (stripping, Burlesque, and "prostitution") without acknowledging their nuanced differences and contexts (2010) – sexual entertainment, theatre or live entertainment, and sex work (see Introduction; and 2. Practice Review).

Interestingly, Siebler exposes further binary assumptions, judgements, and classism within entertainment itself (2014, pp. 567–8), highlighting a "class divide" between Burlesque (higher) and stripping (lower); however, Siebler again only uses secondary sources as justification.

Performer and academic Sherril Dodds' article "Embodied Transformations in Neo-Burlesque Striptease" (2013), attempts to give a balanced explanation for such classist views through personal reflections and semi-structured interviews with performers from a range of social and economic circumstances that are different to her own. Dodds acknowledges the similarities between Contemporary Burlesque and stripping but also highlights the need to recognise the differences in order for Contemporary Burlesque to be seen as a legitimate art form (2013). This idea of legitimacy versus illegitimacy is a point of friction in Dodds' article, as it automatically bestows hierarchy and authority, implying worth and, potentially, shame. These oppositional narratives become further evident in relation to mainstream Burlesque and Burlesque, dividing feminists' perspectives regarding what is empowering and what is exploitative.

In chapter 2 – "Body as Spectacle" (pp. 49–77) – of her book *The Happy Stripper: Pleasures and Politics of the New Burlesque*, Jackie Willson (2008) debates the political nature of the words 'naked' and 'nude' when sexuality and eroticism are applied. Referencing Kenneth Clark's *The Nude: A Study of Ideal Art* (1956) and Lynd Nead's, *The Female Nude* (1992), Willson reiterates and develops the layered perceptions of class systems, monetary value, intellectual worth, shame, sexuality, and sexual promiscuity. The unifying factor, Willson notes, whether naked or nude, low or high art, is that the creation of such art, depicting the unclothed female form, not only disregards and objectifies the model, but is also dictated by "the male authorial presence" (2008, p. 51) for male consumption and arousal (2008, p. 49–51). According to Willson, throughout history a woman's attractiveness, her nakedness, and her ability to have agency were incompatible unless the woman was

a prostitute (2008). As a result, nudity and nakedness were aligned with immorality and shame in the social consciousness. Throughout this chapter, Willson argues that much complexity exists in this standpoint in relation to feminism and performance art. The rest of her book continues to articulate Burlesque's constant challenging of this assumption and stigma. This investigation will examine how this stigma may affect the individual (both audience member and performer) as well as how it may impact on the performer–audience relationship during a performance.

Popular Burlesque and (Novel-) Burlesque

Many writers (Montgomery, 2013; Nally, 2009; Willson, 2008) acknowledge the vast contrast between the luxurious spectacular performances of international touring Burlesque superstars such as Dita Von Teese and Immodesty Blaize, and the homegrown, grassroots, DIY community atmosphere of the Burlesque performed in nightclubs, pubs, and fringe venues. The division between mainstream Burlesque and Burlesque can be seen as the hierarchical politicisation of the entertainment, as well as the commercialisation of Burlesque (Nally, 2009).

Popularised Burlesque

In her thesis, *A Burlesque* (2013), Dr Meghann Yavanna Montgomery is critically aware of the multiple layers within Contemporary Burlesque, highlighting its ambiguity and, consequently, the potential for negative readings and misunderstandings that may occur (2013). This conflict can be found when viewing the popular 'Classic' style of Burlesque (see 2. Practice Review), due to its political ambiguity. Classic Burlesque, at face value, can be viewed as the performer objectifying themselves without satire or irony. However, depending on the performer's intention onstage whilst performing a Classic routine the perceived objectification can shift as the performer explores being both the subject with agency onstage and the object being viewed (Sally, 2009). The performer becomes both the subject and object (Sally, 2009); Montgomery asserts that through the performance, the performer transcends both definitions (2013). In her article "Grrrly Hurly Burly: Neo-Burlesque and the Performance of Gender" Clare Nally (2009) directly tackles the issue of mainstream culture's appropriation of Contemporary Burlesque culture. Nally identifies mainstream appropriation of Burlesque's celebration of diversity and

sexuality as a guise by which to promote sterilised, retro-nostalgic and retro-sexual representations of feminine sexuality that are easily commodified and objectified (2009). Highlighting the importance of recognising this distinction, Nally concludes that Contemporary Burlesque is “Janus-faced” (2009, p. 634) in both feeding into feminine stereotypes whilst also appearing to question them at the same time. Dita Von Teese’s influence cannot be ignored, and many writers of Burlesque have discussed and analysed Von Teese as a writer, a businesswoman, and as the superstar performer who catapulted Contemporary Burlesque into the gaze of the mainstream and popularised Burlesque for the masses (Montgomery, 2013; Nally, 2009; Weldon, 2010; Willson, 2008). I term this ‘the Dita-effect’ (see Voyeurism for more discussion on this term; and Glossary). Both Nally and Willson (author of *The Happy Stripper*) agree that Von Teese’s performance is problematic due its ambiguity and the context in which it is viewed (Nally, 2009; discussed further in 4. Beyond Awareness – the Dialogic Gaze). Willson writes, explicitly in relation to Von Teese and Popular Burlesque: “Without being coupled with an ironical, critical or reflective questioning of sexual power, erotic display risks falling immediately back into unchallenging, stereotypical, ‘off the shelf’ readings of female sexuality – vulnerable, silent and fake” (Willson, 2008, p. 148). Willson, Nally, and Montgomery all agree that without either irony or the critical reflective questioning of self and society by the performer, the art form can effortlessly feed society’s misconceptions of Burlesque and reinforce preconceived ideas of gender and sexuality norms. This reduction of Burlesque through appropriation has led to the art form’s commodification, as “commercially-minded shows” that present “an idealised version of a woman’s figure” (Nally, 2009, p. 623) perpetuate narrow perceptions of sexiness and sexuality.

Siebler describes this commodification of Contemporary Burlesque as promoting the “heterosexist script” (2014, p. 565) for what is considered sexy, as dictated by the “narrative of patriarchal female sexuality” (2014, p. 565). In *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* Ariel Levy (2005) further strengthens Siebler’s notion of the audiences’ patriarchal-heterosexist gaze. Levy highlights how “raunch culture” is becoming increasingly commodified and sanitised, in line with the principle that the performers are “fuckable and saleable” (2005, p. 31), a notion which is devoid of any passion or emotional connection. This is illustrated by the

chapter titled “Pole-dancers and Prostitutes” (2010, pp. 39–62) in Natasha Walter’s book *Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism*. This places Contemporary Burlesque alongside other professions of female sexuality without clearly explaining the differences between these professions to the reader, which is in itself problematic. Walter interviews a performer who moved from Burlesque to corporate mainstream Burlesque and as a result felt objectified, negatively vulnerable, and shameful (2010), leading Walter to conclude that Contemporary Burlesque’s rhetoric of empowerment can fall “back into the same old patterns” (2010, p. 45) of misogyny. Both Siebler and Levy show how the appropriation of alternative cultures, or complex images with multiple layering of meanings, by the mainstream, can lead to homogenisation. In Levy’s view this appropriation and propagation dissipates its power, whilst Siebler calls for more “underground burlesque” (2014, p. 572). The way that mainstream Burlesque has specifically affected the underground Burlesque audience–performer rapport is an area as yet unexplored in the literature and is, therefore, considered in this thesis.

Contemporary Burlesque – the Original 1990s Subculture

The literature on what Siebler calls “underground” Burlesque (2014, p. 572) appears to be somewhat different to that on mainstream Burlesque. Comparing and analysing the negative accounts of Burlesque, it becomes apparent that the simplification, standardising, and sanitising of Burlesque for mainstream Burlesque events leads to the very antithesis of the empowerment message Burlesque claims to promote. The negative accounts of Contemporary Burlesque, as mentioned above, appear to describe experiences within mainstream Burlesque; further, the issues in these accounts would need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The accounts used by Levy (2005), Walter (2010), and Siebler (2014) demonstrate unbalanced power relationships: oppressive work ethics and environment, and/or the intentions of the space and audience being at odds with that of the performer. At the same time, away from the mainstream, with its flexible boundaries and carefully produced environment, Burlesque enables the performer–audience relationship to be more fluid, allowing for exploration and alternative narratives (Brownie, 2010; Carr, 2013; Dodds, 2013; Montgomery, 2013, Nally, 2009, 2013; Regehr, 2011; Sally, 2009; Willson, 2008).

Contemporary literature (Nally, 2009; Siebler, 2014; Walter, 2010; Willson, 2008) often debates the self-professed feminist agenda of the Burlesque revival in relation to empowerment; as with the question of whether Burlesque is itself a theatrical art form, there is no clear answer, but rather layers of complexity interwoven with intention and perception. In “The Rise of Recreational Burlesque: Bumping and Grinding Towards Empowerment” Kaitlyn Regehr (2012) writes: “one of the goals of contemporary feminism is to ensure sexual agency, sexual health and the right to sexual exploration” (2012, p. 155). With the many entry points (books, films, workshops, and online forums) into Contemporary Burlesque for both professional and amateur performers, Regehr claims that Burlesque’s supportive community and safe environment is a space in which to ensure this goal.

With such oppositional viewpoints, and both sides calling for an explorative space, I sought different texts that would present other readings of Burlesque as an environment offering a platform for alternative narratives to societal norms (see Evolution of Terms: Trickster Space). This led me to develop a more nuanced understanding of the performer–audience relationship. Focusing on Burlesque as the main area of research, I explore the impacts mainstream Burlesque has on Burlesque and on the performer–audience relationship.

Voyeurism

Here I use the funnel technique to discuss wider ideas around the theme of voyeurism, seeing, and visual culture before looking at different definitions of voyeurism and finding a working definition for this thesis. This process led to reading about perception and looking at notions of stigma, shame, and “secondary objectification” (Clare, 2015), and how these judgements develop and impact on performers, audiences, wider communities, and society at large. Finally in this section, I introduce both the term ‘Dita-effect’ and the working definition of voyeurism for this thesis, which emerged through my reading.

Language is important when trying to articulate experiences with nuance. Language can be used politically as a tool in the construction of social and bureaucratic

systems and culture, and to control power and bestow 'truth', which in turn dictates the beliefs, morals, and ethics by which we live (Butler, 1990, 2015; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Willson, 2007). So, whilst one societal narrative about Contemporary Burlesque is that it offers female empowerment for the slim white woman through commercialised retro-sexuality, as discussed with Popular Burlesque, another narrative sees all Contemporary Burlesque as negative, degrading, and shameful sex work (both narratives are reductions and over-simplifications of the art form).

Seeing is Believing

Western society's ocular-centrism, discussed by many writers of different disciplines (Classen, 1997; Howes, 2006; Kavanagh, 2004), and the contemporary idioms it reiterates (e.g. 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'; 'seeing is believing' – often attributed to satirical writer John Arbuthnot, 1712, p. 44), assert that to have sight is to have power. Butler also addresses the importance of sight in producing evidence of truth in her pivotal text *Gender Trouble* (1990). Butler uses the verbal pronouncement of gender at the time of birth based upon a person's sex as an example of 'truth' being spoken and bestowed upon the individual, whose opinion has not been considered (1990). Using Foucault, Butler deconstructs notions of gender identity, gender performance, and anatomical sex, arguing that within society the individual performs actions that are perceived to be gendered, rather than being gendered in essence (1990), bringing to mind Goffman's notion of the performativity of a front (1959). As many writers have discussed, power is given to the 'all seeing eye' that proclaims 'truth', but also, in some instances, the one who sees is never seen themselves (Butler 1990; Classen, 1997; Foucault, 1979; Howes, 2006; Kavanagh, 2004; Orwell, 1949). This Orwellian ability and power to view others and to proclaim 'truths', and often to do so unseen, can be likened to that of the legal and medical definition of the 'voyeur' (see Definitions of Voyeurism). The power lies with the viewer. Therefore, it could be reasoned that in a theatrical context the audience has the power, like that of the client at a peepshow or that of a 'Peeping Tom', alluding to the Lady Godiva legend (Carr-Gomm, 2010; Coe, 2003; Donoghue, 2008). These perspectives also highlight the importance Western society places upon external vocalised (facile) 'truths' that emerge from seeing the individual, in comparison with internal embodied 'truths' that emerge from the individual.

In Constance Classen's "Foundations for an Anthropology of the Senses" it is recognised that the hierarchy of understanding the senses "is not purely cognitive or limited to individual experiences but is a communal perceptual orientation (always also subject to contestation)" (Howes, 2006, p. 114). In acknowledging the weight created by a hierarchy of the senses that reveres sight and places it at the top in the social consciousness, Classen also alludes to the need for debate and scrutiny of such assumptions. With the emphasis on sight as the superior reasoned sense on one level of understanding, she also juxtaposes reason with 'witchcraft', allowing for an alternative slippage that can be seen in magic and illusion (1997). The idea of illusion and spectacle is one that Burlesque deliberately plays with in its use of striptease, suggestion, and, often, reveals, making the audience think they see more than they do (Montgomery, 2013). Classen's extensive assessment of the senses accepts different understandings (political, gendered, religious) from various cultures, which the other texts do not to the same extent. Yet, the general consensus emerging from her article, as with others, is that the importance placed on the visual sense is a societal construct used for distributing power and control (1997), indicative of Goffman's framework (1959).

Definitions of Voyeurism

Taking the importance of language into account, a typical dictionary definition of a voyeur is: "1. A person who obtains sexual gratification from observing others' sexual actions or organs. 2. A powerless or passive spectator... [French, from *voir* 'see']". (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1995, p. 1572). This, to some extent, corresponds with scopophilia, which is synonymous with voyeurism in psychological and medical terms, and is a term used by Freud. In his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud states that the pleasure of looking (scopophilia) at the "sexual object" is considered normal if the "sexual aim" is followed through with the sexual act:

The progressive concealment of the body which goes along with civilization keeps sexual curiosity awake. This curiosity seeks to complete the sexual object by revealing its hidden parts. It can, however, be diverted ('sublimated') in the direction of art, if its interest can be shifted away from the genitals on to the shape of the body as a whole. (Freud, 1977, p. 156)

This idea plays interestingly into Burlesque, where the focus is on the playing with and teasing of the audience's curiosity and the revealing of some "hidden parts" in performance (Freud, 1977, p. 156). However, Freud further explains that scopophilia becomes a "perversion" if one of three elements occurs: 1/ if the pleasure comes from seeing only genitals; 2/ if the pleasure of seeing relates to disgust or shame (this is specifically related to voyeurism); or 3/ if this foreplay becomes the sexual aim (Freud, 1977, p. 157). Freud maintains that scopophilia as a perversion "may be overridden" by shame as it's oppositional "force" and the suppressor of scopophilia (Freud, 1977, p. 157). Similarly to Freud, the *Miller-Keane Encyclopaedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health* (2003) claims that scopophilia can be separated into active and passive: the 'active' element aligns itself with voyeurism (the act of watching for self-sexual gratification) and the 'passive' element with exhibitionism (the act of exposing for self-sexual gratification) (*Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health*, 2003). This is a coupling of two acts which rely upon the witnessing or being witnessed, and the either 'active' or 'passive' element relates to the power of the observer, rather than to the one committing the act; this resonates with ocular-centric theories, as discussed previously.

There are some inconsistencies between medical encyclopaedias and dictionaries (*Mosby's Medical Dictionary*, 2009; *Dorland's Medical Dictionary for Health Consumers*, 2007; *Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine Nursing and Allied Health*; *Collins Dictionary of Medicine*, 2004, 2005; *Farlex Partner Medical Dictionary*, 2012) as to whether or not the person being watched or exposed by the person with scopophilia has to be a stranger, therefore giving no consent for such action, in order for scopophilia to give gratification. The concept of the consent of the party being watched, whilst not necessarily being part of the definition of a medical diagnosis, is important not only when looking at how ideas of voyeurism, undressing, and nudity are created within society and are therefore applied to adult entertainment professions, but also in understanding who is placed in a precarious position and may, therefore, be vulnerable.

Voyeurism is an action that can be prosecuted as a crime if the viewed person is non-consenting. Typically, the act of voyeurism places the viewed person in a state of vulnerability, as the power over who sees them and when is removed from their control, and they thus lack autonomy (Brown, 2006, 2010). Similarly, in the case of exhibitionism the person viewing has had their autonomy and freedom of choice to see (or not) violated. In each situation there is a power imbalance that has not been agreed upon. However, in the medical and legal sense, all parties participating in Novel-Burlesque are adults consenting to see and be seen; consequently, Novel-Burlesque can be neither voyeurism, nor exhibitionism. In contrast to legal and medical perspectives, Laura Mulvey uses Freud's analysis of scopophilia in her definition of voyeurism and subsequently builds the "male gaze" theory in her seminal text *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (1975). The male gaze theory is now widely accepted and has filtered into social consciousness as a principal theory in relation to the viewing of entertainment. Mulvey describes "voyeurs and Peeping Toms, whose only sexual satisfaction can come from watching, in an active controlling sense, an objectified other." (Mulvey, 1975, p. 9). Through this definition, and Mulvey's application of Freud to certain aspects of classic Hollywood film, Mulvey's theory solidifies within academia, as well as in popular culture, the stereotype of the voyeur as a heterosexual male. By reducing and defining the viewer's gaze as male, Mulvey's theory removes any possible agency from women, which is more than problematic and is frustrating when accounting for the 'female gaze' and other types of viewing. The tone of the article is one of authority and as such the paper's central idea has become canonised and applied liberally to all entertainment forms with little scrutiny or criticism in popular culture. In *Theatre & Audience* (2009) Helen Freshwater illustrates how Mulvey's theory (from the 1970s) may no longer be applicable for various reasons, including the problematic narrowing of the gaze to male, which Alison Carr addresses in her own doctoral thesis (2013).

In her thesis, *How Do I Look? Viewing, Embodiment, Performance, Showgirls, and Art Practice* (2013), Alison Carr defines the watching of Burlesque and of showgirls into four types. Her discussion of the second type, 'the gaze' (2013), dissects Mulvey's article; her third type, 'the double-take' (2013), renounces Mulvey in favour of another way to watch that takes into account Mulvey's own gender as a woman (2013), the no-longer privileged position of film (2013), and the notion of pleasure as

enjoyment that is not exclusively sexual when viewing showgirls and Golden Era Hollywood films. Carr quotes several other authors who, similarly, attempt to reassert their gaze into/in parallel with/against the canon now understood as the male gaze, including Adrienne L. Mclean (2013), Lucis Arbuthnot and Gail Seneca (2013), and Richard Dyer (2013). Carr's thorough analysis of the gaze, using her perspective both as a watcher and as a performer, is fascinating. However, questions remain regarding the performer's position in live performance within the context of theatrical Burlesque under analysis.

Mythology of the Voyeur - the Peeping Tom

Mulvey references the English legend of Lady Godiva when using the phrase 'Peeping Tom' alongside the term 'voyeur'. In the legend, Lady Godiva rode through the streets of Coventry naked (as punishment for advocating for the townsfolk to her husband), and whilst everyone in the town looked away to preserve and respect her modesty, one man actively looked and became known as the Peeping Tom (Carr-Gomm, 2010). The reason this is important is because we start to understand, particularly in the context of Anglicised language and culture, why the naked body of a woman is seen as contentious, and why, specifically, the act of viewing a woman's naked body is also perceived as illicit.

The author of *Lady Godiva: A Literary History of the Legend*, Daniel Donoghue, points out that in this legend shame is liberally distributed, especially towards Godiva's vulnerable naked body, which creates the illicit desire to see what is forbidden, thus creating the voyeur (2002). Writer for *Harvard Magazine* Charles Coe notes that it is the introduction of the Peeping Tom that brings sexual tension into the story; this feeds into Freud's pairings of scopophilia and exhibitionism, along with others: "the observer and the observed, the prurient and the chaste, the punished and the rewarded" (Coe, 2003). Donoghue raises many pertinent issues in connection with the legend and the various readings of it, as well as alluding to Mulvey's cinematic male gaze and the performance of the legend in film (2002). He states that the legend has now been reduced to its voyeuristic dynamics due to "powerful and ubiquitous institution[s] [film industry, theory, and society]" (2002, p. 127), and that the reason for Godiva's nakedness and Tom's punishment is no

longer remembered. Society's assumption of the male as voyeur and the victimised woman being observed is further perpetuated in historic and contemporary law, art, and media. Interestingly, Brownie, in her chapter "Private Acts, Public Display", discusses the historical development of the movement from participant to observer in the act of undressing (2017). She references how during the 1930s Freud's concept of the panoptic gaze proliferated, with "through-the-key-hole" films and advice from magazines and adverts on how wives, and women in general, should undress, regardless of whether they were knowingly observed or not (2017, pp. 12–13). Brownie's interest is not only in the contrast in gesture between undressing in private and undressing in public, but also in the context in which these are presented, whereas Donoghue's focus is upon exploring other meanings to the Godiva legend and its impact. Both illustrate the widely assumed acceptance of the idea that the external viewer – the voyeur – is male, and the observed is female; neither author questions these gender roles.

The idea of who holds the power in terms of consent and agency when the removal of clothes and revealing of nudity or nakedness is watched, and how this ties in with notions of shame and vulnerability is an interesting area to explore. This is particularly so in relation to Contemporary Burlesque, where the performer, in theory, retains the agency and control as they dictate what is seen and how it is seen by the audience, who have paid to be entertained. Another consideration is how society views the relationship between the Burlesque performer and the audience.

Stigma, Shame and Secondary Objectification

The negative view of Contemporary Burlesque often derives from the assumption that any form of nudity, particularly that of a woman, equates to sex and sexuality. According to some writers this is partly due to Popular Burlesque's lack of depth beyond the stereotypical vintage white sexy woman, who shows little awareness of the historic satirising undertones of Classic Burlesque and the original taboo of Burlesque, that is to say, a woman having full autonomy, performing semi-naked on stage and lampooning society (Allen, 1991; Willson, 2008). However, another narrative erroneously combines all performative nudity and sexuality as sex work and blankets both the work and the people involved with shame and stigma, as

demonstrated by writers Levy (2005) and Walter (2010). “Secondary objectification” (Clare, 2015) of the people who work in and access these types of entertainment leads to stigma that focuses upon the morality of the individual rather than the exploitative working conditions and unbalanced laws, particularly in sex work (Ashforth & Kriener, 1999; Blithe & Wolfe, 2016; Clare, 2015). This is important as the “secondary objectification” (Clare, 2015) and judgement made by an external party about the performer/worker is done without consent and removes the performer/worker’s agency in the name of morality and decency; this contrasts with the agreed voyeurism and potential objectification the performer/worker has with their client/audience. Speaking from experience, stripper, writer, activist, theatre performer, and co-founder of the East London Stripper Collective Stacey Clare, highlights the differences between this consenting voyeurism and damaging “secondary objectification” (Clare, 2015). The moralistic view of all sexual entertainment that exists in law, and overlooks working conditions, leaves these individuals vulnerable and precarious both physically and mentally (Ashforth & Kriener, 1999; Blithe & Wolfe, 2016; Clare, 2015). The aim of this shaming is to prevent the reoccurrence of taboo behaviour; however, the community that surrounds Burlesque bolsters their participants, providing shame resilience through critical thinking and support (Brown, 2006; Dodds 2013; Lintott & Irving, 2015; Sally 2009; see below Vulnerability; also 5. Strategies for Practising Vulnerability and Trust; and 6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability). The ways in which this external judgement may impact on Burlesque as an art form is an interesting area to investigate in relation to both the performer and the audience and their relationship together.

Evolutions of Terms: The Dita-Effect

The narrowing of Burlesque has led to what I term the ‘Dita-effect’¹ (see Politics: Popularised Burlesque; and Glossary), so called because Dita Von Teese catapulted Burlesque into the mainstream media and her impact has been identified by interview participants throughout this investigation. Popular Burlesque altered the art

¹ This term is coined to describe a particular phenomenon that was observed and experienced during the research process. It is included within the context of this thesis in relation to the performer–audience relationship in Novel-Burlesque performance situations.

form's intention and ideology from celebration and exploration to a narrow retro-sexual, retro-nostalgic perception of glamour and monetisation (Levy, 2005; Nally, 2009). No longer challenging the gaze of the viewer, this appropriation and misuse of Burlesque iconography can be interpreted as re-enforcing retro-patriarchal misogynistic views of womanhood and as promoting a specific form of femininity – all this through a supposedly positive and empowered 'sexy' lens (Levy, 2005; Nally, 2009; Siebler, 2014; Walter, 2010; Willson, 2009). Consequently, Popular Burlesque can be seen as a furthering of misogynistic gender stereotyping and values, and the commodification of sexuality and empowerment. This undermines the art form as a whole, and its intention to give a platform to the alternative, the ambiguous, and the unconventional (Montgomery, 2013; Sally, 2009). Feeding into society's patriarchal cultural norms at the edge of what is considered acceptable as "fuckable and sellable" (Levy, 2005) Popular Burlesque feeds into objectification due to its lack of satire that disrupts the viewer's gaze.

The Active Voyeur?

All these definitions of voyeurism fall short of my experiences of becoming an accidental voyeur (when it was not the performer's intention), or of being placed as an intended voyeur (by the performer), and of being on the receiving end of voyeuristic experiences. Therefore, I briefly widen my focus to look to other disciplines and readings of voyeurism.

Intriguingly, in *The Emancipated Spectator* (2011) Ranciere notes: "What is required is a theatre without spectators, where those in attendance learn from as opposed to being seduced by images: where they become active participants as opposed to passive voyeurs." (2011, p. 4). As a philosopher, Ranciere uses his own earlier pedagogical theories in his argument for the reforming of theatre. Ranciere stipulates that certain terminology needs to be redefined and past connotations removed, and states that spectatorship is not inherently bad but our understanding of it and therefore performance of it may be flawed, and can, therefore, be changed. Freshwater succinctly writes of Ranciere that previous theories of the "presumed passivity of the spectator were based upon a set of long-established – but problematic and redundant – associations and oppositions" and therefore viewing

does not imply intellectual passivity (2011, p. 16): there can be an intellectual action in watching. The spectator translates, comprehends, and verifies against their own past experiences the action they are watching and thereby understanding. Ranciere continues to debate the re-definition and multiple definition of terms, looking to blur the boundaries and reduce the distances between the spectator (viewer/student) and the actor (viewed/schoolmaster) – and in doing so emancipates the spectator from their presumed passivity. In doing so, Ranciere creates a democratic and potentially intellectually equal space for both spectator and actor (discussed further in Performer–Audience Relationship; and Evolution of Terms: Trickster Space).

Leipe-Levinson, author of *Strip Show: Performances of Gender and Desire* (2002), debates voyeurism throughout her book, offering the idea that, according to Gertrude Koch, the purpose of strip clubs is not the eventual genital sexual gratification but the foreplay of voyeurism, visual sensuality, and Walter Serner's concept of *Schaulusts*, which is: "a terrifying lust ... the kind of rush that makes the blood boil and the head spin until that baffling potent excitement common to every passion races through the flesh." (Leipe-Levison, 2002, p. 186). Of course, there are those who oppose this view, deeming it objectifying and degrading, yet Leipe-Levison points out that through her investigation many patrons of strip clubs pay to become the object of the dancer's desires and to be the focus of other spectators' desire: "By becoming the object of another's lust and/or admirations, the fantasiser-viewer enhances his or her role as a powerful sexual subject." (2002, p. 186). This echoes Stacey Clare's explanation of the consensual relationship that performers/workers have with their audience/clients. Often, Leipe-Levison explains, patrons want to look beyond the dancers as "dehumanised objects by virtue of their nudity, representational availability or commodification" and discover the real person behind the dancer's persona – the everyday reality, the sexual subject (2002, p. 186). This is a desire that Gypsy Rose Lee traded on with her infamous 'The Psychology of a Stripteaser' routine, where she listed the things she was thinking about while strip teasing, sex not even making it onto the list.

Evolution of Terms: Voyeurism

Taking all this into account along with further reading yet to be discussed – in particular, Linott and Irvine’s paper “Sex Objects and Sexy Subjects” (Linott & Irvin, 2015; discussed further in Vulnerability) – the working definition for this thesis is that voyeurism is when the viewer objectifies the other person rather than maintaining a relationship. This objectification can lead to negative responses from the viewer: passivity in the face of spectacle, or the passing of judgement on the person viewed, and gratification (sexual or otherwise – potentially righteousness gained from secondary objectification). The situation becomes abusive and harmful when a person performing an intimate act is viewed and objectified without their consent. As such, I disagree with the idea that the voyeur in this act is powerless or passive: the context is everything. The voyeur may not be physically active in the situation, but depending on the consent and awareness of the person being viewed, the viewer is potentially placing the viewed person in a vulnerable situation.

Vulnerability

Once again, I use the funnel technique to start the discussion around vulnerability with larger concepts that relate to society and ways of living, to then narrow the debate and draw our attention towards how vulnerability could potentially be described and performed in Contemporary Burlesque. I have used various texts from different disciplines to articulate vulnerability and how I experienced it whilst engaging in Contemporary (Novel-) Burlesque; thus, we end the discussion of vulnerability with the evolution of terms.

Defining Vulnerability

To be vulnerable, according to a dictionary definition, is to be that which “may be wounded” or “exposed to damage” (*Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 1995, p. 1572). This definition of the word ‘vulnerability’ highlights the harmful effects, the negative impact of an external force. In the context of voyeurism, when an act of voyeurism is committed the person viewed is placed in a vulnerable position. Voyeurism is an action, whilst vulnerability is a state of being. This is a rather simplistic view of a complex word – vulnerable – which has many connotations and different developments, as can also be seen with the different understandings of voyeurism.

Shame, Resilience, and Precarious Living

The notions of shame and stigma attached to a performance that involves revealing the human body, especially a woman's body, are relevant to understanding society's negative perceptions of vulnerability (see Voyeurism). Brené Brown quotes the Merriam-Webster dictionary when looking at the definition of vulnerability in relation to the shame experienced by women (Brown, 2006). The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* definition of vulnerability includes "open to attack or damage"; as Brown discusses "the vulnerability continuum" she explains that women who acknowledge their own personal vulnerabilities are more likely to have more shame resilience (Brown, 2006, p. 48). However, those who do not acknowledge their vulnerabilities experience shame, "directing their feelings of fear, judgment, anger, rage and blame towards themselves, towards others" when these vulnerabilities are exposed or "open to attack" (Brown, 2006, p. 48). To be vulnerable is often seen as automatically meaning to be without power or agency – the attribute of victimhood (Brown, 2006, 2010).

In her article "Shame Resilience Theory: A Grounded Theory Study on Women and Shame" (2006) and her follow up TED Talk *The Power of Vulnerability* (2010) Brené Brown discusses the different ways in which vulnerability can be experienced and consequently managed. Brown's work is extensive and her theory is underpinned by much field work in the form of interviews as data collection (2006, 2010) and personal experience (Brown, 2010). According to Brown, shame is the negative experience of vulnerability: "an intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging" (2006, p. 45); shame creates isolation and "excruciating vulnerability" (2015). In her article, and in her practice, Brown explores the notions of shame resilience through techniques of acknowledgment, critical awareness, and the involving of community in the process of "speaking shame" (2006, p. 49), thus enabling the person experiencing shame to move forward from an experience that can be paralysing for an individual (2006). Brown revisits the notion of shame and vulnerability in her TED Talk, furthering this idea of resilience to present vulnerability as a birthplace not only of shame and fear but also of creativity, joy, and greater connectedness with others (2015). This

analysis of vulnerability is greatly nuanced: it attempts to understand this state of being beyond the binary and rigid way that society perceives it, and offers solutions to living with it.

In Judith Butler's *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015), they use the term 'precarity' to describe a state of being similar to Brown's negative illustration of vulnerability and shame. Butler writes that precarity is a space in which people who are vulnerable and dependent upon societal infrastructure, whose voices are marginalised and ostracised by establishments, can occupy and embody this precarity. Consequently, these vulnerable people "take precarity as their galvanizing condition" (Butler, 2015, p. 9): manipulated into a position where it is difficult to live or exist, they take action to find a space and a voice, and, as Brown suggests, greater connectedness (Brown, 2015). Butler goes on to describe the application of desired societal changes during mass assembly movements by the people: "the political demand is at once enacted and made, exemplified and communicated." (2015, p. 137). Butler's analysis of assembly uses fixed terminology and simple language to deconstruct and construct complex ideas. Whilst evidencing her claims with concrete examples from a wide range of international actions, such as Slut Walks (2011–2020) and the Occupy Movement (2011–2012), there is little, however, in the way of personal reflection or testimony in her writing. Butler's own research and examples provide further evidence of Brown's theory that a community bonded over vulnerability can create positive change in action. Brown's and Butler's concept of the vulnerable precarious community could be applied to what has been suggested to be the atmosphere and ethos of the Burlesque community, both as a subculture and as a platform for alternative narratives and experiences; to some extent, the Burlesque community practices Brown's and Butler's idea of the vulnerable precarious community and provides shame resilience against external judgement.

Evolution of Terms: Vulnerability

Through this literary research I have developed a more nuanced working definition of vulnerability, which specifically draws on Judith Butler's notion of everyday precarity, as well as on Brené Brown's research on shame and "living with vulnerability" (Brown, 2006, 2010; Butler, 2015). I then explored these ideas around vulnerability

using other creative spoken-word performances (see Appendix 2: Conference Papers and Supporting Creative Works). This work, whilst not directly Burlesque related, helped me to process and develop a nuanced working definition of vulnerability: vulnerability is a point from which creativity can flourish and is the acceptance of our own fragility and interdependency, and of the dangerous nature of living with others.

Vulnerability, Revelation, Empowerment

Contemporary literature (Nally 2009; Siebler, 2014; Walter 2010; Willson 2008) often debates the self-professed feminist agenda of the current Burlesque revival: 'empowerment'. In her film *Burlesque Undressed* (2010) Immodesty Blaize states that it is not the removal of clothing per se that is empowering (a mainstream reduction of Burlesque) but the act of performing, as the performer has full autonomy in respect of what happens on stage. As suggested, Burlesque as a subculture offers a space and opportunity not only for the performers to creatively explore many different perspectives and possibilities that society tends to narrow and categorise, but also for the acceptance of self and others as multi-faceted beings by the audience (Dodds 2013; Lintott & Irving, 2015; Sally, 2009). There is a recognition by some authors (Dodds, 2013; Montgomery, 2013; Sally 2009) that in doing Burlesque there is a sense of exposure and vulnerability in the reveal of creativity as well as of skin.

In most literature on Burlesque (Brownie, 2017; Dodds, 2013; Montgomery, 2013; Nally, 2009; Regehr, 2011; Sally, 2009; Walter quoting Blaize, 2010; Weldon quoting Cho, 2010; Willson, 2008;), performers describe their position onstage as a place of strength, where they have full autonomy and therefore empowerment. Few engage with the idea of the very real exposure of self as a potential site of vulnerability for the performer, unless they reference vulnerability as a negative consequence of exploitative working conditions (Levy, 2005). Brownie comes close, noting how transformative the process of performing Burlesque can be for the performer as it involves the creation, development, and performance of self-acceptance and cathartic creative exploration (2017, p. 35, p. 37); this echoes Dodd's findings (2013). Brownie also briefly acknowledges the potential effect on the audience with

readings of empowerment and inspiration (2017). In the foreword of Jo Weldon's *The Burlesque Handbook* (2010), performer Margaret Cho describes her first time watching Burlesque as an audience member and seeing a performer larger than herself. Cho explains that experiencing the performer's enjoyment, strength, and autonomy on stage gave Cho the freedom and confidence to love herself, and, later, to perform (2010, pp. ix–xii). This revelation, of a performer reflecting on their experience as an audience member, which can later lead to transformative celebrations of self-awareness and acceptance through performance, is something that resonates throughout the literature on Burlesque; however, it is neither tackled, nor directly articulated from the perspective of the writer as performer (Brownie, 2017; Dodds, 2013; Regehr, 2011). In her thesis finale, as she watches showgirl Burlesque, Allison Carr acknowledges her desire to dance, to be seen, to be more than part of the dialogue as an audience member – to be an instigator as the performer (2011, p. 217). This offers an insight into how the performance of Burlesque can affect the audience and may prompt them into action. However, there seem to be a few steps missing in the process of finding self-acceptance onstage as a performer and also in the bringing about of such a revelation in the audience. Both situations suggest that there is more to the process than is discussed in the literature. If we apply Brown's and Butler's theories on vulnerability and precarity to Contemporary Burlesque as a community, and also to thinking about the performer–audience relationship, we can, perhaps, fill those gaps and explain fully the experiences of revelation and empowerment had by both parties.

Consequently, this leads us to one of the boundaries between audience and performer that can be blurred with 'recreational' Burlesque (Regehr, 2012) in the form of workshops, classes, books, and YouTube videos, which encourage the audience to explore beyond the parameters of onstage production and perhaps step onto the stage themselves (Dodds, 2013; Nally, 2009; Regehr, 2012; Willson, 2008). Kaitlyn Regehr wrote "The Rise of Recreational Burlesque: Bumping and Grinding Towards Empowerment" (2012) as an international Burlesque dance choreographer and an academic voice on women's empowerment through dance. Using Ozer and Bandura's four processes of self-efficacy theory (2012, p. 153) Regehr analysed the data collated from interview transcripts, observations, and an intensive reality-TV format as the methodology for the study (2012, pp.. 139–141). Regehr herself hits

upon the main problem with the study – the highly contrived nature of the artificial environment. There was some attempt in the study to mitigate the pressure that could be felt by the participants, who were being observed via the in-the-moment private video-diary rooms away from the other participants and film crew. However, these recordings would then be viewed as part of the research and broadcast as part of the TV production. It was undeniably an artificial space and circumstance that brought the participants together to be observed. There were many observers in this study: Regehr as instructor and academic, the other participants, the production crew, as well as the eventual television audience. This level of attention would inevitably make the participants self-conscious and vulnerable, thereby creating the Hawthorne effect:² hyper-awareness of the ‘other’ watching, resulting in pressure to react in a certain way or to change behaviour (Schechner, 2013, p. 2). Whilst attempting to research and promote empowerment, self-exploration, and acceptance through dance, there is no doubt that this study, as a reality-TV show, brought the art form to the mainstream. As a result, unfortunately, through the many layers of processing, it is possible for the meanings and experiences of such a study to be diluted and for misinterpretations to be created due to the highly visible and commercial nature of the conduct of the methodology. Regardless, according to Regehr the conclusion is clear: that an environment in which the goals of contemporary feminism can be pursued – “to ensure sexual agency, sexual health and the right to sexual exploration” – is safely provided by contemporary ‘recreational’ Burlesque (2012, p. 155).

Returning briefly to Siebler to address her fears concerning the audience’s patriarchal-heterosexist gaze (2014), there is the potential for Burlesque to become a practical demonstration of Shelia Lintott and Sherri Irvin’s hypothetical method and mission of reclaiming and diversifying the term ‘sexy’. In their paper: “Sex Objects and Sexy Subjects: A Feminist Reclamation of Sexiness” (2015), they theorise that “celebrating genuine sexiness will result in a greater diversity of embodied expressions of sexuality” and should be encouraged within society, creating healthier perceptions of people and relationships (Lintott & Irvin 2015, p. 8). A space could

² The Hawthorne effect states that participants being observed change their behaviour once aware of this observation.

thereby be created where people, in particular women, are “sexy subjects” rather than “sex objects”: the “sexy subject” embodies and redefines the term ‘sexy’ whilst being respected as a person, thus increasing agency, whereas the term ‘sexy’ reduces them to a stereotypical “sex object” (Lintott & Irvin 2015). Lintott and Irving state:

Attributions of sexiness, then, can be either appropriate or inappropriate: they are appropriate when they emerge out of the appreciation of an embodied person in all her sexualized particularity, and they are inappropriate when they neglect her subjectivity and/or impose upon her external societal standards of attractiveness. (2015, p. 18)

Lintott and Irving argue ‘sexiness’ can (and should) go beyond the aesthetic to branch out and include and acknowledge the whole person, their agency, and their reality without their being subjected to the external fantasy of the viewer or society: “Attributions of sexiness, in our view, should be responsive to the person as she actually is” (2015, p. 18). Following on from Lintott and Irving’s theory of sexy subjects, performer Sherril Dodds proposes “that neo-burlesque facilitates opportunities for personal transformation that arise from the performance and spectatorship experience.” (2013, p. 83). Interestingly, Levy calls for similar action to that called for by Lintott and Irving: “There are other choices. If we are really going to be sexually liberated, we need to make room for a range of options as wide as the variety of human desire.” (2005, p. 200). Levy emphasises that this space is needed if we are to discover our own desire rather than follow a pop-culture version of sexiness.

Unfortunately, neither Lintott and Irving’s paper nor Levy’s book offers a suggestion for such a space in society today, although all three authors speculate that such a space should be found. Lintott and Irving go further, to theorise how the space should be conducted. Therefore, I propose that Burlesque, in particular the form of Novel-Burlesque I have identified, could be such a space in which this nuanced understanding of ‘sexy’ could be enacted and embodied (see Evolution of Terms: Trickster Space). Viewing Burlesque and the performer–audience relationship from different perspectives could offer a deeper understanding of the revelations, transformations, and provocations to act, both on- and off-stage, enacted and

experienced by the performer and the audience for each other (see Evolution of Terms: Conduit). In addition, further examination into the process of progressing from audience member to performer is an area yet to be fully explored and interrogated.

Evolution of Terms: Proximal Identification

Turning our attention to the individual performer, and to points of exposure and vulnerability, we look at the created term 'proximal identification'.

Acknowledging my own time limitations and gaps in knowledge, I realise that I still have much research to do with regard to the term 'proximal identification'. This term was created in an attempt to articulate my choice to create and perform a routine about Frida Kahlo and her disability in order to depict my own journey with disability and to prompt conversations about disability and sexiness (see 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust; and 6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability). The term refers to the idea that an individual or group of people can identify with aspects of a cultural icon, and celebrate them as a multi-faceted individual, without denying or dismissing other aspects of the icon's identity. Here, I celebrate Frida Kahlo, her art, her life, and her depiction of disability, yet I am not Mexican, and I do not 'black up' or 'crip up' as part of the routine (see Glossary). Likewise, other groups of people celebrate Kahlo for different aspects of her identity: for example LGBTQ+ communities celebrate her gender fluidity, and her openly bisexual and polyamorous relationships; whereas feminists revere her for depicting in her artwork her very visceral experiences of being a woman. This is where the friction and risk that Burlesque is known for comes into play, as my routine could be viewed as culture appropriation.

As Ayanna Thompson's book *Blackface* explains, despite the care and sensitivity I took when creating and performing the routine I am, nevertheless, in a position of 'white privilege'. The creation of this routine could be described as an act of 'white innocence', where I enact white privilege with good intentions (see 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust for a more in-depth discussion). Even though my intention was to raise awareness around disabilities and to celebrate

Kahlo, this is problematic due to racial differences. Although I am a woman artist, I have disabilities (multiple sclerosis and dyslexia), and have a similar heritage to Kahlo, I have not experienced the struggle and oppression of being Mexican. In chapter 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust, I explore the Burlesque industry and the conversations happening within it around race. Contemporary Burlesque's conversations during this period have shifted from 'Is Burlesque feminist?' to 'How can Burlesque be made more diverse and safer?' In chapter 5 I explore The Haruko Accord (2020), the principles of which are to use pedagogical and/or artistic collaborative processes to identify, acknowledge, disrupt, and demolish colonial systems and habits (The Haruko Accord, 2020). The aim is to create space and engage in the discomfort, uncertainty, and pain of these systems and habits have created, to then dismantle these harmful systems and habits. With a new understanding of our relationships with our environment, each other, and ourselves, we can build more responsible, compassionate, and sustainable systems and habits. (The Haruko Accord, 2020). The discussions and outcome around proximal identification and cultural appropriation are uneasy and unresolved, particularly in relation to my own Frida Kahlo routine. This is another gap in academic research into Contemporary Burlesque which requires further research.

Whilst I have not been able to give the topic of race and racism the space it deserves, I acknowledge that this discussion needs to take place, and an awareness of it in relation to my research is noted if not deeply delved into. Consequently, throughout the thesis I have chosen to capitalise 'B' when writing 'Black' in relation to cultural identity and to keep 'white' lowercase; as Toivo Asheeke explains in "'Lost Opportunities': The African National Congress of South Africa (ANC-SA)'s Evolving Relationship with the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) in Exile, 1970–1979" (2018) this is done to acknowledge how these identifications are "not born out of the same struggle of the oppressed" (2018, p. 522). As such, the first performer case study is of Perle Noire, one of the most internationally renowned Black Burlesque performers, who performs at both Popular Burlesque and (Novel-) Burlesque events. I decided to focus on Noire, as an example of Classic Burlesque, as her performance at HBBF Gala 2016 was one of the best examples of the performer–audience relationship I had experienced, both up to that point and since, and I had yet to articulate this experience (see 4. Beyond Awareishness – the Dialogic Gaze).

Performer–Audience Relationships

Following a funnel structure similar to that of the other sections in this chapter I begin by looking at performer–audience relationships from the perspective of literature on theatre. Focusing next specifically upon literature on Burlesque I then progress to the evolution of terms that were created to adequately express the experiences I had of Novel-Burlesque.

Performer–Audience Relationships in Literature on Theatre

Having proposed that Burlesque is a genre of theatre I turn to literature on theatre to understand theatre’s performer–audience relationship; this included: Susan Bennett (2003), Caroline Heim (2016), and Kirsty Sedgman (2018). Narrowing the focus, I then examine Katherine Leipe-Levinson’s *Strip Show: Performances of Gender and Desire* (2002), in which she uses Schechner’s performance theory, along with other texts, to draw conclusions around gender, desire, and sexual performance at contemporary strip clubs, which evolved out of Historic Burlesque in North America.

In *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (2003) author Susan Bennett acknowledges changes in what is expected of and by a theatre audience when experiencing theatre; she considers as far as the turn of the twenty-first century, with the second edition including chapter additions covering 2001 and 2003. Stipulating early on that the audience is the most important part of the creation of a theatre event, she asserts: “It is at the nexus of production and reception that the spectator exists” and thus the act of theatre is created (2003, p. vii). Endeavouring to see the audience as a diverse group of people who hold their own positionality, experiences, and cultural context, rather than as a monolithic homogeneous group, Bennett’s definition of the audience is the basis for the thoughts of several other authors analysing theatrical audiences (Bennett, 2003; Freshwater, 2009; Heim, 2016; Sedgman, 2018). The audience comprises individuals who as a collective are receptive and reactive to the production viewed. As such, Bennett constructs a model that describes the audience’s experience of theatre as consisting of two frames: 1/ the outer frame – theatre as a cultural construct, the production of the theatrical event, the selection of material for production, and the audience’s

definitions and expectations of performance (see above, in Politics); 2/ the inner frame – the event itself, the spectator’s experience of the fictional world, including production strategies, ideology, coding, and material conditions for the production. It is the crossover and interaction of these two frames that creates the audience’s experience and understanding of theatre, as “cultural assumptions affect performances, and performances rewrite cultural assumptions.” (2003, p. 2). Focusing on the second frame, when applied to non-traditional theatre Bennett describes the process of “production-reception” by the audience as being “bi-directional”, because in the case of a non-traditional audience there is greater flexibility, and therefore the audience are able to draw upon “broader cultural perspectives.” (2003, p. 207). All the cultural expectations and assumptions placed on the event begin to be actioned and experienced by the audience for that theatre production; however, the direct experience of the production revises the audience’s expectations. Consequently, Bennett suggests the challenging of old conventions and the establishing of new conventions that have the potential beyond the moment of production to “reform the boundaries of culture” (2003, p. 207), feeding into ideas around creating new ritual spaces that impact wider society (see Evolution of Terms: Trickster Space).

Bennett devised a diagram of the model (2003, p. 210) to illustrate what she calls the bi-directional influences that impact on the experience at the moment of the audience’s reception of the theatre event. These influences include elements from her model’s outer frame: culture, interpretive communities, horizons of expectations, and interactive relations with the theatrical moment. The influences from the inner frame are: the fictional world of the stage, the fixed time for reception, the internal horizon of expectations, and the cultural overcoding – that is, a shared language and understanding due to societal experiences. Whilst this diagram succinctly conveys the relationships and interactions happening outside and inside the theatrical moment for the audience it does not easily transfer across to Contemporary Burlesque. Within Burlesque the fictional world of the stage has a duality of illusion and reality that traditional theatre is not overtly engaged with; therefore, the audience can also overlook this duality of illusion and reality more easily. The bi-directional element of this model is linear and very rigid, and as such it does not allow for fluidity or for influences to skip a few steps to directly impact the audience’s experience.

There is no discussion regarding the level of intimacy, vulnerability, and trust required on both sides of the stage, and although Bennett does investigate non-traditional theatre there is still a sense of prescription and dramatic text even within those alternative theatrical events. (Novel-) Burlesque is very piecemeal and tends to only come together on the night of the event because usually, different performers are employed for each event, so there is a sense of everything shifting and evolving in every possible variable of the production. Consequently, Bennett's model of frames and bi-directional interactions is too restrictive to be applied to Burlesque.

Kirsty Sedgman, author of *The Reasonable Audience: Theatre Etiquette, Behaviour Policing, and the Live Performance Experience* (2018), takes Bennett's theories a step further by asking who makes 'the rules' for the audience, who the rules are for, and who polices those rules. With some uncomfortable questions Sedgman goes on to expose the damaging power dynamics at play when audiences are asked to be "reasonable" and "respectful". These words gloss over the discrimination and exclusion of people who cannot subscribe to traditional theatre etiquette for a myriad of possible reasons, including, but not exclusive to: disability, race, culture, and class. "Respect is a construct designed to resist disruptions to the status quo ... these terms are so often used to obscure the violence of normalisation." (2018, p. 6–7). Sedgman joins David Osa Amadasun in posing questions such as: "whose experience is being privileged by the culture industry?" (2018, p. 149). Doing so highlights the ingrained colonial biases in the systemic workings of theatre, not only in its administration but also architecturally (ranging from oppressive architecture and a lack of step-free access, to a lack of sensitivity and accessibility training for front-of-house-staff) that results in wider marginalisation and affects the make-up of audiences, thus re-enforcing those ingrained biases. Sedgman's book offers an opening into disability and performance theory from the perspective of a "marked", "unruly", "unreasonable" disabled body as audience (2018). I will return to this thread of discussion in 6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability. Not only are there physical obstacles to be overcome, or rather to be accepted and understood, but there are also cultural discrepancies to be addressed because not everyone responds to an event in the same way: one person's silence may show respect for the performer to one, whilst to another person it shows disinterest and boredom. Therefore, the audience's self-policing that can happen in the stalls of the auditorium

under the guise of educating others in theatre etiquette – when ‘asking for respect for the performers’ or for ‘being reasonable to others’ – can further manipulate the demographic of the audience as newcomers are made to feel stupid, ashamed, and unwelcome rather than able to authentically share in the joy of creativity and the experience (2018, p. 118). Ultimately, Sedgman calls for theatre to be receptive to alternative ways of viewing and engaging with it, and to even, perhaps, favour an unreasonable audience, because judging others in relation to strict behavioural theatre etiquette which leads to their exclusion is not a neutral or objective act. In 2. Practice Review I discuss Burlesque etiquette, how it is introduced to the audience and then enacted.

In her book *Audience as Performer: The Changing Role of Theatre Audiences in the Twenty-first Century* Caroline Heim (2016) narrows her focus to Western mainstream theatre (Broadway, Westend, etc.), where the audience ‘perform’ the role of the ‘traditional’ audience and give spontaneous contributions, in contrast to ‘participatory theatre’ where the audience foregoes the role of audience member and has their actions and role prescribed or directed by the production (2016). Heim deliberately does not look at avant-garde or fringe types of theatre. Heim also states that she “champions” the voices and experiences of the “ordinary audience members”, rather than the voices of the theatre professionals, who are seen as authorities on the subject matter (2016, p. 7). In doing so Heim relishes the subjective, passionate, and sometimes fickle views of the audience and argues that “in the diegetic world of the theatrical experience the actors *and* the audience are performers in this world” (2016, p. 7). Discussing the differences between acting (the act of doing – performance) versus being (the being of a role), Heim quotes Patrice Pavis: “the performer stages his [or her] own self, while an actor plays a role of another” to develop the idea further and include the audience who “stage their own selves” (Pavis, 1980, p. 262, quoted by Heim, 2016, p. 4). Using Goffman’s concept of ‘fronts’ Heim explains that the audience stage themselves through the role of ‘audience’. There is also the crucial acknowledgment of the actors’ responses to the audience reactions during the theatre event; as a result the actors become the audience’s audience. Therefore, the audience can also be considered as a troupe of performers with their own text and embodied actions who, in turn, inform the actors’ performance and experience onstage.

The contemporary audience performer does not perform alone but performs in the gregarious community of fellow critics, consumers, and co-creators and with their co-performing troupe, the actors. The essence of theatre is the encounter between two troupes – actors and audience members. (Heim, 2016, p. 176)

Extremely close to describing the experiences I have had when watching and performing (Novel-) Burlesque, Heim's account falls short because she does not interrogate the performative and production elements (such as the host, or the call and response the performer and audience enact; please see 2. Practice Review) that are necessary for trust to be developed, only describing the vulnerability that is expressed on the performer's side.

Quoting Gadamer, Heim describes the dialogic gaze and conduit almost as I define them in this thesis: "The player receives back from the onlooker what he has dared to do and inversely we, the onlookers, receive from the daring presentation of the players new possibilities of being that go beyond what we are" (Gadamer, 1987, p. 64, quoted by Heim, 2016, p. 175). Heim interprets this to mean that the actors invite the audience to find new ways of 'being' an audience. I would further interpret this, that through experiencing the act of doing by the performer onstage, many possibilities may be revealed to/for the audience, not only within the theatre context but also beyond it, thus, making the actor the conduit. Similarly, drawing on her experiences as an actor as well as an audience member Heim's description is very close to that of the performer's experience of the dialogic gaze:

As an actor, if I felt that the audience were *with* me ... reacting to everything I gave them ... I would work to live more in the moment and allow myself to be more spontaneous on stage. I would give them more. Now as an audience member if I feel the actors are *with* me and are reacting to what I give them ... that they are listening to me listen – I will laugh more, I will cry more, I will applaud more. I will give them more. In either troupe I am a performer. (Heim, 2016, p. 176)

Of those I have read, this brilliant description comes closest to articulating the dialogic gaze in a theatre context (see Evolution of Terms: Dialogic Gaze). However,

the reason given for this interaction, and the description of how it is constructed and maintained do not adequately explain my experiences of Novel-Burlesque, both as an audience member and as a performer. Heim limits her analysis and therefore constrains her conclusion to a very specific set of parameters that can be seen as being not ambitious enough to delve further into these experiences and their possibilities.

Unlike Sedgman's critique of exclusionary theatre spaces, Heim finds that the framing of the environment, including the architecture, contributes to the emancipation of the audience, giving them "permission to perform in relaxed environments that privilege audience creativity" (Heim, 2016, p. 172). Heim argues that "expressive audience performance can be seen as cyclical", with a return of the rowdy performances of the nineteenth century during the second half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century (Heim, 2016, p. 172), both finding and confirming the atmosphere and environment Sedgman desires for an unruly audience; there is, however, no discussion from Heim regarding those who Sedgman described as marked and unreasonable in terms of disability, race, culture, or class (2018).

Heim's audiences want to interact, and they find new ways to engage with theatre through technology. These audiences also perform to a wider community beyond the temporal site-specific experience. Taking selfies and reviewing shows online reaches wider virtual communities beyond the specific location of the theatre; the further sharing of memorabilia, such as music or merchandise, extends experiences beyond the time frame of the performance. This illustrates the audience's "authority, liberation, and pleasure", which is similar to that of nineteenth-century audiences in their use of mass media, discussed at length in Susan A. Glenn's book *Female Spectacle* (2000) (Heim, 2016, pp. 172–173). Ordinary audiences enjoy critiquing a piece as a way of connecting with other audience members and potential audience members. Consequently, because of the existence of this wider community, 'word of mouth' opinion that spreads from one ordinary audience member to another holds more authority than the opinion of theatre critics. There is a democratisation occurring as audience members listen to each other because there is no assumed hierarchy among them similar to that which exists among theatre professionals

(Heim, 2016). In this way Heim's audience is similar to a (Novel-) Burlesque audience, in that they are a community, exchanging show critiques, sharing memorabilia, and also extending their audienceship beyond the restrictions of the event's time frame.

Turning our attention to the other end of the entertainment spectrum, Leipe-Levinson investigates (not only as an academic but also as a performer – unfortunately her experiences are rarely mentioned – and as a researcher-patron) strip clubs that have both women and male performers. Explaining clearly the progression of contemporary stripping out of Historic Burlesque performance, Leipe-Levinson details costume dramas, sexual subjectivity, choreography, and the performer–spectator relationship. Analysing and dissecting the reasons behind these elements and how they are used to sexually arouse the spectator, Leipe-Levinson exposes the power dynamics behind the performance, and explores further to show how these feed into and upturn society's expectations and assumptions around male active sexual agency and female passive sexual agency. Leipe-Levinson acknowledges that, for some, there may be truth in this stereotype, due to societally cultivated ideas about sexual desire, but she also carefully counters this narrative throughout as an incorrect generalisation.

Constantly returning to the point, Leipe-Levinson asserts that all the sex scenes performed with spectators' involvement, all the tipping rituals, and all the interactions with the performers are mutually consensual and occur within a very strict code of etiquette that allows for these carnivalesque trickster transgressions to play out safely (2002); "Spectators pay to participate in highly regulated rituals around sex and desire both as viewers and as performers." (2002, p. 171). In a similar context to that of the traditional architecture (wherein the wealthiest audience sat on or in boxes closest to the stage in order to be seen) and culture of theatre, spectators in strip clubs find pleasure and thrills in the blurred lines of seeing (the intimate acts) and being seen (by the performer and by other spectators) in adult sexual entertainment (Mackintosh, 1992). Therefore, they explore and play with desiring, being desired, and, as Leipe-Levinson points out, "even vicariously or narcissistically 'desiring oneself' through the image of another" (2002, p. 171).

Leipe-Levinson calls upon Schechner's performance theory to remind us that no matter how much money exchanges hands for the different types of erotic ritual play, it is almost impossible for any participant to buy control over all the different gazes in a theatrical encounter (2002), quoting Schechner:

A person sees the event: he sees himself; he sees himself seeing the event; he sees himself seeing others who are seeing the event and who, maybe, see themselves seeing the event. Thus, there is the performance, the performers, the spectators; and the spectator of the spectators; and the self-seeing-self that can be performer or spectator or spectators of spectators.

(Schechner, 1985, p. 297)

Schechner succinctly articulates the many different types of viewing and who is being viewed. As discussed above, each spectator comes to the event with a different set of nuanced assumptions, parameters, experiences, and intentions through which they engage in and view the event (Bennett, 2003; Freshwater, 2009). Consequently, the way in which the spectator watches, along with who they identify with and how, is fluid and constantly changing with the multiple possibilities.

In Leipe-Levinson's book the spectator, or voyeur, is rarely seen as passive even when they (men) are paralysed by the performer's (woman) garments draped all over them (2002) or when they (women) are cradled in the performer's (man) arms and carried to the stage (2002) even if "aspects of these parts may play out in forms that reflect the indoctrination of cultural gender norms" (Leipe-Levinson, 2002, p. 171). The stripper (woman or man) is ascribed the role of sexual object; however, interestingly, the 'performing spectators' (men or women) shift the focus, attempting and desiring to take on that role as well through these rituals and interactions.

From the foregoing it can be seen that if theatre audience–performer relationships, with the intent to take the audience on a creative journey, are at one end of the spectrum, whilst strip club spectator–performer relationships, with the intent to create sexual titillation and arousal in the spectator, are at the other, then Burlesque audience–performer relationships are somewhere in the middle, combining both creative narrative with sexual titillation (corresponding with the UK Entertainment Laws, see 2. Practice Review).

New Women and Chorus Girls – Spectacle, Agency, and Control

Having looked at theory of contemporary theatre audiences, I now focus briefly on how historic women performers and their producers used visual 'female-spectacle' and manipulated the audience's gaze. From this exploration we can see threads of the past in Contemporary Burlesque and in the literature about the art form, particularly in the moment of performance.

In *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* (2000), Susan A. Glenn analyses the use and performance of visual spectacle by women performers in the US during the turn of the nineteenth century (1860–1920s) in music hall and popular entertainment. Glenn describes this as being where theatre worked both for and against women due to its capacity to engage in debate, create new images, offer alternatives, and to be a platform for 'women's experience'. Theatre gave the opportunity and space for women to become what Glenn calls "New Women": women who self-consciously used self-spectacle to create entertainment and popularity. These New Women displayed self-realisation and self-identification away from a male counterpart (husband, father, brother, guardian). Most shockingly, they used reclamation of their own personality, and their own sexual and gender expression as their performance gimmick: publicly and unashamedly, they were paid for their work, for being themselves as self-female-spectacle. "By opening a space for female performers to become *both* spectacles *and* personalities, the popular theatre promoted the development of the first self-consciously 'modern' expression of new womanhood." (Glenn, 2000, p. 7). At the same time as theatre provided these opportunities, women in society were campaigning for equal votes, equal work rights and the acknowledgement that no two women were the same. Throughout Glenn's book she gives several examples not only of politics and theatre intertwining but also of how women performers used their image, personalities, politics, and new technologies to communicate with their audience both on the stage and off.

Glenn starts with Sarah Bernhardt, who used new printing technology and self-production to create a campaign that utilised different types of literary spin and mass media. She then moves to the comediennes who used both subtle intellectual

humour and violent slap-stick humour to draw attention to themselves and comment on the social, cultural, and political changes that were happening around them. These funny women performers often sacrificed their beauty to disrupt notions of their own femininity in order to be comical: "Playing with the grotesque and the beautiful, funny women articulated their period's cultural nervousness about the lines between permissible and forbidden desire." (Glenn, 2000, p. 49). As technology progressed in the late nineteenth century and into the twentieth century the reproduction of images happened both onstage and off. Women mimics reproduced other performers' acts and personalities onstage, whilst off stage the performers utilised the captured image with the advent of the camera, allowing audiences to take the images home. This caused further nervousness in society as it not only questioned originality in art but also questioned the strength of women's personalities: according to some, women were weak and therefore malleable and were consequently unable to create original art but only to mimic it. However, the women mimics challenged this notion: "In being likened and in likening themselves to photographers, mimics and their audiences not only asserted the right of women to look powerfully at others, but their ability to creatively elaborate what they observed." (Glenn, 2000, p. 87). This argument fed into the self-identifying rhetoric by demonstrating that women could also be self-reflective and 'the artist intellectual' as they could participate and critically evaluate cultural practices.

However, theatre was a double-edged sword or, as Nally describes Contemporary Burlesque, "Janus-faced" (2009). Glenn comments on the "central paradox of popular theatre, namely, that it simultaneously magnified and diminished the idea of female agency and individuality" (2000, p. 155). Producers began to exploit this new female-spectacle as beautiful women were 'discovered' by Broadway producers (such as Ziegfeld) and placed on stage as lavish ornaments, "to make spectacle of women by presenting them as alluring non-threatening objects." (2000, p. 155). There was the creation of the 'chorus girl'; not a wife or mother, or even a woman, the chorus girl image was young, hyper-feminine, and sexy; with their image and sexuality constructed and managed by men, chorus girls were one of many: reproducible, impersonal, and controlled. There was extravagance and abundance on every level of the Broadway musical revue, which featured a core chorus line, then another core 'showgirl' troupe who could sing and dance, then solo performers,

who would join this huge cast, mostly comprising women, as the headline acts. There was excess and decadence onstage – more was more – more costumes ('faux nude', or less costume to show more flesh), more set designs, more performers on stage. Women became both the consumer and the consumed. Ziegfeld packaged titillation and naughtiness with respectability, trading in nationalism by glorifying and defining, with measurements, the concept of the 'American Beauty'. Glenn notes "a blend of idealism and voyeurism" in the conception and promotion of the 'American Beauty' that is not unlike my concept of the Dita-effect (2000, p. 170). As the assertive New Woman increased in popularity and gained her own individuality and identity, Broadway (i.e., producers such as Wyburn and Ziegfeld) created the chorus girl as a passive sexual commodity that men could possess: one in a crowd rather than an individual.

Assertive self-spectacle by theatre women ... [vs] theatrical producers made a spectacle *of* women, positioning them as a passive object for audience consumption ... It is in the interplay between active and passive female spectacle that we see most vividly how the theatre became an important progenitor of two very different, but nevertheless equally modern, concepts of femininity. (Glenn, 2000, p. 3)

However, it should be noted that in 1919 these chorus girls went on strike, demanding better working conditions. Due to this mass walkout, performances could not continue, thus the Chorus Equity Association was created in 1919. The chorus girl – whose image had become tarnished with scandal and rumour propagated by their own producers, depicting them as hedonistic party girls who were sexually manipulative gold diggers – finally came to be aligned with morally respectable performers and women. These New Women (including the chorus girl) expanded, onstage in male-dominated public spaces, the notion of what women could be. Through their performing of these roles "they inspired other women to dream and experiment." (Glenn, 2000, p. 216). Through theatre the women performers created female-spectacle that not only said 'look at me' but also demanded to be listened to, as they had something to say about the experience of being a woman.

The Performer: 'Awareishness', Duality and Transformation

The question of the performer–audience relationship in Contemporary Burlesque at the moment of live performance is the major subject of this research. As such, narrowing our focus again, the literature on this aspect of Contemporary Burlesque provides an essential context for understanding the essence of Burlesque itself. It was, therefore, the primary driver for developing the research methodology.

On the stage, Burlesque performers throughout history and in their many guises have all had one attribute: the knowing look, wink, or kiss (Leipe-Levinson, 2002; Montgomery, 2013). In her essay “Representing 'Awareishness': Burlesque, Feminist Transgression and the 19th Century Pin-Up” (1999), and book *Pin-Up Grrrls* (2006), Maria-Elena Buszek discusses the many factors that led to the rise of the historic Burlesque performer and their use of *carte de visite* photography, that were the origins of the pin-up genre. ‘Awareishness’ is a term Buszek uses to describe this knowing look, a term she attributes to Lydia Thompson’s monologue routine ‘Girl of the Period’ (1999, p.155) that lampooned herself, the audience, and the very concept of Burlesque. Many writers agree with Buszek, using ‘awareishness’ as a term to describe Contemporary Burlesque performers (Dodds, 2013; Nally, 2009; Sally, 2009; Willson, 2008) as being different from other types of theatre performers. Montgomery goes further to define this quality as belonging to Burlesque but not striptease (2013, p. 33). However, the effect of this awareishness upon the performer–audience relationship needs to be further analysed in order to understand how the performer’s gaze functions within different routines, and how, more broadly, awareishness interacts with the existing concept in theatre of breaking the fourth wall.

Interestingly, Leipe-Levinson goes into fascinating detail about “facial choreography and eye-dancing” and “erotic mugging” as an exaggerated extension of Western methods of sexual looking that happen among mutually interested people (2002, p. 117). She also explains both playful – through their “stares, peeks, heavy-lidded looks and winks” – and real power dynamics that these strippers perform: for example, when a patron has broken the rules the stripper punishes the patron by refusing to look and acknowledge them (2002, p. 199). Finishing this section of “Choreography 1: The basic moves” (2002) she states:

In order for erotic sparks to fly between pairs of “hungry I’s”, the gaze of the looker must be returned – not by passive “sex objects” with vacant, empty stares – but again, at the very least, by the fiction of a like-seeing sexual subject who offers the pretence of desiring the looker in return.

(Leipe-Levinson, 2002, p. 120)

This quote illustrates strippers’ use of Irving and Lintott’s “sexy subject”, combining it with the “awareishness” of Buszek’s Burlesque performers. However, even though many choreographed moves – such as the knowing wink, the bump and grind, the shimmy, and the striptease – are shared between Burlesque performers and strippers, the intent with stripping, as mentioned before, is somewhat different, since the end goal is to give sexual gratification to the audience.

Dr Lynn Sally’s essay “‘It is the Ugly that is so Beautiful’: Performing the Monster/Beauty Continuum in American Neo-Burlesque” (2009), analyses Contemporary Burlesque’s fluidity and use of extremes in its challenging of traditional notions and narratives of the monstrous and of beauty. Through subversive action, Burlesque reveals that the image of beauty is performative and can be fabricated and is therefore not bound by gender (2009). Drawing upon her own experiential knowledge, Sally uses Carolee Schneeman’s concept of being “an image and an image maker”, to investigate and analyse the friction a Burlesque performer encounters as both object and subject (2009, pp. 14–15, pp. 22–23). Much of Schneeman’s work revolved around using her own body to reclaim the female nude from its objectification by art history’s great male artists, as she herself was the artist and used her body as the work of art. Through Burlesque the performer is able to hold a paradoxical duality: they can consent to objectification by the viewer and still retain their agency as creator of the art the viewer is looking at. Consequently, Sally echoes Montgomery’s debate and conclusion (2013) in concluding that a beautiful showgirl made monstrous through Burlesque and the use of Neo-Burlesque performance styles (see Glossary; and 2. Practice Review) can be progressive and provoking when seen in the context of the “carnavalesque space” (2009, pp. 14). However, due to the ambiguous nature of Burlesque and the need for the correct contextual framing in order for the subversive and/or progressive message of the performance to be understood, mainstream Burlesque (often

produced without the contextual framing) can easily be seen as problematic and misogynistic. This duality possessed by the Burlesque body and the Burlesque event is discussed only from the performer's perspective; whilst Sally acknowledges the audience's participation, she does not explore the relationships that are created.

Similarly, in her article "Embodied Transformations in Neo-Burlesque Striptease" (2013) Sherill Dodds explores the body as a site of duality and complex transformation. Focusing upon Burlesque as a place of transformation for the performer, Dodds echoes Regehr's research, as she proposes "that Neo-Burlesque facilitates opportunities for personal transformation that arise from the performance and spectatorship experience." (2013, p. 83). This reference to the potential effect upon the audience needs to be further explored in relation to the performer–audience rapport, and the possible transformative process for the audience as well as for the performer.

Visual Spectacle and Sound as Communication

The subject of the gaze of the audience is split between those who deem it as voyeuristic, sexually objectifying the women dancing, and those who argue that it is a more complex experience. When examining Contemporary Burlesque, many authors (Dodds, 2013; Nally, 2009; Willson, 2008) argue the latter. The gaze between the performer and audience is often referred to by scholars, writing from both perspectives, in terms of an "exchange" (Dodds, 2013, p. 76), a "conversation", or a "dialogue" (Nally, 2009, p. 638) and is often considered a combined product of the performers' awareness (Buszek, 1999) and the audience's immediate vocal feedback. The flexible boundary between the performer and audience allows for an exchange to develop, which consequently challenges the scopical gaze and the desire that would result in the audience becoming mere passive voyeurs of the performance (Dodds, 2013; Nally, 2009; Sally, 2009). Within this "democratic space" (Nally, 2009, p. 637), objectification of the performer is, consequently, difficult, as the audience whoops and cheers and the performer responds with a full awareness of their actions and effect on the audience. Dodds describes this as "an accumulative spatio-temporal exchange" (2013, p. 76) between the audience and performer, where everyone is a participant of some kind (Sally, 2009). Willson proposes that

this exchange and relationship between the performer and audience is more complex than relying on sexual gratification and offers more complex pleasures (Willson, 2008). Our understanding of the performer–audience relationship can be further enhanced by applying different viewpoints. More importantly, by examining how the relationship is sustained throughout a performance from each perspective, a better understanding may be attained. The understanding between the performer and audience represents a state of trust between the two parties, and may be considered a special quality, which, as far as the literature is concerned, is an area that has not been fully researched.

The lack of research on the impact of societal opinions about Contemporary Burlesque on the performer–audience relationship and on how these opinions are experienced by performers and audiences is a clear gap in knowledge (see Voyeurism, above). Likewise, the consequences of the stigmatisation of Contemporary Burlesque that occurs when it is conflated with and judged alongside adult sex entertainment, are woefully ignored, if not in some cases actually fed, by academic literature (Levy, 2000; Siebler, 2014; Walter, 2010). The predominant academic view of vulnerability in Contemporary Burlesque does not consider possible positive aspects or readings (see Vulnerability, above). The ways in which these opinions impact on Burlesque as an art form and on the performer–audience relationship is an area that is yet to be explored. This is because most of the British literature on Burlesque (Carr, 2013; Dodds, 2013; Nally, 2009; Walter, 2012; Willson, 2008) was written before 2015, which is when Equity included Burlesque performers in the actors’ union. Consequently there is no mention in the work of these authors about how the support from Equity and Arts Council England (who supported HBBF 2016) may have had an impact on Contemporary Burlesque, particularly in the UK.

Evolution of Terms: Trickster Space and Ritual

As with other terms that evolved during this investigation, this term was created through my practice-as-research; consequently, some of the literary research was conducted later, and was carried out in order to find a way to articulate my experiences (see 2. Practice Review; and 3. Development of Practice). However,

this area of research into space creation, ritual, carnival, and tricksters will become an area for further research beyond this particular investigation.

Having discussed the idea previously – in the context of communities built on commonalities and the performance of identity (Goffman, 1959; Schechner, 1985, 1988, 1995, 2004, 2013; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 2003) – that Burlesque needs to do more (Siebler, 2014) for shame reliance (Brown, 2008, 2015), in order to practice change (Butler, 2015), and because of the need for new spaces (Lintott & Irvin 2015), I now want to ask whether this can happen in the context of Contemporary Burlesque? and/or is it happening already? Do we have adequate language with which to describe it? These are important questions because the Burlesque event is the crucible holding and framing the performer–audience relationship that is the main focus of this investigation.

Exploring intersectional feminism in her keynote address at the Feminist Emergencies conference (University of Birkbeck, 2017), poet M. NourbeSe Philip referred to Sylvia Wynter’s work regarding the creation of new inclusive narratives for Caribbean women writers in relation to feminism, stressing the escape from the binary nature of society, the space for potential growth and development, and the creation of new rituals. Philip said “ceremony [for many voices] must be found” (Wynter, 2000, quoted in Philip, 2017). Perhaps, in light of Lintott and Irvin’s theory, Contemporary Burlesque is, or could be considered to be, this new ritual for theatre and feminism: a space that is dependent upon the understanding and acceptance of all present and participating. The subculture of Burlesque is self-aware and self-referential in nature, with performers constantly questioning the art form and the audience through rewriting narratives and archetypes, and by subverting symbolic meanings (Dodds, 2013; Montgomery 2013; Sally, 2009). The 1990s revival of Burlesque focused upon the creation of space for women, by women, and as a subculture (regardless of mainstream appropriation) it has developed and sought to become more inclusive with the community’s focus shifting from feminism to diversity (discussed throughout the thesis). Sara Ahmed, speaking for a Feminisms in Public event (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2017), pointed out that in every sector there needs to be an acknowledgement and a transformation towards being inclusive rather than simply adopting ‘add-on’ tokens of diversity. In their speeches, both

Ahmed and Philip widened the scope of Wynter's paper – "Beyond Miranda's Meanings: Un/silencing the 'Demonic Ground' of Caliban's Woman" – and expressed the desire to see inclusive spaces for community, growth, and new ritual in other areas of society. As a platform for many diverse identities, Burlesque has the potential to be – as Wynter states – a "demonic space" existing outside of societal norms (Wynter, 2000, p. 119) and, theoretically, answering the call – made by authors of literature on Burlesque and intersectional feminists alike – for a new celebratory space.

Interestingly, Leipe-Levinson discusses the development of Historic Burlesque into contemporary stripping in North America and describes the interaction between the performer and audience as a "ritual" (2002, p. 183). Leipe-Levinson focuses specifically on contemporary stripping; however, many of the interactions described are derived from Burlesque and acknowledged as such. The rituals Leipe-Levinson describes are a series of exchanges that are codified and are therefore adhered to by all patrons in attendance, not only so that they can satisfy their desire and attain pleasure, but also out of fear of expulsion at the performer's displeasure if they overstep or ignore the rules of the exchange. These rituals can change depending on the club, the dancer, and the compere or host, but each one is very particular and orchestrated in a way that creates and manipulates sexual desire. Leipe-Levinson uses the word 'ritual' as in Schechner's definition of ritual as a series of performative actions, in which "ritual process is performance" (Schechner, 2003, p. 324) rather than in the sense of ritual as an entity (Schechner, 1988, 2004, 1995). This event etiquette can be seen in Burlesque and is discussed in 2. Practice Review.

I explore other forms of entertainment, specifically carnival and carnivalesque, to find another way to articulate the space that authors of literature on Burlesque call for, and which, potentially, Contemporary (Novel-) Burlesque could adopt. Historically speaking, most Western cultures have a fool festival or 'feast of fools' dating back to the mediaeval and Renaissance eras, also known as carnival (Bakhtin, 1984, 1999; Otto, 2007; Welsford, 1935; Willeford, 1969).

These festivals revealed the feminine in patriarchal Christianity with the crowning either of Mother Folly or of the carnival king: "If the authority of the Pope is shared

with the fool, as the king's is with his jester, then the Church as the Bride of Christ becomes the Church of Mother Folly" (Willeford, 1969, p. 177). The festivals lasted for a specific amount of time, during which societal roles, both secular and religious, were upturned as positions of authority were parodied, lampooned, and burlesqued (Welsford, 1935; Willeford, 1969). Indeed, Contemporary Burlesque could perhaps be seen as a modern-day equivalent to carnival, with its own ritual-pageantry, the crowning and decrowning of the host (the master of ceremonies), and its etiquette (see 2. Practice Review). During such carnival festivals the holy trinity was Mother Folly, the Fool, and the folly of the festival, mirroring the Church's own Holy Trinity of the Son, the Father and the Holy Ghost. This action through carnival linked the Church with its antithesis: the visceral chaos of nature, death, and rebirth, and the role of women – elements and issues which the Church and society ignore or reject at all other times of the year (Welsford, 1935; Willeford, 1969). Such festivals were considered to act as a safety valve for the public masses, releasing them from the pressure of the status quo of normal life into a celebration of folly, chaos, and alternative narratives.

According to philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, these festivals were a way for the dominant status quo to legitimately give space to laughter, to irreverent joy, and to the profane. This temporal frame was a second life, "a utopian realm of community, freedom, equality and abundance" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 9). It was another way of living, another world, another life that was lived by all participants and was equally as official and legitimate as the sombre official life (Bakhtin, 1984). It was "ritual-pageantry" that was an experience lived and embodied by everyone; as there were no spectators or performers, it was a communal performance that permeated every aspect of life, both public and private (Bakhtin, 1984, 1999). In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Bakhtin, 1929/1999) Bakhtin states that a 'carnavalesque' space needed four elements: 1/ "free and familiar contact among people", meaning that all systemic structures that led to hierarchy and inequality among people in the official daily life were suspended, allowing for mass action and communal performance without the segregation of people; 2/ "a new mode of interrelationship between individuals", such as eccentric or inappropriate behaviour that normally would be repressed by etiquette due to social hierarchy; 3/ "carnival mésalliances", which means the unifying of paradoxes – such as death and birth, heaven and hell,

young and old – to create a full understanding of the whole experience; and 4/ “profanation” or the sacrilegious: the parodying of all things secular and religious with a “bringing down to earth” or degradation of these and connection to the feminine “reproductive power of the earth and the body” (Bakhtin, 1999, pp. 122–123). There are some parallels that can be drawn between such characteristics of these festivals and the atmosphere and space produced at Contemporary Novel-Burlesque events.

Some authors of literature on Burlesque (Montgomery, 2013; Nally, 2009; Sally, 2009) use or imply a sense of carnival to describe Contemporary Burlesque as, for example, a “democratic space” (Nally, 2009, p. 637), and performer and academic Sally describes Contemporary Burlesque as a “carnavalesque space” (Sally 2009, pp.14–15, p. 23). Leipe-Levinson, too, describes the atmosphere at a strip club as “a festival that features parodies, mockeries and role reversals of the prevailing social order” (2002, p. 159). (Novel-) Burlesque, in my experience, almost achieves all four elements of Bakhtin’s requirements for the carnivalesque. Having a distinct essence of carnival, Burlesque unifies dualities (the sublime with the ridiculous, the extravagant with the gritty, the decadent with the political, see 2. Practice Review); accepts and encourages eccentric behaviour (whooping, cheering, clapping during a performance, see below Performer–Audience relationship; and 2. Practice Review); connects the participants with the visceral raw earth and body; and, finally, (although there is still a hierarchical structure in place) promotes a sense of communal performance at events (in which the audience, equally, are dressed up and participating, see 2. Practice Review). When Bakhtin develops his theories around carnivalesque in relation to the grotesque body and the festive laughter of the people in *Rabelais and His World* (1975/1984) there are more similarities, as both carnival and the grotesque offer a new perspective and a way of living and thinking that is an alternative to the status quo (1984). However, historically, the effects of carnival only lasted for a certain time frame – three months, according to Bakhtin (1984) – and were seen as being only a temporary escape that did not affect the normal status quo after the festival had ended. Afterwards, everything returned to how it had been. In contrast, Contemporary Burlesque appears to have the possibility of affecting those involved beyond the specific time frame of the event, as discussed above in Vulnerability and Revelation.

Drawing upon many cultural traditions, in *Trickster Makes This World* (1998) Lewis Hyde describes the universal character 'the trickster' (seen in many stories and cultures, thus making it an archetype), as a figure known for uncovering silenced voices and opinions as well as deliberately provoking and challenging their audiences and wider society. Burlesque could be seen as a trickster landscape that enables discourse from and visibility for those who are underrepresented and otherwise silenced. This is not too different from Bakhtin's carnivalesque; however, Hyde's trickster is also, crucially, a "boundary crosser" (1999, p. 7). This trickster crosses physical and social boundaries, breaking societal rules. He blurs and connects "right and wrong, sacred and profane, clean and dirty, man and woman, young and old, living and dead" (Hyde, 1999, p. 7). Resembling Bakhtin's unifying duality of carnival and the carnivalesque, this trickster goes further. He has the potential to step out of the carnivalesque and change the status quo, the official everyday life of hierarchy, law, and order.

As an art form, Burlesque illustrates many of the carnivalesque pageantry-ritual requirements (Bakhtin, 1984, 1999) and has the same all-important ability to permeate boundaries of time and to create change as have the trickster traits (Hyde, 1999); with these theories in mind, I propose that Novel-Burlesque in particular is a 'trickster space' that holds the possibility for the enactment of new rituals and spaces that can potentially effect change in society, as desired by Wynter (2000).

Evolution of Terms: Conduit

Further re-enforcing the idea that Burlesque, as a trickster space, has the potential for such discourses, in his book *Theatre of the Oppressed* (2000), Augusto Boal proposed that theatre is the place for this dialogue to happen. Suggesting that alternative narratives can be found through theatrical exploration and dialogue, Boal's Forum Theatre offers performance where the boundaries of actor and spectator are broken down. The spectator literally takes to the stage and steps into the role of the actor to reimagine the performed action taking place, and to perform alternative possible actions they might do in real life. In doing so they rehearse "ways of freeing themselves from all oppressions" and become the "Spect-Actor", who

straddles both fiction and reality, as can be seen in the case of Contemporary Burlesque performers (2000, p. xxi).

The Spect-Actor has a duality where “by transforming fiction, he is transforming himself” and therefore reality (2000, p. xxi). This Spect-Actor and the performance are guided by an external player known as the “Joker”, who mediates this blurring of lines. The Joker is closer to the role of spectator than to that of the actor, breaking the dramatic action and creating a new “dramatic ritual” (Boal, 2000, p. 155). The Joker analyses and explains the performance onstage to the spectators, thereby allowing the action and the actors/characters onstage to maintain their fictional world (Boal, 2000). Boal describes the Joker’s attributes and function as: “magical, omniscient, polymorphous, and ubiquitous”, noting that he may take on the role of “master of ceremonies” (MC), delivering interpretation, but he may also step into the role of actor/characters in the performance (Boal, 2000, p. 159). The Joker, thereby, further blurs the boundaries between fiction and reality by creating conversations regarding the fiction onstage that pertain to the audience’s reality and lives off stage away from the theatre event. The roles of Spect-Actor and Joker, as described, are similar to those of the Burlesque performer, the audience, and the compere or MC (see 2. Practice Review; and 3. Development of Practice).

These roles (Spect-Actor, Joker, and, I propose, Burlesque performer) performed onstage are conduits for the audience and for alternative possibilities, both physically and mentally; they also have qualities Hyde would attribute to the trickster archetype – the ability to straddle different worlds, to see and offer external critique – yet are also able to be a part of the internal action. A dictionary definition of the word ‘conduit’ describes it as: “1. a channel or pipe conveying liquids” and goes on to use the words “tube”, “trough”, and “tunnel”, illustrating the passage of an element, in this case water or electricity, from one place to the next – the linking of two spaces (Oxford English Dictionary, 1995, p. 278). In *Strip Show: Performances of Gender and Desire* (2002) Leipe-Levinson references lesbian stripper, porn star, and feminist Debi Sundahl (Fanny Fatale), who “argues her performances, and those of other sex trade workers, provide a conduit for the sexual agency of all women – as well as a handy lesson on what is appropriate ‘real-life’ behaviour and decorum for men and women.” (Leipe-Levinson, 2002, p. 125) Therefore, with Boal’s Joker and Spect-

Actor as well as Sundahl's self-acknowledgment, the use of the word 'conduit' in this thesis describes the performers and performance space that allow for ideas to pass, or journey, from one place to another through potential transformation and development from fiction to reality.

Evolution of Terms: Burlesque Script

As previously mentioned, Leipe-Levinson (in "Choreography 1: The basic moves" and "Choreography 2: Structure, pleasure and 'confessional' narratives of the body") gives a detailed account of the history of dance moves, the construction of a routine, and how each move is performed today by both women and men to create and manipulate sexual desire in their audiences (Leipe-Levinson, 2002). Weldon (2010) also goes into detail about the history of Burlesque and routine construction; however, neither Weldon nor Leipe-Levinson have a term for the combination of moves that elicits the audience reaction and the performer's response. This call and response, similar to that found in pantomime: 'He's behind you', 'Oh no he's not', uses widely accepted visual cues from the performer that the audience pick up on and respond to. In 3. Development of Practice I describe Lady Wildflower's term STRIP (suggest, tease, reveal/remove, interact, present) and use it to build a Burlesque script for a whole routine, creating a visual journey with highs and lows, teases and reveals, for the audience to respond to. This visual journey of the Burlesque script can then be overlaid with a narrative script that gives the performer in character or persona a reason for performing such a visual journey: the Burlesque script (see 3. Development of Practice). From this point of shared understanding, the relationship between the performer and audience can be built, maintained, and developed further using the dialogic gaze.

Evolution of Terms: the Dialogic Gaze

The 'dialogic gaze' is a term that I found through this research, which describes the relationship between the performer and the audience in Contemporary Burlesque. It acknowledges Buszek's "awareishness" (1999) of the performer who recognises the context in which they perform and the multiple readings of their performance. It also takes into consideration Dodd's "accumulative spatio-temporal exchange" (2013, p. 76) within Clare Nally's assessment that Contemporary Burlesque is a form of

“theatrical democratisation” (2009). However, these theories do not adequately articulate the relationship I experienced when watching and performing Novel-Burlesque.

Leipe-Levinson gives the account that is closest to my understanding and experience of watching and performing Burlesque, when she writes of the strip events she attended:

Within the transgressive ‘poetics’ of the strip show, depictions of female and male sexual interests take the form of active, dialogic conversations within the cultural imposition of sexual ‘normalcy’. (Leipe-Levinson, 2002, p. 183)

Here Leipe-Levinson ties together two of Bakhtin’s areas of interest: the transgressions of carnival, and the multiple ways in which language interacts, effects, affects, changes, reacts, qualifies, quantifies, relates to, and challenges, depending on what it is combined with, in relation to, or how it is constructed, which he calls “dialogic orientation in discourse” (Bakhtin, 1999, pp. 275–300). The idea that “no living word relates to its object in a *singular* way” is what interests me, as the relationship between the performer and audience member is not bi-directional: it is more complicated than an exchange, and it does not exist in a vacuum, isolated and unaffected by society (Bakhtin, 1990, p. 276).

Instead, I propose the term dialogic gaze, defined as meaning a relationship between the performer and audience that is founded on trust, a mutual respect, consent, and vulnerability. This brings together and develops Bakhtin’s theories regarding language with David Bohm, Donald Factor, and Peter Garrett’s theory, “A Dialogue – A Proposal” (1999). Bohm et al. write:

In Dialogue, a group of people can explore the individual and collective presuppositions, ideas, beliefs and feelings that subtly control their interactions. It provides an opportunity to participate in a process that displays communication successes and failures. (1999)

As such, I propose that the performer–audience relationship is more than the simple breaking down of the fourth wall for a two-way exchange: it is an oscillating energy that does not remove power or agency from either party. This energy can be created

using the Burlesque script and is communicated with aural whoops and cheers but can also be silently felt through attention from the gaze. Both parties are attentive and responsive to each other in the moment. With a full awareness of and respect for self, others, the context, and the material performed, the relationship is developed and maintained throughout a live performance by both parties. This description acknowledges that the performer–audience relationship is carefully curated along with many other factors (2. Practice Review; and 3. Development of Practice), thus reducing the opportunity for medical or legal voyeurism and, in turn, offering a relatively safe space for both parties to explore alternative narratives, risky behaviour, and to be vulnerable.

Another element that can be experienced as an act of vulnerability, within the dialogic gaze, is the concept of ‘offering’. The idea of offering, in the context of Burlesque, is that of a gift. As defined by Lewis Hyde in his book *The Gift*, the gift of art goes beyond the price of a ticket and it is “the spirit of an artist’s gifts [that] can wake our own” (1983, p. xii). Hyde goes further to explain how early sociologist Marcel Mauss (1924) noted three obligations with regard to gift exchange: to give, to receive, and to reciprocate. Within the Novel-Burlesque context this can be analysed as: the gift of revealing oneself is given by the performer and received by the audience, who reciprocate with their gift of respect, attention, and openness as well as kinetic and aural communication during the performance. Much like the dialogic gaze, this cyclical gift exchange goes beyond being a commodity by building relationships between all parties involved. This allows for a “decentralised cohesiveness” (Hyde, 1998, p. xiv) to emerge within the trickster space of the small community participating and can be considered as Nally’s “theatrical democratization” (2009, p. 637) in Burlesque.

It can be seen, therefore, that the dialogic gaze is a ‘dialogue’ between the performer and audience where the power oscillates back and forth without either party losing agency or control. It is based on a shared vulnerability and mutual respect, and on the openness and consent of all parties involved. Trust is created and maintained throughout the performance and event between the performer and audience. The dialogic gaze can be created through the ‘Burlesque script’ (see Glossary), using eye contact and expressed by the sounds of cheering and clapping; however, it can also

be communicated through kinetic energy, without the need for expression that can be heard and overt eye contact.

Conclusion: The Gaps in Knowledge

Throughout this literature review I have attempted to find clear and adequate explanation of the experiences I had when conducting my practice-as-research, watching and performing Burlesque. It needs to be borne in mind that this process has been far from linear, as the literature research and practice-as-research happened in parallel; therefore, there was a cyclical feedback loop wherein my reading fed into the practice I conducted, the practical discoveries led to further reading, and so on (see 2. Practice Review; and 3. Development of Practice). As a result, I have read literature across many different disciplines beyond Burlesque and theatre, and this vast literature solidly underpins my contribution to knowledge. Using the funnel technique, I was able to first investigate wider societal concepts and constructs, to then narrow my focus with each layer of investigation, often looking at literature on theatre or historical entertainment next, before moving on to literature specifically on Burlesque. Finally, I drew an end to each larger overarching section with an evolution or new understanding of the original term and the creation of others to help in articulating the practice-as-research experiences I wished to bring to light as new knowledge.

When exploring politics in relation to theatre there was an understanding that the two were heavily intertwined, with the political interfering with the running and systems of theatre as well as with the creative context that was then produced and watched by the audience. Goodman, Kershaw, and McGrath all argued that theatre could be “both an art form and platform” and more than just pure escapist entertainment (Goodman, 2002, p. 1). The existing literature on Burlesque seemed to fall a little short of expressly saying that this could be the case, focusing on the empowerment of the performer through their having a creative space, rather than through the removal of clothes. There was some investigation of the differences between mainstream popular Burlesque and “underground” Burlesque (Siebler, 2014). However, we saw that little was said about how mainstream Burlesque affected

“underground” Burlesque, nor about its effect on the relationship between the performer and the audience, and on both parties as individuals (Siebler, 2014).

My investigation into voyeurism led to a nuanced definition of the term, as my research explored the power dynamics between the viewer and the viewed, specifically exploring agency and consent, as well as the potential of an active voyeur (Rancier, 2011, and Leipe-Levinson, 2002). Having established that the definition of voyeurism did not adequately describe my experience of watching Burlesque and did not consider that the performer was returning the gaze, I turned to wider medical, legal, mythological, as well as ocular theories. I found that Laura Mulvey’s popular-culture theory of the specifically gendered “male gaze” had infiltrated most of these theories (1975), and had taken over and clouded the rhetoric around not only viewing in general but also watching entertainment and, in particular, all sexual performance. However, some authors (Carr, 2013; Freshwater, 2009) argued that reduction of the gaze to men created a lot of contention and frustration and was particularly problematic when it came to its implications for consideration of rape culture. Carr went some way to refuting Mulvey’s gendered gaze, yet there needs to be more research on identifying audiences’ and performers’ gazes as well as the unifying of the two perspectives. From these accounts and perspectives, voyeurism does not seem to describe the gaze of an audience watching underground Burlesque. Of course, there are exceptions and these also need to be explored in order to describe what is felt normally when experiencing Burlesque. Clare and others (Ashforth & Kriener, 1999; Blithe & Wolfe, 2016) pointed to external moralistic judgements that describe all sexual performance as shameful sex work, which make some of these professions more dangerous and exploitative rather than making the individuals safer. The impact of external judgements, or “secondary objectification”, has not been discussed from the Burlesque audience or performer perspective (Clare, 2015). There are also implications when secondary objectification and judgements begin to influence producer decisions about who they hire to perform and what they think the audience wishes to see, perpetuating the Dita-effect and promoting only young white slim vintage-styled women.

Rejection of the term ‘voyeurism’ as describing a type of gaze in action when audiences watch underground Burlesque (not only as the audience but also as the

performer) – apart from its usefulness in contributing to a few interesting comments about active voyeurism, the inability to control others’ intent and gaze completely, and the Dita-effect being perpetuated and deemed misogynistic – leads to the concept ‘vulnerability’ increasing in importance and interest. A more nuanced and positive exploration of the term ‘vulnerability’ was found through Brené Brown and Judith Butler and their discussions around combating shame, living precariously by making the changes desired, and vulnerability as a source of creativity and community. It is interesting to apply Brown’s ideas of vulnerability and shame-resilience communities, along with Butler’s ideas about precarious living and communities who enact change, to Burlesque and the people who participate in it. Most literature on Burlesque describes the performer experience as empowering and transformative due to the performer having the opportunity to be heard, and the space for the development of self-acceptance and cathartic creative exploration. However, the exposure or vulnerability of the performer in the process of such a transformation is not touched upon. In addition, little is said or analysed about the transformative experience of the audience. Both perspectives warrant more investigation and insight.

This is particularly so when applying Lintott and Irving’s theories around sex objects and sexy subjects in relation to underground Burlesque. In fact, almost all literature on Burlesque (even that which sees it as shameful and upholding gender inequality) calls for more work and exploration of Contemporary Burlesque. Therefore, there is a need to fill this gap and explore the art form’s potential for new ritual (Wynter, 2000), the understanding of self and others, and for the way that through the development of Bakhtin’s carnivalesque space that expands beyond its time frame. Contemporary Burlesque thus becomes a trickster space (Hyde, 1999), with new understandings and ideas that can infiltrate everyday life. Similarly, the understanding of the performer’s position onstage as a site for discovery and rehearsal (Boal, 2000), and as the conduit, for the audience to experience journeys and different perspectives, needs to be further understood and investigated. Further investigation, beyond this thesis, is also needed into the idea of proximal identification and how that sits, or does not sit, in the context of race theory, decolonialisation, and creative practices (for further discussion, see 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust).

Interestingly, analysis of the audience in the literature on theatre felt either too prescriptive and rigid (Bennet, 2003), or extremely close to my practice-as-research experiences of Burlesque. However, due to the authors' focus they did not investigate the underpinning of the relationship between the audience and performer (Heim, 2016). Questions around being “unruly”, “marked”, and “unreasonable” were raised by Sedgman (2018), which warrant more conversation about disability and performance (see 6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability) and about the changes necessary for theatre and entertainment to be more accessible and inclusive for audiences of all backgrounds. I found that descriptions of the performer–audience relationship in literature on Burlesque were also not sufficiently identified or articulated, using terms such as: “exchange” (Dodds, 2018), a “conversation”, or “dialogue” (Nally, 2009), combined with Buszek’s “awareishness”. Like Mulvey and the “male gaze”, Buszek’s established “awareishness” (1999) of the performer has led to little investigation into how it is used and felt in the performer–audience relationship. With much emphasis on the performer and how they use their visual performance to cue a response from the audience (Leipe-Levinson, 2002), I developed the term ‘Burlesque script’ to describe the series of gestures put together for a routine that create an easy call and response between performer and audience. Consideration of the performance and possible vulnerability of the audience and their potential for transformation within the performer–audience relationship was sparse and overlooked in literature on Burlesque. The actual process of how an audience member may become a Burlesque performer and how this may affect the performer–audience rapport was also unnoticed in the existing literature.

These investigations, along with understanding the historical context and development of these relationships in entertainment (Glenn, 2000, and Leipe-Levinson, 2002), discussions around viewing performance (Schechner, 1985, 1988, 1995, 2004, 2013, and Leipe-Levinson, 2002), and dialogue (Bakhtin, 1984, 1999; Bohm et al., 1999) led to the development of the term ‘dialogic gaze’. The dialogic gaze between performer and audience is the multi-directional exchange (oscillating power) that supports the agency and consent of all participants, based on mutual

vulnerability (offering) and trust in self and others. This trust and vulnerability are maintained and developed throughout the performance. The constant maintenance and care of this relationship results in it being particularly difficult to adopt the negative aspects of voyeurism and objectification – which can lead to shame and stigma – in the gaze of either participant. Whilst the ‘evolution of terms’ has been developed in order to help articulate my new knowledge, discoveries, and practical experiences of Contemporary (Novel-) Burlesque, the dialogic gaze is the focused main discovery of new knowledge to emerge from this investigation. This term – the dialogic gaze – as well as the others, will be used and argued throughout the thesis.

2. Practice Review

The research questions are derived from the need to better articulate my experience of the performer–audience relationship in Novel-Burlesque. To understand Novel-Burlesque properly from within, rather than examining it externally through theory and literature alone, it was integral to the study that I become the main instrument. Consequently, this investigation is an in-depth exploration of my experience of Novel-Burlesque through three different perspectives, which each adopt different methods. The first perspective is that of the researcher, examining the theory and literature to discover gaps, developing research questions, and aiding the articulation of my own discoveries and experience of Novel-Burlesque (see 1. Literature Review). The second perspective is that of the audience and is investigated through three methods: 1/ observations of events and performances (in the form of reflective writings); 2/ consenting conversations with other audience members at those events; 3/ conducting semi-structured interviews with audience members and performers. The third perspective is that of the performer; this required practice-as-research, wherein I created the Burlesque persona Arabella Twist, performed routines, and interacted with the audience whilst both on- and off-stage (see 3. Development of Practice). These last two perspectives and their methods were crafted with the aim of narrowing the gaps that can be seen in the literature previously discussed, wherein the author adopts one perspective (usually that of an objective audience member) and either fails to mention the other (performer’s) perspective or requires secondary sources (such as interviews) to obtain that experiential knowledge.

As result of being the main instrument of research for two of the three perspectives (the performer’s perspective and the audience perspective), there is a reflexivity in that the discoveries of each method I conducted fed into, influenced, and informed the other research methods. Therefore, in this thesis, the knowledge gained from the experiential embodied research is debated alongside the literary and theoretical concepts, as well as with the research from interviews with performers and audience members (Ellis et al., 2011; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Moon, 2004; Schon, 1983; Varela et al., 1993). Melanie Jasper notes that reflection is “the way that [we] learn from an experience in order to understand and develop practice” (2003, p. 2). This systematic approach (Tague, 2005) has been central to the entire process of this

research; such reflexivity enabled knowledge to be gained from experience, as well as from other methods that fed back into the process of research and were not lost or isolated.

Reflective Writings

These reflective writings record my experiences as an audience member (thirty-one reflections), and as a performer (nineteen reflections), as well as other experiences from networking events, workshops, and rehearsals, which were recorded and reflected upon.

Throughout the process I kept a notepad and pencil with me at all events to make notes in the moment, where possible, as well as writing up reflections after events. These were handwritten notes, often written in the dark of the auditorium, backstage, on public transport on the way home, or on my return home. The writings include quotes from impromptu conversations, my initial thoughts, feelings, observations, and, in some cases, drawings. The following day, or a few days later, allowing time for reflection on the experience, I would create a more detailed and reflective account of the event and the experience. This would include:

- specific research points (the reason why I attended the event) and the outcomes;
- the experience as a whole;
- the line-up of performers and anything particular to note as an audience member about how they built their relationship with me;
- how I responded to the venue, space, interruptions, mistakes, etc;
- the audience's reception in general of the performers;
- off stage/impromptu conversations and comments that were important to note for the research.

Due to the requirements of the ethics approval for this research I am only able to evidence relevant reflective writings referenced within the thesis; this is because of the potentially personal nature of these experiences for audience members, performers, and myself as the researcher.

These reflective writings produced qualitative data that was examined using thematic analysis, as discussed and stipulated by Braun and Clarke (2006). The data was sorted using the key themes extracted from the literature review (the politics of Burlesque, vulnerability, and voyeurism). The reflective writings were in turn used to cross reference experiences, accounts, comments made in interviews, and my performance review as an audience member. The 'moments of insight' and discoveries made during 2. Practice Review were then analysed in relation to 1. Literature Review, positioning these discoveries in the context of existing theory, and thus navigating towards the gaps and creation of new knowledge. This ensured that only relevant material informed each step of the process as the research investigation progressed and that there was constant reference to other perspectives and sources, thereby avoiding the research being a narcissistic endeavour (Chang, 2008; Freeman, 2010; Jasper, 2003; Nelson, 2013; Schon, 1983).

Audience Subjectivity – Performance Review

I watched thirty-one performances from November 2015 to December 2016, and from May 2018 to October 2018. This allowed for discoveries addressing the audience's experience of Contemporary Burlesque and their perspective of the relationship with the performer as I focused on my own experiences of it as the audience-researcher.

Additionally, other audience members' viewpoints were gathered, from impromptu conversation (see Appendix 4: Information Sheet for Impromptu Conversations). Impromptu conversations initiated as an audience member were struck up when queuing to enter the venue, when waiting for the toilet at the venue, and when getting drinks at the bar before or after the show or during the interval. When initiated as a performer these impromptu conversations happened backstage with other performers and also after the curtain call when audience members would approach me to talk. I would state clearly to the other person who I was and what my research intentions at the event were; I would then provide them with an information sheet for impromptu conversations. At this point the performer/audience member could choose to continue talking to me as a researcher and thereby consent to their responses, if used in the research, being automatically anonymised (unless they

stated otherwise). Or they could tell me they did not wish to be part of the research; at that point we would either continue our conversation without the research in mind, or stop. If they were interested in participating further, I would invite them to take part in a semi-structured interview, if possible, at a time after the event (see below, Researcher – Semi-Structured Interviews).

Throughout the thesis relevant impromptu conversations are identified and referenced simply “(impromptu conversations, DATE)” unless the other person wished to be identified. I have not identified the show or event where the conversation took place because in some cases this could lead to identification of the participant by other audience members or performers who attended the same event. Similarly, I have not included the raw data in terms of my reflective writing journals as this was a requirement of my ethics approval due to the potentially personal and vulnerable nature of the experience for the person I reference. The automatic anonymity granted also enabled the respondent to have a more authentic conversation with me at these events (Giordano et al., 2007; Saunders et al., 2015).

Most of the performances were located in the North of England, with the exception of two performances which were held in London (Appendix 9: Performances Reviewed). The majority of these were Novel-Burlesque, rather than Popular Burlesque, providing entertainment for the Burlesque-going community and industry professionals. The exceptions were six shows intent on entertaining much wider audiences, including tourists, and may be described as Popular Burlesque. These exceptions were hosted at Popular Burlesque venues such as conventions (*Sexhibition* at Victoria Warehouse, Manchester; *Burlesque and Alternative Fair* at The Ritz, Manchester), Blackpool Ballroom, and The London Palladium. In contrast, the Novel-Burlesque venues were small alternative fringe venues, such as jazz clubs, pubs, and small theatres.

Researcher – Semi-Structured Interviews

The semi-structured interviews (Bjornholt & Farstad, 2012; Edwards & Holland, 2003) address the research questions by gaining other people’s perspectives as performers and audience members. As a condition of the ethics approval for the

research I have not included the transcripts of the recorded interviews and have only included data relevant to the research in this thesis in order to protect the interview participants; this is because of the potentially personal and sensitive nature of the material that may have arisen during the semi-structured interviews.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with eight performers and ten audience members (see Appendix 3: Interview Participant Profiles), targeting people who would be willing to discuss their experiences and relationship to Contemporary Burlesque. Audience members who had already engaged with my research in conversation at events were asked if they would consider being interviewed (see Appendix 4: Information Sheet for Impromptu Conversations; Appendix 5: Information Sheet for Interview Participants; Appendix 6: Interview Consent Form). Performers who were part of the performance review, and therefore aware of this research, and were interested in participating further were interviewed. Therefore, the interviewees were self-selecting. To find information on the interview participants please see Appendix 3: Interview Participants Profiles.

Starting with questions relating to the research questions, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed space for additional information, issues, thinking, and other questions (not previously considered) to emerge organically (Appendix 7: Performer Semi-Structured Interview Questions; Appendix 8: Audience Semi-Structured Interview Questions). Interviews were transcribed with the option for the participant to read their words and alter their responses should they wish to do so (see Appendix 5: Information Sheet for Interview Participants; Appendix 6: Interview Consent Form). As with the analysis of the reflective writings, Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis method (2006) was also used to analyse the interviews. This analysis used the key themes (the politics of Burlesque, vulnerability, and voyeurism) and then used further groupings into related topics and issues to be discussed in the context of existing theory.

The Mechanics of Burlesque – Audience Perspective

When conducting my practice review, I learnt how Contemporary Burlesque is produced (including the format of an event, the different types of routines) and how

the audience is received (including the ways they could participate). As discussed in the Introduction, there are two predominant types of Contemporary Burlesque: Popular Burlesque and Novel-Burlesque. In this investigation the primary focus is on Novel-Burlesque (not Popular Burlesque), and research was conducted to understand its specific qualities. However, I did have the opportunity to attend Dita Von Teese's production *Art of The Teese* (seen on 27 October 2018 at The London Palladium) and I have drawn on my experience of that event as the main example of Popular Burlesque (see 4. Beyond Awareness – the Dialogic Gaze), as well as on experiences of an anonymous event (title retracted as requested by the producers) seen in July 2016. Therefore, I will be drawing on the data from my reflective writings, observations, and conversations from the audience-researcher perspective and on the semi-structured interviews I conducted with both audience members and performers.

The Law

Conceptualising adult entertainment as a spectrum, as contemporary entertainment law does, means the adult entertainment industry can be more easily understood, for all its complexities. The law stipulates that it is the intention of the performative nudity or sexuality that is important when attempting to classify such professions or public action. The three very clear categories of entertainment licences and their requirements regarding the display of the human body are as follows:

- Theatre licenses allow full frontal nudity.
- Live entertainment licenses (for venues such as bars, clubs, pubs) allow covered reproductive organs (all genitalia and, for women, additional nipple coverings).
- Sexual entertainment licenses (these venues include: lap, pole, and strip dancing clubs, as well as live sex shows, and peep shows) allow full frontal nudity.

(GOV.UK, 2016; Home Office, 2010, pp. 7–8).

The third licence focuses on the intent of the performed live nudity in respect of the audience and is only required if the use of nudity is “solely or principally for the purpose of sexually stimulating any member of the audience” (Home Office, 2010, p.

8). This emphasises that the intent of both the audience and the performer, as well as the context is important in the classification. The importance of intent is further reinforced in other areas of law (Public Order Act 1986; Section 66 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003; 'Outraging' Public Decency in Common Law) when addressing public nudity (as seen with the World Naked Bike Race). Therefore, prosecution of such cases occurs on a case-by-case basis because the context of the situation, the people involved, and the actions undertaken whilst naked all need to be taken into account (Churchill, 2017; Cobley, 2006; Savva, 2017; BBC (a), 2007; BBC (c), 2011; BBC (d), 2011; BBC (f), 2014; World Naked Bike Race, 2006). Burlesque straddles both the theatre and live entertainment categories as its intent is not solely to sexually arouse its audience, and it is recognised as such within the entertainment industry (Arts Council England, 2016; Equity 2015) and the law (Home Office, 2010). Because of the distinction in the creative intent of Burlesque, it is not classified as sex work, whereas stripping is, as is performing in porn films or engaging in prostitution/sex work. However, populist moral dogma assumes that all performance of feminine sexuality is sex work and consequently immoral, and there are instances where this misconception actually impacts on the enactment of regulations and law; this was seen with the controversy that arose when Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival attempted to hire a Hebden Royd Town Council building in 2013 for the 2014 festival (Belle, 2014; BBC (e), 2013; Walsh, 2014; Whittle, 2013). These misconceptions can also lead to audiences acting inappropriately towards performers as they do not understand the nuances. What is allowed in one context may not be allowed in another (see 2. Practice Review; and 3. Development of Practice).

The Event

My research discovered that Novel-Burlesque is created predominately by women for women: out of 17 shows, all except for three were produced by women; within those shows, over 80 per cent of the Burlesque performers onstage identified and/or presented as women (see Appendix 9: Performances Reviewed with observational gender demographic); audiences similarly mirror this demographic, and comprise a high majority of women. It is a women-led form that promotes a culture of inclusivity and diversity (see 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust).

Contemporary Novel-Burlesque is not exclusively for women but gives a platform for voices that are alternative to the status quo to be heard and witnessed (see 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust). Its provocation is both intellectually challenging (e.g., Miss Glory Pearl's routine that follows a homeless person through capitalism to materialism, to education to communism, seen in 2016; Lilly Snatch Dragon's routines that question the fetishising and dehumanising of Southeast Asian culture in popular media and the effect this has on British Asians, seen in 2016–2018) and seductively alluring (for example Millie Dollar's classic vintage bump and grind routines, seen 2016–2018; Oriana's boudoir routine of undressing under the guise of going to bed, seen 2016), thereby providing a creative critical forum through which to question society. The provocation, variety of voices, and breadth of creativity that Burlesque offers provides a good counterbalance to the decadence, luxury, and perfection in the Classic style of Burlesque that Popular Burlesque focuses on. Popular Burlesque, in contrast, offers almost exclusively vintage and retro-nostalgia routines which are more dance- and costume-focused, such as fan dances and sequined bump and grinds, as well as troupe showgirl dancing. With every element of the Popular Burlesque event being tailored towards a high-end expensive experience, the sensation of escapism and fantasy is reinforced, rather than critiqued as it is at Novel-Burlesque events.

The Venue

Frequently, Novel-Burlesque events are held in a variety of fringe-type venues. For instance, this list of venue types is compiled from places at which I have performed or been in the audience, or that interviewees have mentioned:

- cafes (the Richmond Tea Rooms, Manchester)
- pubs (Pilkey's Snooker Bar, Keighley; Ape and Apple, Manchester)
- working men's clubs (Queens Club, Sheffield; Bethnal Green Working Men's Club, London)
- clubs (Matt & Phred's, Manchester)
- basement bars (The Magnet, Liverpool)
- community centres (Mytholmroyd Community Centre, Hebden Bridge)
- village halls (private event)
- small theatres (Hebden Bridge Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge)

- comic conventions (Kita Con, Coventry)
- warehouses (Victoria Warehouse, Manchester)
- luxurious restaurants (Hotel Royal Café, London)
- alternative fairs (O2 Ritz, Manchester)
- festivals (Barefoot Festival, Leicester)
- big tops (Big Top Burlesque, Wakefield)
- patios (private event)
- fetish clubs (Quest, Leeds).

These venues tend to have a live entertainment licence and therefore can cater for Novel-Burlesque.

Matt & Phred's, a city centre jazz club and bar, sets up cabaret seating for *Cherie Bebe's Burlesque Revue*. The tables and chairs have to be pre-booked as there is limited space, and the event is often sold out with standing room only available at the back. The performers have to walk through the audience to get to the stage, increasing the sense of intimacy. In contrast, *The Frou Frou Club's* venue at Hebden Bridge Little Theatre is an intimate rural proscenium arch theatre with raked seating. Both shows can be equally raucous; however, *The Frou Frou Club* is very contained and focused as a show, with a theatre blackout until a performer physically crosses the stage threshold, which often happens.

With its use of alternative and intimate venues, the proximity of the performer to the audience members in Novel-Burlesque is usually greater than in Popular Burlesque venues and this difference in scale is a major distinction. The scale of Popular Burlesque is large and extravagant in every possible sense: large venues with large audiences (e.g., 2,286 capacity at The London Palladium), and the use of large props (e.g., Von Teese's martini glass or rodeo bull, seen 2018). In comparison with the from 50- to 180-seat (e.g., Matt & Phreds, Manchester) capacity of fringe venues, the relatively large size of Popular Burlesque venues means that the audience are physically distanced from the performers, therefore detaching the audience from the action on stage. An invisible fourth wall creates a barrier between the action on stage and the audience watching. The performers do not appear to acknowledge the individual audience member; consequently, the action would take place regardless of

the audience watching. The smaller scale of Novel-Burlesque fringe venues allows for the audience and performers to see one another and to have the potential to touch one another. There is a frisson of risk in smaller Novel-Burlesque venues because the audience cannot safely hide in the darkness, either from the performer or from each other.

The Audience

Firstly, it can be seen from audience observations that the majority of Novel-Burlesque audience members are women, coming in groups of as large as six (larger groups than this tend to be attending as a celebration for a birthday or hen party), as couples, or alone. Men attending the events usually come with their female partner or female friends. Occasionally, large groups of men attend for a celebration (a birthday or stag party); however, they are still in the minority. Both hetero- and homosexual couples attend. The audience have a wide range of lifestyles and professions outside of Novel-Burlesque, from farmers to comic writers, accountants to primary school teachers, NHS nurses to stay-at-home mothers. In attitude, they tend to lean towards an alternative outlook or artistic perspective, but not always. As Contemporary Burlesque is considered adult entertainment, audience members have to be over eighteen years of age and the oldest audience member met during the research was ninety-two years of age (2016); however, it should be noted that there are exceptions to this. Some events are family friendly and therefore performers alter their routines to be less sexual or revealing of flesh; others allow children when accompanied by parents and deliberately do not alter their performances, as I experienced when performing at The Glitter Lounge at Chester Pride (2018) and The Barefoot Festival (2019).

The audience for Novel-Burlesque falls into two main types: the local regulars and the nomadic visitors. The local audiences tend to stay loyal to a particular producer, town, or region (interview Bobbie Dazzler, 2016; interview Kirsty and Cat, 2016), whereas nomadic audiences travel to see particular performers and/or attend special events (audience observations, 2015–2019; interview Tony Heath, 2016). Both audiences know each other and when they meet they exchange experiences and

knowledge. This mix of audiences also helps to diversify the appreciation of and participation in Novel-Burlesque.

These collective audiences are integral to the creating and protecting of Novel-Burlesque's supportive atmosphere. They help 'Burlesque virgins' (new attendees) to feel welcome, educating them in Novel-Burlesque etiquette and preventing any prejudicial judgement or inappropriate behaviour based on misconceptions of Contemporary Burlesque.

The local regulars and nomads from the Burlesque community are very much the foundation for the audience at Matt & Phred's. However, with its central location in the city, the ability to buy tickets on the door, and the fact that once the show has started other clientele enter looking for a drink on a Sunday evening, there is less of a unified, tribal feel (like that at *The Frou Frou Club*) and more a sense of there being small groupings and cliques who do not interact unless through the compere. In addition, due to its central location Matt & Phred's often gets group bookings. When attending an event these large groups are often celebrating (a birthday, stag or hen parties, or Christmas) and unless the party host has specified that the intention of the gathering is to watch the show, they are often there to socialise and drink. This sometimes leads to them either being asked to leave or becoming a part of the compere's banter, depending on how they interact with the compere and performers (discussed in detail in *The Framing of Burlesque – the Compere*). At my examination performance (8 December 2019) there appeared to be a higher percentage of heterosexual couples and a large queer group attending. This caused the usual small groupings to feel even more separated than they would normally, and the seasonal Christmas parties added further friction to the dynamic.

In comparison, Popular Burlesque events are often touring shows, such as *The Art of the Teese*, which choose large theatre venues that are receiving houses rather than production houses. These shows focus on the spectacle and glamour of the event with relatively high ticket prices (e.g., tickets for seats only to see *The Art of the Teese* ranged from £47.00 to £79.60; various packages providing extras cost up to £224.00), which are on a par with West End shows or concerts. In contrast, Novel-Burlesque tickets can range from £5.00 to £20.00 (pre-Covid-19 prices). Therefore,

financially speaking there is a stark difference between those who can access these two types of entertainment. Popular Burlesque productions have very wide and highly visible marketing campaigns (billboards, underground advertisements, tourist exchanges, sponsored targeted adverts on social media) to fill the larger capacity venues and pay for international costs. Because they are marketed to a wider audience, it can be assumed that these events pull in a larger population of non-Burlesque audiences, including the larger venues' own regular theatre audiences. Many theatregoers will attend a Popular Burlesque night at a theatre venue they frequently go to, as would concertgoers when Popular Burlesque is produced in a concert hall or arena (audience observations, 2016, 2018). These non-Burlesque audiences will more than likely have encountered Contemporary Burlesque through other media, by seeing images and watching films and other popular entertainment, including music videos, on YouTube and other digital social platforms. When discussing Burlesque with my interview participants and others the most commonly referenced popular entertainment sources included: Dita Von Teese's book, *Burlesque and the Art of the Teese* (2005); films about Burlesque's history (*Mrs Henderson Presents*, 2005; *Moulin Rouge*, 2001; *Cabaret*, 1972) and contemporary scene (*Burlesque*, 2010); in music ("Lady Marmalade" by Christina Aguilera, Lil' Kim, Mýa, and Pink 2001; Pussy Cat Dolls, 2003–2010; Kylie Minogue *Showgirl Tour* 2005); and TV programmes featuring Burlesque and showgirls in episodes (*CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* "A Kiss Before Frying", 2011; *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries* "Murder Most Scandalous", 2013; *NCIS: New Orleans* "Aftershocks", 2016). These popular (populist) portrayals of Contemporary Burlesque in different media forms establish and re-enforce the Dita-effect, and Popular Burlesque shows, therefore, feed into these expectations. From my observations there appeared to be less diversity in the Popular Burlesque audience demographic, with more white heterosexual couples attending these shows than attended at Novel-Burlesque events.

The Framing of Burlesque – the Compere

The compere has several names (see Glossary) and responsibilities when it comes to framing and running the Contemporary Burlesque evening. Performer and compere Velma Von Bon Bon notes: "It's so important that they [the compere] make

that connection with the audience, and the audience feels like they trust them.”
(interview, 2017).



Figure 2. (left) Comperes: Heidi Bang Tidy, HBBF 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

Figure 3. (right) Comperes: Amber Topaz, 2018. Photography: Neal Rylatt Photography. Amber Topaz, 2018.

Firstly, and most importantly, comperes welcome the audience by setting the tone for the evening and educating newcomers (so-called Burlesque virgins); they do this not only by entertaining the audience but also by being clear about how to interact and participate in the event. Even though Novel-Burlesque’s boundaries between audience and performer are more flexible than are those in other forms of live entertainment, and the content of the performance is more adult, sexual, and challenging, there are unspoken and spoken rules (voiced by the compere) that most events adhere to. These rules are based on mutual respect and can differ from event to event; however, the following are a list of the specific ones I encountered during this investigation:

- Do show enthusiasm to the performer. This may be in the form of whooping and cheering throughout the performance or at the very end.
- When showing this appreciation and enthusiasm read the performer’s cues for the Burlesque script. Usually, the compere demonstrates how to do this and warms the audience up through clapping, cheering, and whooping.

- Respect personal space; this rule divides into the following two points:
 - do not touch the performers unless asked to do so as part of their routine;
 - if an audience member does not wish to participate in a performer's routine or interaction, they cross their arms in front of their chests.
- No photography or filming. This rule varies depending upon the venue and producer. Some producers deliberately hire professional photographers, so that the audience do not need to take photographs. The compere will always let the audience know at the beginning of the event if photography or filming is allowed.
- An audience member doing something inappropriate to draw attention to themselves (e.g., talking loudly during a routine or over the top of the compere, or getting up during a performance) will make them a target of the compere's banter until either the situation is diffused, or they are asked to leave.
- Look out for each other. Due to the nature of exposure and the resulting vulnerability a Burlesque audience is more likely to step in and help or to check on others in a situation that is perceived to be awkward or upsetting (see 5. Strategies for Practising Vulnerability and Trust; and 6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability).
- Dress codes are sometimes given, depending on the venue. It is expected that the audience will dress according to their preferred cultural affiliation (rockabilly, vintage, steampunk, etc.) and dress 'up', or at the very least in smart-casual to semi-formal dress. The audience makes an effort because the performers make an effort.

Between performances, comperes also entertain the audience with their own range of skills: for example, singing (Kiki Devil; Rueben Kaye – see Figure 6); gymnastics or circus skills (Abigale Collins and Velma Von Bon Bon – see Figure 4); comedy (Heidi Bang Tidy – see Figure 2); Burlesque (Dr Gypsy Charms; Amber Topaz – see Figure 3); storytelling (Jonathan Mayor – see Figure 5); and audience participation games and whip cracking (Diva Hollywood).



Figure 4. Comperes: (left) Abigale Collins, March 2017. (right) Velma Von Bon Bon as Natalia Kalashnikov. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

By introducing the performers, the compere mediates between the performer and the audience. They navigate between one performance and the next, thereby preparing the audience's expectations as there can be a wide variety of performances in one event, which all require different responses from the audience. Through these introductions, the compere also encourages the audience to be open to new experiences. How comperes do this can vary in style. *The Frou Frou Club* audiences were managed by women comedian comperes (Abigale Collins, 2017 – see Figure 4; Amber Topaz, 2018 – see Figure 3) who led evenings with specific sign-posting of body positivity and a queer safe environment; whilst at Matt & Phreds (audience observation, 2016; performance reflective writing, 2017, 8 December 2019 – see Appendix 1: Examiners Invite), comedian Jonathan Mayor (an overtly self-identifying gay performer of colour), led the audience on what seemed to be an at times haphazard, sometimes tenuous, yet still highly political journey throughout the night. Both Abigale Collins (2017) and Amber Topaz (2018) had set audience interaction pieces that they were able to improvise from. Jonathan Mayor's style of compering was entirely improvised as he riffed off the live audience in front of him on the night (see Figure 4); due to the fluid and free-form nature of the bar and the environment, Mayor flamboyantly wrangled the audience into submission and focus (audience observation, 2016; performance reflective writing, 2017, 2019).



Figure 5. (left) Comperes: Jonathan Mayor, December 2019. Photography: Darren McGinn Photography.

Figure 6. (right) Comperes: Rueben Kaye, July 2016. Photography: Tony Heath Art.

On a few occasions, the comperes may have to re-enforce the rules of the Burlesque event in various ways. They will often single out a person who has behaved inappropriately as the ‘fall guy’ for jokes or participation throughout the rest of the event. At *The Wet Spot* (Leeds, 2016), Rueben Kaye (see Figure 5) targeted audience member Nevil, who took a flash photograph during a performance. I described, in my reflections, the moment Kaye found Nevil:

Reuben stalked the flash, took the phone, licked it, fitted it into his mouth, the audience laughed in shock and applauded – a mix of relief that it wasn’t us on the other end of Reuben’s wrath. Conversation with Nevil was at first embarrassing but quickly became playful and teasing banter as Reuben talked more to him. (Reflective writing, 2016)

Throughout the evening Kaye returned to Nevil for conversation, and he dedicated a song to him. Consequently, through Kaye’s deft manipulation of the evening and interaction, Nevil transformed from someone who had disobeyed and disrespected the rules to an advocate for the audience, as I wrote that evening:

At end of the night the audience began shouting out, heckling for Nevil to the point that it became a chant. Reuben giving the audience what they wanted found Nevil again and kissed him. Nevil had become our champion.

(Reflective writing, 2016)

In contrast, at Matt & Phreds it is very difficult to prevent secondary capture of performers by the audience filming or photographing on phones for later consumption or objectification, because the audience is so fluid.

At *The Wet Spot* (Leeds, 2016), a hen party and two separate stag parties caused issues during performances. Usually local and nomadic, Novel-Burlesque audiences tend to outnumber the 'Burlesque virgins' and, as such, assist the compere by being willing knowing participants, leading the newcomers by example. However, when the audience is weighted in number towards groups of Burlesque virgins, or audience members who do not know show etiquette, or do not wish to watch the show, this can have a huge effect on the energy in the room. There is an air of assumed authority from the consumers of entertainment, who ignore the communal nature of the event, and, consequently, disregard other audience members as well as performers, an issue the compere often encounters. At *The Wet Spot* that same evening, Kaye retorted: "This isn't TV, I can hear you!" (audience observation, 2016), which perfectly illustrates this consumer attitude that focuses on the need of the individual at the expense of others. Kaye's sharp wit and interaction with Nevil quelled two of the parties into enjoying the evening along with the rest of the audience. Kaye's refusal to 'take any prisoners' earned him the audience's respect, and they yielded and enjoyed the show. One party, after being given several opportunities to change their behaviour (by Kaye, the bouncers, and audience members), was asked to leave, which according to the regulars was "an almost unheard-of occurrence" (interviewed audience member Tony Heath, 2016). The local audience regulars, at *The Wet Spot*, as well as Kaye and the venue's bouncers all worked in unison to create an atmosphere conducive to Novel-Burlesque (audience observation, 2016). It was risky, dangerous, and exciting, but also accepting and trusting.

The tactic of singling out an audience member can be precarious because they may be particularly sensitive or unwilling to participate. During the research I witnessed an incident where an audience member seated themselves right at the front, was therefore visible to everyone, and refused to engage with the compere, who was

trying to coax them into a response, a situation that became increasingly more awkward as the event continued (audience observation, 2016). The difference between this example and Kaye's interaction with Nevil was that this audience member had done nothing wrong to begin with: she just refused to respond at all even though she was positioned at the front and centre of the audience. There is a fine edge between humour and cruelty in comedy and the difference between these two examples is that consent and agency was clear in one situation but not the other. Afterwards, when talking to the audience member (impromptu conversation, 2016), they said they were fine, as they knew they would be a possible target, but had wanted the best view of the show and were, therefore, willing to deal with the banter by not responding. Most cabaret and Novel-Burlesque events have unrestricted seating; therefore, audience members choosing to sit in the front-row seats are seen as willing participants who want to be close to the action and usually sit there for that reason – to participate. This is the risk with all live entertainment, but particularly so with Novel-Burlesque, as the audience are expected and encouraged to respectfully participate, and so too are the compere and performers. As, often, the only speaking role onstage, it is important that the compere strikes the right tone with the audience, particularly in an environment where women are choosing to remove clothing onstage. The compere also acknowledges and highlights the work done by everyone involved, including backstage crew and front of house, throughout the evening and with the last bow.

The Compere – Stepping Over the Line

The rules of etiquette for Burlesque are there for everyone's safety; however, you cannot force people to adhere to them, nor can you always predict people's actions and reactions.

During the conduct of this research, I witnessed a few public faux pas made by male comperes when introducing performers, which were either in bad taste or were seedy (interview, Velma Von Bon Bon, 2017), and/or were rape jokes that were outright offensive. Over the past five years the most famous and high profile of these was when London-based performer Dusty Limits made a rape joke while compering on the opening night of the Burlesque Hall of Fame Annual Weekend in 2016 (a

night produced jointly with Sublime Boudoir) in Las Vegas. The following day, in a published statement of apology, Limits acknowledged the offence and trauma his comment had triggered in participants at the event, as did the Burlesque Hall of Fame and Sublime Boudoir (Limits, 2016).

There is a 'contract of consent' respected between the performer, audience, and compere that is created at a Contemporary Burlesque event, and as a result trust is developed (see 5. Strategies for Practising Vulnerability and Trust; and 6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability). The compere possesses power, and the identity of the compere can influence the way they wield this power.

For example, a white straight man being the compere inadvertently plays into retro-nostalgia for a time when women did not have a voice or the rights they have today; this is often still seen at Popular Burlesque shows. The white straight male host introducing women strippers is a historic hangover from the vaudeville era and a contemporary attempt by producers to add "variety" to a stage dominated by women performers (interview, Rubyyy Jones, 2017). The white straight male comperes tip the scales of agency in favour of society's norms and may also produce a heightened level of perceived threat in spaces and environments promoted as alternative feminine spaces. White straight men as comperes, performers, and audience members are "guests" (interview, Rubyyy Jones, 2017) in a very alternative feminine queer space and need to respect that fact (interview, Tony Heath, 2016; interview, Wild Ginger and Dottie Dynamo, 2016). They are in the minority and this space, particularly onstage, is created not for them but for those considered to be minority voices in society (see 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust).

Whilst the foregoing does not apply to Limits, who is a white queer man, there is an interesting allowance given to queer male comperes who perform a "faux abusive brand of comedy", as Viv Clicquot describes it (21st Century Burlesque (d), 2016; 21st Century Burlesque (e), 2016). Scotty the Blue Bunny (HBBF 2016), Reuben Kaye (The Wet Spot, 2016; Burlesque Noir, 2016), and Dusty Limits all play with overstepping the line when it comes to this kind of humour and invading personal space, and rely on their judgement of the situation during performance.

During the course of this research, an increasing number of women and queer-identifying hosts were observed at Novel-Burlesque events, and the audiences appear to be more receptive to them than to white straight men as hosts. Women comperes are given a similar amount of licence to play with the edge of invading personal space and tend to rely on their dry wit to wrangle with the audience. However, on more than one occasion I have seen women comperes sharply address an issue to close down problematic behaviour. For example, Lilly Snatch Dragon, as compere for HBBF 2019's *Cherry Pop* show instructed the house lights to come up while she conducted a direct intervention about racist humour and 'yellow face' comments after two audience members heckled her with such insults. This swift nonsense action does not rely on peer pressure or potential shame to keep the audience in line but addresses the issue head on, resulting in clear action and education.

The Willing Participant

It should also be noted that more often than not at a Novel-Burlesque event the threshold between the stage and the auditorium/audience space will be crossed. Not only will the performer cross the perceived theatre boundary to interact with the audience, but they will also invite an audience member onstage to be a part of their routine and performance. This experience is often as exhilarating as the moment the compere interacts with the audience and, like Kaye's championing of Nevil (2016), this chosen participant becomes the audience's representative. In this volunteer, the audience can invest feelings of nerves and excitement. Through witnessing their experience onstage, we are given an opportunity not only to imagine ourselves in their position with the performer but also to see how a non-performer reacts when they leave the safety of the auditorium/audience space and are put on stage in a potentially risky position in front of the audience. **Some performers** and comperes may ask the volunteer to stay onstage whilst they perform around them (Abigale Collins, 2017); other performers and comperes may give them instructions to carry out at a certain time in the performer's routine; the element of risk is heightened for both performer and audience, as along with this volunteer there comes an element of the unknown (Kiki Deville, 2016; Kiki Lovechild, 2016; Velma Von Bon Bon, 2017).

Anything could happen. In later chapters I discuss the risks involved in choosing an audience volunteer (see 5. Strategies for Practising Vulnerability and Trust).

The Craft - Visual Styles and Content

Within Contemporary Burlesque there are two main visual styles: Classic Burlesque and Neo-Burlesque.

Classic Burlesque



Figure 7. Classic Burlesque: (left) Wonderful Ginger and (right) Oriana, HBBF 2016. Photography: 159Photography.

As previously discussed in relation to the Dita-effect (see 1. Literature Review), Classic Burlesque refers to a costume style that harks back to English Victorian fashion (corsetry), the Parisian Moulin Rouge (can-can skirts and petticoats), and 1940s–50s Golden Age of Hollywood film (sequined dresses, satin gowns, fur stoles, feather fans, and hats – see Figures 7, 10, and 11). It uses historic class-based tropes, in particular upper-class symbols of masculinity and femininity such as top hats and opera gloves. Such items from past eras symbolise wealth, extravagance, decadence, luxury, and the exotic to both historic and contemporary audiences. Historically, the removal of these items onstage would be read as a subversion of class structure (Allen, 1991); revealing the woman underneath clothes that have been designed and worn deliberately to conceal their body adds extra titillation (Nally,

2009). For example, performer Matt Fraser, for the BBC, described a performer from the 1940s–50s removing her glove and turning her exposed hands back and forth for the audience, emphasising the excitement this brought as it was considered uncouth for upper/middle class women to show the palms of their hands (Fraser, 2015b).

Within Contemporary Burlesque, these retro-sexual and retro-nostalgic costumed dance routines perform vintage spectacle and glamour with rhinestones, sequins, and feathers and also ‘cheesecake’ retro-cute pin-up (see Figures 8 and 9).

‘Cheesecake’ is American slang for 1940s–60s images of women who were natural beauties, or ‘girls next door’; scantily clad or suggesting nudity and sexual inference, often in domestic settings such as the kitchen, these women were on postcards and calendars that could be, literally, ‘pinned up’. They could also sometimes be seen on the side of army planes and as tattoos. The focus in these routines is on choreographed striptease, decadence, fantasy, and escapism, whilst they also problematically reinforce gender stereotypes if not performed with Buszek’s “awareishness” and critical reflection. However, ‘cheesecake’ is often used as a comical starting point for Neo-Burlesque.



Figure 8. (left) Pinup Classic Burlesque: Seedy Frills, HBBF 2016. Photography: 159Photography.

Figure 9. (right) Pinup Classic Burlesque: Petite Pois, HBBF 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

Usually performing to 1940s big band jazz and swing music, Classic Burlesque performances adhere to the routine types more rigidly: peel and parade; bump and grind; sing and fling; feature/signature or prop routine (see Figures 9 and 10; explained further in Routine Types). A performer often combines two types and two different music tracks shifting from one intention to another (e.g., from glamour to sexual) to show their variety.



Figure 10. (left) Classic Burlesque: Havana Hurricane. Photography: Neal Rylatt.

Figure 11. (right) Classic Burlesque: Havana Hurricane, HBBF 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

Neo-Burlesque

Neo-Burlesque allows for contemporary influences to be performed as part of routines, thereby offering a much wider range of creative performances. For example, a broader range of music of any genre may be featured, from classical to heavy metal and pop, and soundtracks can be used ranging from sound clips to news features. Nasty Canasta's routine performing a Classical fan dance to different car alarms is a great example of the use of a Classic prop – feather fans – being juxtaposed with a contemporary sound – car alarms. Below, I list the most notable types of routines:

- Different dance styles – Aurora Nova performing contemporary dance as a phoenix rising from the ashes to Queen's song, "We are the Champions"

(2017; see Figure 12); Lou Safire performing Black Swan ballet and en pointe (2017).

- Political statements – Rubyyy Jones’s ‘Potty-mouth Princess’ routine about equal gender rights (2016, 2017); Misty Strange’s ‘Jeremy Corban’ routine is overtly political in nature (see Figure 12).
- Storytelling – Velma Von Bon Bon’s organ-grinding monkey escaping his oppressive master (2016, 2017); Cheski Kobler’s routine tells the surreal story of after-sex activities as a lampshade (2016, see Figure 13); UmA Shadow brings elements of Japanese theatre and dance into his routines (2016; see Figure 13).
- Circus skills – Celeste Steel performing a striptease whilst doing pole and aerial hoop routines (2017); Velma Von Bon Bon stripping to Village People’s song, “YMCA” whilst unicycling and skipping (2017).
- Comedy – Titselina Bumsquash is known for her geek-related (Nerdlesque – see Glossary) routines including, ‘The Ultimate Ghostbusters Tribute’ and ‘Harry Potter and 50 Shades of Necrophilia’ (2016, 2017, 2018). Bumsquash also lampoons the Classic Burlesque genre with her showgirl routine, in which everything that could go wrong, does.
- Freakshow acts – Raven Noir juxtaposes Classic showgirl costume with freakshow skills such as using a bed of nails (2016); Lolo Brow staples a moustache to herself and hammers nails up her nose (2017).
- Classic striptease (see below on how this differs from Classic Burlesque) – Havana Hurricane, whose classic bump and grind is filthy as well as fun (2016, 2017).



Figure 12. Neo-Burlesque: (left) Aurora Nova and (right) Misty Strange, HBBF 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

As a style, Neo-Burlesque offers a greater variety of possibilities and options and thereby promotes diversity and inclusion (of many identities), as well as offering risky and edgy performances. These performances can be challenging to some members of the audience as they do not conform to what is considered the norm in societal standards, both in entertainment and in daily life. The desire to provoke and be provoked will be discussed further in 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust. Most Novel-Burlesque events include both Neo and Classic styles of Burlesque performance to allow for the two styles to be juxtaposed. In this context, the Classic Burlesque style may also speak politically and offer the audience a more provocative, exciting experience by breaking away from expectations. In the context of Novel-Burlesque, Classic Burlesque performance is seen as a reclamation and playful exploration of feminine sexuality and power rather than as the fantastical illusion of luxury that it is often framed as within Popular Burlesque. There is more of an emphasis on the theatrical nature of the performance in Novel-Burlesque with Neo-style performance, and less on the need for costumed dance as with Classic style performances.



Figure 13. Neo-Burlesque: (left) UmA Shadow and (right) Cheski Kobler, HBBF 2016. Photography: 159Photography.

Performances of Neo-Burlesque can be further dissected into different genres. For example, throughout this investigation I experienced many different subcategories of Burlesque or ‘lesques’ as they are known (these are listed in the Glossary). The two that will be touched upon in this thesis are Boylesque and Queerlesque.

Boylesque involves male-identifying performers performing Burlesque. This can include Classic or Neo- stylings. For example, Tom Harlow performs classic showgirl fan dances, balloon pop routines, and a Neo fetish puppy routine (see Figure 14). These performers can also range from those who perform hyper-masculine personas – such as Mortimer Moonbender, who performs as a vaudevillian gent – to, for example, Dave the Bear, who takes on different gender tropes and flips them (e.g., a masculine Viking swinging a huge plait around switching to a male cheerleader displaying baton skills and playing hoopla with the audience using a target wedged between his buttocks), and to Tom Harlow’s beautiful feminine fan dance.



Figure 14. Boylesque: Tom Harlow, HBBF 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

Queerlesque is slightly more complex and can include Boylesque as well as Drag performance. In Queerlesque, Burlesque performers' routines and/or persona focus on LGBTQ+ themes and issues, challenging ideas of identity, gender, and sexuality. Performer Rubyyy Jones is known as the 'Queen of Queerlesque', with routines that debate issues such as gender rights ('Potty-mouth Princess'), anxiety and self-acceptance around queer identities ('You're Welcome'), and consumerism ('Shoesss'). Often, Boylesque performers, for example Tom Harlow and Pi the Mime, play with gender as part of their performance. Queerlesque can also include Drag performers such as Drag kings (women performing as men – see Figure 16) and Drag queens (men performing as women – see Figure 15). Rusty Von Chrome is a Drag king performer who is known for their comical bad male stripper routines, including one about Henry VIII seeking out another wife.



Figure 15. (left) Drag Queen - Dolly Trolley, HBBF 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

Figure 16. (right) Drag King - Rusty Von Chrome. Photography: Tony Heath Art.

During the course of this study, I have observed a slow increase in diversity on the Popular Burlesque stage as performers from the more diverse forms of Burlesque infiltrate the mainstream. Performer Rubyyy Jones, with the moniker 'Queen of Queerlesque', won the international highly acclaimed Innovation Award at the Burlesque Hall of Fame (BHoF) 2017 annual weekend. As well as there being an increase in the number of performers with diverse backgrounds, abilities, and styles performing on the BHoF stage, these performers are also increasingly being nominated for the international, public vote, 21st Century Burlesque Top 100/ Top 50 annual charts (21st Century Burlesque (h), 2015 - 2019). Representation matters, particularly in a context where the Dita-effect promotes a narrow view of perfection, which can lead to insecurity in audience members due to the exclusion of other body types. In an interview, performer Rubyyy Jones described this experience as being isolating for the audience (interview, 2017). Often, after a show where I have performed as Arabella Twist, I have had conversations with audience members about their desire to perform or to be comfortable in their own skin and they expressed a lack of confidence and fear of presenting themselves in this way (reflective writing, 2017–20). However, when their negative beliefs (fears and insecurities) are challenged by their seeing someone like themselves on stage performing and enjoying themselves, this can shift their awareness and provide the

potential for stronger self-belief. Siebler acknowledges that Burlesque can be feminist, reflective, and questioning; yet she states that Contemporary Burlesque is not doing enough to ensure that the critical voice of the performer is seen, as the audience can slip all too easily into a patriarchal and misogynistic viewing of the performer (2014). Whilst referring to Contemporary Burlesque in her use of the term Neo-Burlesque, Siebler has commented that: “we need not condemn Neo-Burlesque only ask more of it” (2014, p. 572); thus, Siebler advocates for further development of Burlesque, for questioning of female sexuality in relation to patriarchal power, and for the promotion of performers who do this.

Virtuoso and Vernacular

During this investigation I identified that Novel-Burlesque could be further classified by considering the categories of virtuoso and vernacular routine. Virtuoso routines tend to elicit silence from their audiences as the experience demands attention. This tends to be created by a slow Classic routine such as a fan or Isis-wing dance, or a performer exhibiting a specific skill requiring a high degree of concentration or training. Vernacular routines, in contrast, encourage in-the-moment audible interaction between the performer and audience members, in the form of clapping, cheering, whooping, and hollering. These can be seen as being more grounded and gritty in comparison with a virtuoso act, which, on the other hand, can be seen as awe-inspiring. Virtuoso and vernacular routines can be performed across both Classic and Neo-Burlesque styles. The performer Vicky Butterfly (see Figure 17) would be considered a virtuoso performer. Her mesmerising Classic routines use sumptuous props and costumes – for example, ‘Moth’ with Isis wings and ‘The Swan Bride’ fan dance to name just two routines (seen 2016, 2017) – which enchant and elicit silence in the audience until the very end, when there is an eruption of applause. In contrast, performer Good Ness Gracious (see Figure 18) would be categorised as a vernacular performer as she performs cheekily to the audience. Her sing and fling routine involving a stripping nun, and her ‘Good Morning’ routine which involves her making breakfast the morning after the night before (seen 2017) had the audience raucously showing their appreciation of her performances whilst they were happening. Both types of performer acknowledge the audience, but Butterfly sweeps

audiences to another place, whilst Gracious grounds her audience in the present moment by building a vocal rapport and joking with the audience.



Figure 17. (left) *Virtuoso: Vicky Butterfly*. Photography: Tony Heath Art.

Figure 18. (right) *Vernacular: Good Ness Gracious*. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

Routine Types

Contemporary Burlesque is generally comprised of four basic types of routine for a striptease, which were created and developed by performers of the 1940s and 1950s:

1. Peel and parade – walking around the stage, stopping to remove an item; this was similar to a catwalk, showing off the extravagant luxurious costume. Historically, most performers started their routines with this, and then usually either went into a bump-and-grind routine once the evening gown was removed, or continued the catwalk peeling (Allen, 1991; Fraser, 2015). During this research, Heidi Blitz from Portugal performed a purely peel-and-parade routine at HBBF 2016 International Showcase.
2. Bump and grind – dancing led by the hips in accordance with the music: bump on the percussion and grind on the brass. Tempest Storm was renowned for her bump-and-grind performances (as was Crystal Starr) that had explicit sexual connotations. Today, performers Havana Hurricane and Millie Dollar (see Figure 20) are both good examples of bump-and-grind performers.

3. Sing and fling – removing items of clothing whilst singing, involves multi-tasking and is the famous Gypsy Rose Lee’s renowned gimmick, as she used to strip whilst performing a monologue. In Contemporary Burlesque, the previously mentioned Good Ness Gracious sings during her ‘Sister Good Ness Gracious’ routine (see Figure 17).
4. Feature/signature or prop routine – this includes a large prop or theme that provides the focus of the routine: for example, a fan dance, a martini glass, a chair, or a balloon pop routine (where the performer comes out covered in balloons and during the routine they pop the balloons with a pin to reveal what they are wearing, if anything, under the balloons). During the 1940s and 1950s, performers were trying to find a unique selling point or gimmick, and they looked to the circus and to side/freakshows, as well as to other sources of inspiration (Willson, 2008; Fraser, 2015). For example: Satan’s Angel was famous for her flaming tassel twirling, and Sally Rand was known as the first fan dancer. Contemporary performer Dita Von Teese uses large props in most of her routines – a martini glass, a rodeo bull, chaise longues – whilst Anna Fur Laxis’s homage to Bettie Page (with a half-and-half routine ‘Viva Bettie’ where Fur Laxis portrays both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Bettie Page (see Figure 19)) would be described as a feature act.

These types of routine can be seen in both Popular Burlesque and Novel-Burlesque. When paired with a Classic styling they can be easily identified (Heidi Blitz and Havana Hurricane, for example); in contrast, Neo- styles tend to subvert the expectations of a routine or layer different types of routine together or offer multiple skills, making identification of the routine type more difficult. For example, Neo-Burlesque performer Lolo Brow performs ‘The Burlesque Shuffle’, in which the audience dictates when the music changes and Brow, dressed in a ball gown, has to improvise a striptease to whatever music is playing – this could be categorised either as a parade-and-peel, or as a bump-and-grind routine depending on the music being played (seen 2017).



Figure 19. (left) Feature Act: Anna Fur Laxis with her 'Viva Bettie' routine, 2018. Photography: Tony Heath Art.

Figure 20. (right) Bump and Grind: Millie Dollar, 2016. Photography: Tony Heath Art.

It should be noted that the cultural and geographical context in which a performer learns Burlesque can have an influence on the type of routines and creative expression they develop. These cultural references, which are understood by the performer and audience, could be considered as an accent. For the purposes of this research, I focused my performance review predominately on North and North West England, with a few exceptions. However, these shows did include performers who had travelled to reach them; therefore, I was able to experience performers from around the world and to understand something about tastes and styles elsewhere. For example, Italian performer Wonderful Ginger (interview, 2016) explained that, in her experience, Italian producers and audiences favoured Classic performers over Neo-Burlesque performers and routines, preferring the decadence and escapism. British Drag king Rusty Von Chrome told me that their Henry VIII routine, when performed in Italy, was considered quite controversial because it was seen to lampoon England's historical split from Roman Catholicism (interview, 2016); this supports Wonderful Ginger's claims. More overtly, there are issues around the performance of blackface minstrelsy, which the majority of the global Burlesque community condemn (see 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust: Performing on The Edge – Proximal Identification). However, during the period of this research, performers in both France and the US continued to practice this. On

an online forum debate in the comments section of the article “Burlesque Festival Cast Quit Over Blackface Dispute”, producers, audiences, and festival organisers defended the practice as culturally normal in those locations and argued that it therefore should not be seen as offensive (21st Century Burlesque (f), 2017). More subtly, within the UK it could be suggested anecdotally that comedy routines featuring music hall innuendos (although they can be serious in subject matter) thrive more in the North West, whilst more serious intellectual or political routines tend to be performed in the South (London). There is a need for more research to be carried out into the different nuances of geographical location and cultural context to understand their effect on performance style.

Conclusion

This practice review begins to establish the workings of Contemporary Burlesque as a genre of theatre. It delves into the nuanced differences between Popular Burlesque and Novel-Burlesque – the intentions, economics, and interactions.

With a high percentage of those involved in the producing and performing of Contemporary Burlesque being women, it is not surprising that most audience members are also women. With the intent of creating a performance space that is inclusive and diverse, and that foregrounds contemporary alternative voices, Novel-Burlesque is the counterbalance to Popular Burlesque, which, instead, looks to retro-sexual and retro-nostalgic luxury, decadence, and escapism. In terms of economics, from the audience’s perspective the price of the ticket is determined by the status of the performers and the venues, and this builds certain expectations around the event (Bennett, 1997). Tickets for Novel-Burlesque events, with their intimate fringe venues, more diverse performance offerings, and risks for the audience are substantially cheaper. Popular Burlesque attracts different types of audience than does Novel-Burlesque. Typically, the former attracts a higher proportion of white heterosexual couples, while the latter sees audiences composed of vastly greater proportions of women and people from different backgrounds and ethnicities. Popular Burlesque’s audiences are less intimate with the performers, as the size of the event results in the theatrical fourth wall being drawn up. However, what is not

clear is whether this is entirely due to the size of the venue and audience, or whether it is the Novel-Burlesque performer's routine and journey that breaks the fourth wall. This leads us then to question: what exactly the performer's role and position is in the performer–audience relationship; to what extent the audience impacts on the performer when both on- and off-stage; how the two roles work and what exactly the nature of their relationship is during a performance of Novel-Burlesque.

The compere's role is integral to all Burlesque events. By setting the tone, they initiate a 'code of etiquette', based on respect and consent. They also give the audience a safe space in which to experience different types of performance and social narratives. Novel-Burlesque as a safe and risqué space is carefully read and navigated by the compere, enabling the performers to challenge the audience and potentially place them in a vulnerable space, from which the audience can empathise and understand new experiences (see 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust). Within the Burlesque space, trust and supportive relationships can be taken beyond the stage to create a community that cares for each other and promotes learning and the exploration of new experiences (see 6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability). However, this does not fully answer how the compere's framing of a performer affects their performance on stage, their ability to build a relationship with the audience and the experience for the audience.

When watching Novel-Burlesque as an audience member I was struck by the variety and creativity with which the artists performed on stage. From my previous reading of literature on Burlesque (see 1. Literature Review), specifically *The Burlesque Handbook* (2010) by Jo Weldon, as well as from conversations with performers (both impromptu and semi-structured interviews) I was able to categorise and record the different visual styles and content of the routines. These ranged from the traditional Classic: beautiful, sensual, and sexy, to the contemporary Neo that could be political, bizarre, and challenging. As audience-researcher I was able to see and experience the impact of these different performances styles on the audience and to allow the performers to draw me into their creative journeys onstage. However, I neither knew how these routines were created nor understood what techniques and tools the performers employed to create these experiences and sensations, nor that in doing

so they formed a relationship with the audience. In my role as audience-researcher, I only understood half of this relationship; in order to fully understand the dynamics and elements at play it was necessary for me to learn the practice of performing Burlesque.

This chapter has, through an investigation that involved audience observation, reflective writing, and semi-structured interviews, revealed several factors about Contemporary Burlesque, and has highlighted the gaps in knowledge that the audience-researcher perspective could not answer.

3. Development of Practice

Having undertaken a practice review utilising two methods – 1/ observations of events and performances, recorded in the form of reflective writings; and 2/ conversations and semi-structured interviews with both audience and performers – and discovered that I had only partially answered the questions that arose out of my literature review, the final method – practice-as-research – proved integral to this investigation. It was necessary for me to create and perform the persona Arabella Twist and two Neo-Burlesque routines to understand the performer’s perspective in the performer–audience relationship, not only onstage but also off stage, in order to fully answer those questions whose answers remained only partially articulated.

Returning to the idea that I, as the researcher, would become the main instrument of research in order to investigate from inside Burlesque rather than taking an external viewpoint (and therefore potentially carrying out the secondary objectification Clare warns of, 2015), there needed to be a continuous feedback loop of reflexivity (Tague, 2005). This reflexivity would ensure that every stage of the practice-as-research was informed by and informing of the other methods of research I conducted (Ellis et al., 2011; Jasper, 2003; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Moon, 2004; Schon, 1983; Varella et al., 1993).

Reflective Writings

As previously mentioned in 2. Practice Review my reflective writings consisted of nineteen reflections on my experiences as a performer, as well as other experiences from networking events, workshops, and rehearsals that were recorded and reflected upon. The foci of the more detailed reflections on the experiences I had as a performer were slightly different to those of the reflections I made as an audience member:

- specific research points (the reason why I performed at the event) and the outcomes;
- the experience as a whole;
- the line-up of performers and my position within it;
- onstage performance notes: how I responded to the venue, space, interruptions, mistakes, and so on;

- the audience's reception and response to me as a performer;
- off stage/impromptu conversations and comments that should be noted for the research.

These performance reflections included an anecdotal scale indicating how my performance compared with rehearsals and past performances, along with a brief explanation (that was later expounded on in detail in reflective writing) as to why I rated that particular performance as I did. For example:

Performing Arabella Twist – Cherie Bebe Presents Burlesque at Richmond Tea Rooms 28/7/2018

Frida:

A-----B-----X-----C

Start rehearsals Automatic Muscle Memory Second Nature
Responsive but Clueless Repetition of action Responsive and Knowing

X = Muscle memory, not as careful placing things but still very aware of the smaller space and the intimacy of the audience as they are almost all around me.

Cruella:

A-----B-----X-C

Start rehearsals Automatic Muscle Memory Second Nature
Responsive but Clueless Repetition of action Responsive and Knowing

X = Second nature, responded to the venue and audience. Playful, mischievous, I feel that Arabella played with this routine like an old friend. (reflective writing, 2018)

This type of reflective writing enabled me to reflect on, sort, and analyse the experiences I had, capturing details that a film of the performance or event would not, due to the limitations of filming. Although I did attempt to have as many of my performances filmed as possible, as previously mentioned in 2. Practice Review the ethics approval for this research was based on the understanding that only relevant links would be made available (Appendix 14: Performer Links) due to the potentially

personal nature of these experiences for audience members, performers, and myself as the researcher. Within the reflective writings I consider the many peripheral encounters that make up the event as part of the experience, but these are not understood to be the event itself and could not be picked up by film (Freeman, 2010; Jasper, 2003; Nelson, 2013): for example, conversations at the bar, discussions in the queue for the toilets, backstage conversations about world events, the smell and stickiness of the stage, how the framing of a routine by the host affected the audience, or how the stage manager made snap decisions that affected a performance in a certain way.

As with the data compiled for the practice review (through a performance review as audience-researcher and semi-structured interviews) and literature review, I analysed the qualitative data using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I cross-referenced this data with the other data generated, using the key themes (the politics of Burlesque, vulnerability, and voyeurism) to pull out insights and discoveries made and to align those experiences within the context of existing theory (Chang, 2008; Freeman, 2010; Jasper, 2003; Nelson, 2013; Schon, 1983).

Performer Subjectivity – Practice-as-Research

Throughout this study, the use of practice-as-research intertwines with the practice review methods because of the need for myself as the researcher to be both a tool with which to conduct research and the material being researched. In order to gain deep and comprehensive knowledge about Novel-Burlesque I had to experience as many aspects as possible of the art form. This required me to engage with and become a part of Novel-Burlesque (Freeman, 2010; Tomkins, 1997). This may also be seen as taking a systematic approach, in which the steps are: 1/ planning, 2/ action, 3/ reflection, 4/ analysis (Chang, 2008; Tague, 2005;). This is a cyclical process, enacted from an informed position, based on experiential knowledge, and from which the next part of the research was conducted (Dieleman, 2017; Lakoff & Johnson, 1990, 2003; Schon, 1983, 1991). Experiential knowledge may be considered as a nuanced form of empirical evidence, most appropriate to the subject matter (Freeman, 2010; Nagatomo 2007, quoted in Freeman, 2010; Schon, 1991).

I shall continue to explain the organic process and practice I undertook in this investigation:

- creation of persona and routine;
- finding Arabella Twist: attaining new skills;
- promotion, branding, marketing, and social media;
- performance: first and second routine.

Creation of Persona and Routine

Before the creation of my Burlesque persona Arabella Twist, I attended and took part in sixteen ticketed events, including workshops, networking opportunities, and courses that looked to develop my performance skills, from November 2015 to December 2016. These events called for more than spectatorship, requiring me to put to one side the role of audience member and explore the role of performer. These included one-off Burlesque workshops with international performers, two six-week Burlesque courses with the performer Lady Wildflower (one of the courses I took twice), and performer networking events. The discoveries and experiences gained from undertaking these events and courses fed directly into and helped develop my practice-as-research.

The process of embodied research resulted in the performance and development of two Burlesque acts and the creation of a stage persona; this involved the following elements:

- music selection and editing;
- making costumes and props;
- devising the performance narrative and choreography;
- creation of stage persona identity and name;
- branding and marketing through social media;
- performing and being (both on- and off-stage).

Each element was crucial to the process and production of being a Burlesque performer and to the performance persona. These elements led to the first performance, conducted on 4 March 2017 at *The Frou Frou Club*, Hebden Bridge Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge, where I debuted as Arabella Twist performing the

routine 'Cruella Wants it All'. The original intention was to devise four routines, which would relate directly to the particular themes of voyeurism, vulnerability, and consent that were the initial foci of this research. However, due to time constraints, changes in research foci as a direct consequence of the literature review, and the discoveries from the practice-as-research focusing the investigation on vulnerability, it was felt unnecessary to create more routines. This illustrates the feedback loop of reflexivity and the cyclical nature of this investigation.

Finding Arabella Twist: Attaining New Skills

To answer the research questions from both the audience perspective and the performer perspective, the Burlesque persona of Arabella Twist was created. Through Burlesque classes and one-to-one mentoring by Lady Wildflower as well as workshops with several other performers, a style of performance and persona was developed, which continued to evolve with every appearance onstage or audience interaction. With Lady Wildflower's guidance I chose to debut 'Cruella Wants it All' as Arabella Twist at one of her shows (March 2017) rather than at a student showcase. The aim was to replicate as closely as possible the experience I had had (from the audience-research perspective) of other students debuting alongside professional performers at *The Frou Frou Club*. This decision meant that the audience would also be as similar to the usual Burlesque audience composition as possible rather than being weighted towards friends and relatives, as is the case with student debuts.

The process to the stage was an organic one, which I then analysed in: 'Who am I? The Burlesque Flip Book and Paper Dolls', created for TaPRA annual conference exhibition 2017, in collaboration with Hannah Freeman from Betty Noir Studio (see Figure 21). It was necessary for this particular project to peel back the many personas and societal "fronts" (Goffman, 1990) that I already had, together with those I had created specifically for this research. In 'Who am I?' (2017), Arabella Twist was given the title 'The Conduit' as this identity was the tool through which research from the performer's perspective could be undertaken. I used the word 'conduit' specifically because it means 'a tool' (channel, tube, trough, tunnel) through which something can pass from one space to the next or that links two elements together (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1995; see 1. Literature Review). I created this

Burlesque persona with the intention of moving from a state of enquiry to one of understanding, both for myself as the performer-researcher, the artist performing different routines and characters, as well as for the audience to identify with in the moment of performance. From this position, situations and scenarios were experienced regarding the research questions, and questions not previously considered arose, none of which would have been realised had Arabella Twist not been created.



Figure 21. 'Who am I? The Burlesque Flip Book and Paper Dolls'. Created for TaPRA annual conference exhibition, 2017.

An earlier incarnation of The Conduit was named Betty Bluestockings and was introduced during a conference striptease performance, 'Attempting to Put the Showgirl Back in her Box' (University of Birmingham, 2016). Presented as a PowerPoint presentation, Betty's discovery of Burlesque led her out of the archives of history and onto the contemporary glittering stage; as part of the accompanying striptease, I removed my clothes to reveal Betty in the iconic costume symbols of Burlesque. Betty was cute, determined, but somewhat naïve. Whilst planning and seeking advice on how to debut professionally in Burlesque onstage, rather than at a conference, I realised that I wanted to push my boundaries and play outside my performing type, exploring other facets of my own personality. Therefore, the persona I created for my professional debut had to be an assertive woman who could play with different roles: who could perform a classic showgirl fan dance, or a

cheesecake pin-up (see Glossary) routine, or an angry political Neo-Burlesque routine. In a workshop with performer Velma Von Bon Bon (31 July 2016) we wrote down five things we wanted to communicate as our Burlesque personas. The new 'conduit' had to be inquisitive, because this was the whole point: to explore and push boundaries. These were my five words:

- curious;
- cheeky;
- explorer;
- fantasy;
- challenging.

Choosing a name was difficult, more difficult than choosing what my debut routine would be. It took at least six months of conversations with family, friends, and Burlesque professionals. After much deliberation, and deadlines from my parents and from my Burlesque teacher Lady Wildflower, I decided on Arabella Twist. 'Arabella' as a name sounded elegant and exotic as it sumptuously rolled off the tongue. 'Twist' was sharp and angular – a full stop. As well as a physical action/act, it also alluded to the unexpected: to an unforeseen 'plot shift' or overturning of a common narrative.

After research that involved talking to people at events and shows, internet research, and following up names in the literature on Burlesque it became clear that there was no singular route into performing Contemporary Burlesque. On further research and inquiries, both with other performers and with Lady Wildflower herself, I chose to take Lady Wildflower's beginner's course and then did her intermediate course twice, with a view to debuting on the stage she produces: *The Frou Frou Club*. By this stage, the performance review was underway and I had seen very engaging performers onstage who had taken this route. Lady Wildflower was my first point of contact for the period of time when I was developing Arabella Twist and the 'Cruella Wants it All' routine. She helped navigate my path to the stage by answering a series of questions relating to costumes, choreography, social media, workshops, performers to research, backstage etiquette, contacting producers, contracts, and even 'personal grooming': "should I wax all my pubic hair off and attempt to make a dalmatian merkin (pubic wig)?" (personal correspondence, 2016; see Glossary).

As the creative process developed, the type of performer I became was similar to that of Velma Von Bon Bon (see Figure 23), where the performer takes on a persona who then performs different characters. For example, I, Claudia Jazz Haley, take on the persona Arabella Twist to perform Burlesque; in turn, Arabella performs as the character Cruella, killing the dog, or the character Frida, breaking free from a medical corset. In contrast, Lady Wildflower performs differently: Ms X takes on the persona Lady Wildflower, and the persona Lady Wildflower (see Figure 22) performs the routine 'Aqua Marina', or 'Kinky', or 'The Dragon'.



Figure 22. (left) Lady Wildflower performing 'Kinky' at HBBF Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.

Figure 23. (right) Velma Von Bon Bon performing 'Monkey Business' at HBBF Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.

Promotion, Branding, Marketing, and Social Media

As part of building a Burlesque persona and performing there were extra activities to consider, which included branding, marketing, and the use of social media. To gain some level of success as Arabella Twist and to enable the research, I needed to engage with the marketing and branding aspect of Burlesque. I employed a fellow Burlesque performer and photographer Hannah Freeman, from Betty Noir Photography, to take publicity shots for the first two routines ('Cruella Wants it All' and 'Frida') and a set of persona photographs (Arabella Twist, see Figure 24). By sharing with Hannah the sources of inspiration behind the routines and the ideas

behind the creation of the persona Arabella we were able, together, to produce the series of photographs that illustrated these identities. The photographs enabled producers to identify and promote me, visually, from the very beginning, and these images were used on social media and on posters for their audiences. They also enabled me to begin my self-promotion on social media platforms.



Figure 24. Arabella Twist. Photograph by Betty Noir Studio, 2016.

I had identified Facebook as one of the platforms used most by Contemporary Burlesque performers and producers to communicate with their audiences, give support to each other, and acquire work. By attending Novel-Burlesque promotion and social media workshops, I began to understand the types of 'posts' I wanted to use to build a particular identity and brand for Arabella Twist. On Arabella Twist's Facebook business page (started 16 January 2017), this involved posting about not only event and act promotion, but also Arabella's Burlesque experiences, rehearsal photos, and inspirational women, thereby creating a rounded identity. With most interaction and focus being placed on the business page, Arabella's personal Facebook profile was created to try and prevent the potential intertwining of my own personal life with my Burlesque persona life. Many people 'tag' others into their 'posts' and pictures, and often tagged Claudia Jazz Haley when I was performing as Arabella Twist. To some extent, the separate Arabella Twist personal profile as well as the business page helped to retain my two separate identities as Claudia Jazz Haley and Burlesque persona Arabella Twist. However, the two lives had already

become blurred as the result of a decision made by the academic ethics committee, who advised that I should be completely overt in my research and make a public announcement on Burlesque support groups and social media of my intentions; this linked Arabella Twist and Claudia Jazz Haley together. I also joined Instagram in May 2018 because use of this platform appeared to be on the rise within Burlesque as another way for performers to promote their work and connect with audiences.

Interestingly, the development of Arabella Twist's persona expanded, because the Covid-19 pandemic (2020) forced venues to shut and performers to interact with their audiences in different ways. Social media has been transformed from a necessary marketing tool to a performative space where audiences are able to interact directly with the performer. Some performers have taken to performing live in online shows through Zoom, Facebook, Instagram, Vimeo, and YouTube. Other performers have started using subscription sites, such as Patreon and OnlyFans, where audiences can pay for exclusive content. However, the added technical difficulties and lack of live audience feedback did not appeal to me, so as Arabella Twist I found other ways to engage with my audience and followers of my social media. Between March 2020 and December 2020, I created seventeen different low-budget recyclable costumes to attend Dolly Trolley's virtual Drag Aerobics class and published those on Arabella's social media pages (Facebook and Instagram), to the delight of many people (followers), promoting the need to stay safe and stay at home where possible. I also created two pre-recorded films that aired in online shows, 'Stationary Beauty' (*Toots & Leigh presents Tittle Tassels*, 31 July 2020) and 'Be Prepared' (*Little Peaches & Arielle Firecracker presents Digital DisabiliTease*, 26 November 2020). Both films show the impact of the Covid-19 lockdown and restrictions on all Burlesque performers; the latter, in particular, satirises the current Conservative government's handling of the pandemic, and was aired during the second national lockdown. With this shift in social media engagement, Arabella Twist as a persona became more robust and fully formed. In these films and their contemporary social media engagement posts, Arabella Twist as a personality came to the foreground, in that I performed as Arabella being Arabella rather than Arabella performing onstage as Cruella or Frida.

Performance: First and Second Routine

For written accounts of the two routines and of use of the Burlesque script, please see Appendix 11. Debuting a routine based on the Disney villain Cruella de Vil came out of the need to play into the 'Burlesque script'. This term refers to a set of known physical gestures, tropes, and prescribed visual cues performed in an order understood by the audience and performers, which I consider to be a visual Burlesque script. For example: as the performer, I look at my arm and hand, which has a satin glove on it; I look at the audience, I look at my arm and hand and stroke the glove; as I do so, I look up at the audience and smile; I caress the glove and slowly peel it away from my arm and hand; I play with the glove in a number of suggestive ways, looking at the audience, and I return my gaze and touch to my arm and hand; I stroke my arm and hand seductively and look to the audience. This was referred to as "present, tease, peel, and play" during Lady Wildflower's beginners course and later as suggest, tease, reveal/remove, interact, present (STRIP) (workshop with Lady Wildflower, 2016) (discussed in more detail later in this chapter). By performing this script in my 'Cruella Wants it All' routine, I gained an understanding of Novel-Burlesque performance before attempting to manipulate the form. The character Cruella de Vil also allowed me to explore in performance the archetype of the seductress – otherwise known as the femme fatale, the vamp, and the villainess (see 1. Literature Review; and Glossary). In turn, performing this archetype, and in particular the character Cruella de Vil, revealed sides of my own personality that are not often seen – my desire for perfection and my dark sense of humour – and offered as well a loose commentary on capitalism.

Whilst staying within the form, I slightly altered the content of the 'narrative script' (see 1. Literature Review – Evolution of Terms: Burlesque Script; and Glossary).³ This is another term that was created, this time to describe the story narrative and the performative journey of the character (in this case Cruella de Vil) performed by the stage persona (Arabella Twist). By separating out the narrative script from the Burlesque script I was able to alter the positioning of the two climaxes, which in most

³ This term is coined to describe a particular phenomenon that was observed and experienced during the research process. It is included within the context of this thesis in relation to the performer–audience relationship in the Novel-Burlesque performance situation.

Burlesque routines happen at the same time. Normally, the Burlesque climax is the final reveal, for example tassel twirling or the revealing of even smaller underwear, and coincides with the climax of the narrative script of the character being performed. However, during 'Cruella Wants it All', the narrative climax appears two-thirds of the way through the routine (the killing of the puppy) and the Burlesque script climax (tassel twirling and G-string reveal) is at the very end.

This performance required the learning of a new set of stage skills: routine choreography, how to apply stage make-up, music selection and editing, and costume making. I sought help from fellow performers, including Artemis Queer (also known as Tab Kimpton), who tutored me through the process of creating costumes and props (see Figure 25). The steep learning curve also included altering personal beauty regimes, as experimentation with different types of 'illusion' underwear were also tried and tested.



Figure 25. Work in progress (a). From Kimpton's drawing to altering the black-sequined dress and creating a stand-up collar, 2016; just one of seven costume pieces we created.



Figure 26. Work in progress (b). From Kimpton's drawing to altering the black-sequined dress and creating a stand-up collar, 2016; just one of seven costume pieces we created.

It was a deliberate decision to debut as part of *Lady Wildflower Presents The Frou Frou Club Burlesque and Cabaret Show* (see Figure 26) rather than at Lady Wildflower's student showcase, *Show Us your Newbies*. Having seen performers debut at *The Frou Frou Club* whilst I was undertaking the role of audience-researcher for the performance review, I wanted to experience this performer perspective as closely as possible as the performer-researcher. This decision also meant that I was able to see the backstage workings of a typical production and perform in front of an audience I considered to be representative of Novel-Burlesque. Student showcases are often more supportive environments, with a high percentage of the audience being family and friends of the new performers. On the occasion of my debut, although my family and a few friends were present, the majority of the audience were strangers.



Figure 27. Arabella Twist debut performance, March 2017. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

In May 2017, my performance of 'Cruella Wants it All' won the audience choice at Spare Rib Super Star Competition, Liverpool. This gave me the opportunity to create and debut my second routine, 'Frida', at The Spare Rib, The Magnet, Liverpool (October 2017). This second routine was again a departure from the 'Burlesque script', in that it used the 'tropes' in a way that was different from the first routine. In order to take the audience on an alternative journey of potentially uneasy emotions I explored the composition of the narrative, physicalisation, and tone, using details of Frida Kahlo's life and my experiences of performing 'Cruella Wants it All', as well as my own experiences of disability (in particular, symptoms of MS) (see Figure 27). To

do this I sought advice from Lady Wildflower and also from Rubyyy Jones, who is known for creating and performing challenging narratives on Novel-Burlesque stages. Novel-Burlesque teachers and mentors encourage students to seek advice and classes from various performers depending upon what they are trying to create onstage.



Figure 28. *Arabella Twist* exam performance, 'Frida', December 2019. Photography Darren McGinn Photography.

It emerged that there were limitations to getting performance bookings because often performers respond to a casting call on social media and the producer chooses from amongst those who have replied. Rarely, the producer approaches the performers first, but only when the producer already knows the performers and has a particular line-up in mind. As part of my research, I targeted shows and venues where I had been an audience-researcher, and when applying for castings I made the producers aware of my research (for a list of venues and events I performed at, see Appendix 10: Practice-as-Research Performances).

Examination Performance

I invited my Examiners to witness my performance at *Cherie Bebe's Burlesque Revue* at Matt & Phreds, Manchester, 8 December 2019.

Like my Burlesque mentor Lady Wildflower, Cherie Bebe is a performer and producer with established regular Burlesque events in North West England that offer a high standard of show with a wide variety of cabaret and Burlesque performers. Both producers follow a similar event structure with their line-ups, offering something to suit the taste of almost everyone in the audience.

Cherie Bebe offered me a slot at what would usually be her Christmas show, at jazz club Matt & Phreds, Manchester, 8 December 2019. Traditionally, this was Bebe's last show of the year, and like most other shows around this time of year would be themed, with performers chosen specifically for their festive routines. However, on this occasion, because there were a number of Christmas-themed shows in the North West that weekend, Cherie wanted to produce a regular show with references to Christmas. Having performed there twice before, I knew the venue and event well. It was a sold-out event with several of the local Burlesque regulars having booked their tickets months in advance, and, due to the time of year, groups of party-goers celebrating the festivities, rather than the usual Burlesque communities.

My aim was for the Examiners to experience my practice-as-research in the correct context within a live Burlesque setting, rather than relying on a video or written description in order that they could understand and experience the performer–audience relationship. I gave the Examiners a written piece to provide context for their invitation to the performance (see Appendix 1: Examiners' Invite).

Reflections from the examination performance are interwoven throughout the thesis to support knowledge gained from previous performances, and there is a brief summary of the findings from this particular performance in the thesis Conclusion.

The Mechanics of Burlesque – Performer's Perspective

Similarly to the practice review I conducted as audience-researcher, here I will be drawing predominantly upon my performer-researcher experience, highlighting in particular my examination performance at *Cherie Bebe's Burlesque Revue*, Matt & Phreds (8 December 2019, see Appendix 1: Examiners' Invite), and my performances at *Lady Wildflower presents The Frou Frou Club*, Hebden Bridge Little

Theatre, Hebden Bridge (debut on March 2017 and January 2018), with the addition of performer interviews, and the occasional audience observation, where needed as examples. I will now broaden my focus to include the findings from my practice-as-research about other processes that are involved in becoming a performer, and also about creating routines and experiences of performing, as well as my own experiences.

The Event

The Compere – Framing of Performances

From my practice-as-research experience it is clear that if the compere has not warmed up the audience sufficiently or has misrepresented the routine, the performer has to work harder to gain the audience's enthusiasm, attention, and, ultimately, their trust (audience observation, 2016; performer reflection, 2017; interview, Velma Von Bon Bon, 2017). When performing at *Burlesque Idol UK*, the compere failed to warm the audience up and prepare them for a change of pace from Purrsia Kitt's serious and powerful warrior piece, to my silly dark comical routine, 'Cruella Wants it All' (*Burlesque Idol UK*, 2017). Consequently, some of the audience were cold towards me as I stepped out as Arabella; they were still wrapped in the emotions of the previous performance and my entrance was jarring to both them and me. Rather than simply allowing the audience to join me enthusiastically in my storytelling, as I had done in the past with well-prepared audiences, I had to work to engage the disconnected audience members in the new story I was telling. I did this by focusing on making my communication with the audience clear and strong from the very beginning, enabling connection with them. The compere must have a range of tools and expertise to guide the audience through an evening and make the transitions seamless for everyone, thereby creating a more enjoyable experience.

One of the compere's key skills is to read the audience and the atmosphere in the room so that they are able to correctly pitch the performer to the audience. This ability also helps when manipulating, wrangling with, or guiding disruptive audiences. During my own examination performance (8 December 2019, see Appendix 1: Examiners' Invite) the audience were unreceptive to compere Johnathan Mayor's framing of 'Cruella Wants it All'. However, Mayor framed 'Frida' perfectly in that he

piqued the audience's curiosity by satirising the art and entertainment industries, as well as everyone in the room (including himself), by asking the audience directly to give their attention and to witness my routine as 'high art'. With this unusual introduction, Mayor had wrangled with the audience's expectations and framed my performance brilliantly, and the audience gave me their concentration from the very beginning (2019). Through the use of improvisation techniques, the compere can be accepting of any challenges and spin the situation to everyone's favour with good humour (audience observations, 2016–2018; interview, Velma Von Bon Bon, 2017).

Performer's Perspective – Audiences Overstepping the Line

There have been occasions where performers and comperes overstep the boundaries (and not in a good way), as discussed in 2. Performance Review and in more detail in 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust. However, performers regularly report being assaulted by audience members (both male and female) physically grabbing them (interview, Rusty Von Chrome, 2016; see 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust; and 6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability) and one performer mentioned that another performer had a stalker with a restraining order against them (interview, Bobbie Dazzler, 2016). Audiences who perceive the ticket transaction as an invitation to commodify and consume the performer as an object can prove problematic when alcohol lowers inhibitions. This attitude is akin to the phrase, "They were asking for it", which circulates around victim blaming and rape culture (see 1. Literary Review). The performer's persona name is not just a creative tool, used to make them sound more alluring; it also protects the person's anonymity by preventing one aspect of their life bleeding into another and reduces the risk of "secondary objectification" (Clare, 2015) or possible assault. Interestingly, during the process of this investigation, I personally encountered secondary objectification; the experience is discussed in more detail in 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust.

However, many performers, even when off the stage, have to deal with 'dick pics' (unsolicited photographs of men's penises) being private messaged by men to a profile or business page on a performer's social media account. As a result of requirements made early on (as mentioned briefly in the Introduction and

Methodology), the connection between my real life and persona life were established in order to conduct the research ethically. Consequently, there has been an intertwining of these two lives, which most performers avoid. Arabella Twist has had only two men private message her with romantic overtures over the course of twelve months (2017). Yet Claudia Jazz Haley has been privately contacted by nine male strangers during the same time frame (2017), referencing Arabella Twist, making romantic overtures, complimenting her appearance, and, in one instance, making a marriage proposal. Neither of my profiles received unwanted 'dick pics' (see Glossary) in the twelve months mentioned (2017).

The Craft – Practicalities and Function

Having already assessed the craft of Contemporary Burlesque in terms of visual styles and the content of performers' routines, as I observed as an audience-researcher (see 2. Practice Review), I now examine the practicalities of how performers, their personas, and routines are created and developed.

Classes and Courses

There are several routes into becoming a Burlesque performer, including mainstream Popular Burlesque examples, such as 'Burlesque-inspired' fitness classes and Burlesque chair troupe dance classes, whose teachers may or may not be experienced Burlesque performers. When seeking out classes and workshops through Novel-Burlesque shows and alternative spaces, I discovered that there was a wide variety of these, the choice of which would depend on what the individual wanted to achieve or experience.

During this investigation, I saw advertisements for Novel-Burlesque classes at dance studios (where classes are usually held), leisure centres, pole studios, on social media and online, and at alternative events including club nights and theatre events. To find out about classes or performers who taught locally, attending a nearby Novel-Burlesque event and asking someone at the venue (performer, producer, or audience member) was a sure way to gain advice. Before Covid-19, the cost of a group class (for 15–20 people) started at £5 per hour with a set routine that focused on fitness, and a teacher who may not be a performer. The maximum price I came

across was £15 per hour, but depending on the teacher's level of experience in Burlesque performance and the skills being taught it could be more (e.g., Lady Wildflower's course costs £12 per session). These more expensive classes usually have fewer participants, and they focus on learning skills and applying them according to individual needs. A one-off class is priced at £10–£50+, depending upon the experience of the performer/teacher, the skills being taught, and the length of the class (Lady Wildflower's one-to-one session is £30). Classes with performers as teachers are often thought of as an investment by those who wish to learn skills and perform themselves. Other, more economically accessible routes can be found through books and online YouTube tutorials, but taking classes that have a performer as the teacher does help the student to integrate easily into the Burlesque community.

There are classes, courses, and workshops given by performers and producers that offer a range of different styles and types of teaching. These also do not necessarily lead to performance. For example, Lady Wildflower, who mentored me as Arabella Twist and became my 'Burly Mama' (see Glossary: Burlesque family), provides a one-hour-a-week, eight-week Beginners Course that teaches the basics in posing, walking, and bump and grind as well as in how to set a routine. For the duration of the course, Lady Wildflower provides the participants with opera gloves and a feather boa to use in class. To follow that course, she offers a one-hour-a-week, eight-week Intermediate Course that looks at different ways to STRIP (suggest, tease, reveal/remove, interact, present), personal performance styles, character and persona development, and routine development. At this point, the participants start to invest in their own costume pieces to create a routine in class with the techniques Lady Wildflower teaches. After that course and a few one-to-one sessions with Lady Wildflower, she may then suggest performing in a 'newcomers' slot at one of her produced shows: *The Frou Frou Club*, or her now annual newcomers showcase, *Show Us Your Newbies*. Other teachers have varying formats for different levels of performers. Rubyyy Jones offers an intensive 'Queerlesque' course for people who have already debuted as performers. At the end of her three-hour sessions, one a week for six-weeks, the students 'graduate' and perform the routine created as part of the course in a Save Rubyyy Jones production. There are also regular drop-in

classes for both choreographed routines and improvised dancing, depending upon what the individual would like to learn or practise.

Often, in conjunction with a Novel-Burlesque event there are one-off workshops. This is particularly common with international headline performers and offers the rare opportunity to learn certain skills or techniques from highly experienced, internationally acclaimed performers. For example, American performer Dirty Martini, who performed in England (2016), delivered three hours of workshops in each city she performed in. Many Burlesque teachers encourage their students to then see the performer and their skills in action onstage. There are a wide range of skill workshops on offer, including costuming, marketing, and other elements that are required for a performer to have some level of competency onstage.

Performers also provide one-to-one sessions both in person and live online, which means location is no longer a huge factor in undertaking performance progression. Before Covid-19, online sessions were not the norm, but were also not unheard of. Once, due to a train strike I had an online one-to-one session with Lady Wildflower, where she watched my routine as I performed in the rehearsal studio before giving me feedback. She also regularly gave stage make-up tutorials through Facebook for her students. Since Covid-19 these online sessions have become more common, allowing for greater accessibility of Burlesque skills and classes, now from the comfort of your own home.

Resources

The first thing you are told when wanting to perform Cotemporary Burlesque is to support your local Novel-Burlesque community and learn by seeing as many shows as possible. Investing in the community allows you to gain opportunities to perform in the future, whilst also experiencing different types of performance.

Highly recommended by Burlesque performers, *The Burlesque Handbook* (2010) by performer, producer, and Burlesque teacher Jo Weldon, is a resource for people who wish to delve deeper into the mechanics of Burlesque as an art form. Compared with Von Teese's hardback, beautiful spectacle of a book, *Burlesque and the Art of the*

Tease (2005), Weldon's book is a detailed manual, which offers the reader information on performance creation and progression through each step, as well as a brief history of Burlesque (2010). Each chapter is broken down into sections that provide further specifics, which, in turn, give step-by-step diagrams, advice, and anecdotes from a wide range of performers and industry professionals. The book has photographs that illustrate the variety the art form encompasses, as well as a resources section for further research. The book is intended to develop the reader into a performer, or a more-informed enthusiast, with an understanding of the foundations of what makes a good performer or routine, as well as of the glitz and glamour.

Other resources include DVDs, YouTube, podcasts, and streaming sites such as Netflix and Amazon Prime. All of these provide a range of documentaries, filmed live performances, and 'classes' for choreography and other aspects such as costuming and marketing. There are also forums and groups on social media platforms, in particular Facebook, where performers promote themselves, find castings, help each other, and also communicate with their audiences outside of live Burlesque events.

Costuming

When creating a routine there is a paradox, as the routine needs costume and props to be created, but until the routine is created, the specific costume and props may be unknown. To overcome this, substitute props and costume can be found, bought, or made, and as the routine develops, so do the props and costume required.

There are two methods of practice when it comes to costume creation:

- The performer employs a costumier to make a specific costume. Some performers also employ the costumier to further decorate the item or, to bring the price down, the performer decorates the item themselves. Hiring a costumier can be extremely expensive; however, the standard of costume will be very high. For example, Anne Addiction (see Figure 28) employed two different costumiers to make her debut costume professionally (cape, gauntlets, covering of bra, knickers, and corset), costing a total of £485.

Addiction added approximately a further £100 worth of extra rhinestones to her costume, and continues to update it with more rhinestones.

- The performer sees the creation of the costume as an extension of the development of the routine: this involves learning through trial and error how to create the item and its performed removal, which, in turn, informs the routine that is created. This is very time-consuming, and the standard of the costume depends on the skills of the performer. Arabella Twist's debut Cruella costume cost just under £200 (including sale clothing repurposed, materials, and failed costume attempts) and took over forty hours to construct, with assistance from a fellow performer and costumier, Tab Kimpton.



Figure 29. Anne Addiction performing, September 2018. Photography: Darren McGinn Photography.

The professional, luxurious and decadent aesthetic of Popular Burlesque can be bought, and/or created, as an investment in the performer's routine and future bookings. There are costumiers who specialise in Burlesque costumes and props, as the removal of the item is just as important as the item itself. However, if that is not a viable option, buying items and repurposing or creating from scratch is also possible. It was necessary for performers in the 1990s resurgence to use this method, due to the influence of the DIY culture of Burlesque at the time and the difficult economic situation for most artists. Some of those performers still favour this way of working (workshop Q & A, Dirty Martini, 2016; interview, Rubyyy Jones, 2017). It is not uncommon for contemporary performers to also have a costume business and to

make costumes for other performers as well as their own. The most renowned example of this is Catherine D'lish, who performs alongside Dita Von Teese, both wearing costumes D'lish has made, and who also creates iconic boudoir dressing gowns.

Getting a Gig

The way in which a performer has trained often determines the setting of their debut performance. One route is to debut at your teacher's produced show or showcase. However, some performers find different ways on to the stage, through open castings, on social media, at newcomer competitions, and through theatre or event contacts. Quite often there are crossovers between entertainment industries, particularly from theatre to cabaret and Burlesque, as seen with alternative cult culture productions such as the theatrical touring version of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, which has toured the UK since the early 1990s (interview, Rusty Von Chrome, 2016; interview, Velma Von Bon Bon, 2017).

Castings

After a debut, further work can be obtained through forums on social media, specifically Facebook, where producers post casting lists for future shows. Depending on the type of show and its producer there may be a 'newcomers' slot, for which a performer with less than 2 years' experience or fewer than twenty performances can often apply. These slots usually pay expenses only and are primarily opportunities to gain performance experience in front of an audience, as well as to obtain photographs and live footage of the routine that can be presented to other producers to cast from in the future. Other avenues of opportunity include competitions and festivals, which are usually unpaid or offer expenses only. Another way to acquire performance opportunities is to send out 'cold' emails to producers of shows the performer has researched and thinks their routine would suit. However, to date no producer has employed Arabella Twist on the basis of this last method. Most gigs have been acquired through word of mouth and from conversations with producers after shows.

Payment

One American performer described performing Novel-Burlesque as “white collar work with blue collar pay” (impromptu conversation, 2016). The amount of time and energy that goes into creating and maintaining a routine and persona is rarely balanced financially by Burlesque performance alone (Dodds, 2013; interview, Rubyyy Jones, 2017; interview, with Oriana, Dottie Dynamo & Wonderful Ginger, 2016). Performer Rubyyy Jones attests that regardless of experience the performer onstage is an artist and should be paid, and that they all support themselves with other income (interview, 2017). Throughout my research I have encountered performers who during the week are accountants, HR managers, stay-at-home-mums, or nurses. There are also those who work within the creative industry and for whom performing Burlesque is one of the many performance skills on their professional theatre CV.

In England, performers can earn £50–£150 for two acts, dependent on their experience, the type of event, and the size of the venue (interview, Oriana, 2016). During the research period, Arabella Twist was paid amounts ranging from travel expenses only (minimum £5.40 – a tram ticket) for one act with 6 months’ experience, to £85 as a door split for a sold-out gig with two acts and 16 months’ experience. When answering casting calls as Arabella Twist, £50 plus travel expenses was my starting rate of pay for two acts. As I gained more experience, the rate for two acts increased. When the time it took to become ‘performance ready’ (including creating the routines, making the costumes, and hiring rehearsal space), is taken into account, overall, Arabella Twist made a substantial loss. These findings correspond with those of Dodds in her article “Embodied Transformations in Neo-Burlesque Striptease”:

[it] suggests a privileged class position in that they [Burlesque Performers] have the necessary economic and social capital that enables them to critique the contemporary cultural landscape that they occupy. (2013, p. 84)

It can be seen that for many artists, performing Burlesque cannot provide their sole income, although it may furnish a welcome addition to their primary income. The desire to perform has less to do with financial gain and more to do with creative output. The financial discrepancy between the expense of creating routines and the

monetary gains is in itself a sad reflection on the perceived value of the arts. It is also a contributory factor towards narrowing the diversity of who is seen and whose voices are heard on Contemporary Burlesque stages, particularly within Popular Burlesque; it requires a substantial financial outlay just to reach the stage and can be seen, therefore, as a middle-class pursuit.

Rejection and Silence

Casting rejections are rarely discussed, yet as the Contemporary Burlesque industry grows and more people seek to perform, there are fewer opportunities as producers are inundated with applications. Producers often only respond to the performers they would like to hire, leaving the others to assume, by the silence, that they have been rejected. It is also common practice for a performer not to mention future gigs until the event publicity has their name on it or a contract has been signed. Whilst the ethos of Novel-Burlesque promotes acceptance and support, the reality is that finding places to perform is difficult. This can undermine a performer's confidence and therefore their desire and reasons for performing in the first place (impromptu conversation, 2017). It can also lead to performers creating routines that are perceived as being more commercially viable for producers of Popular Burlesque, rather than pursuing their own creative inspirations (interview, Bobbie Dazzler, 2016). For example, some producers favour 'Cruella Wants it All' over 'Frida' as they believe that the latter routine is too experimental, challenging, or intellectual for audiences' tastes. As briefly mentioned in 2. Practice Review there has been a slow increase in diversity on Popular Burlesque stages, but it remains an issue. The ways in which this impacts upon Novel-Burlesque events, audiences, and performers will be discussed throughout the thesis; see also 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust.

The Craft – Communication and Interaction

Motivation

There are many reasons why an audience member may want to cross the threshold from auditorium to stage. For some it is the opportunity to perform 'the dream', the fantasy of luxury and decadence, to be close to the Dita Von Teese lifestyle that is promoted by Popular Burlesque (interview, Wonderful Ginger, 2016). Others find

confidence, validation, and self-worth through performing and expressing themselves creatively outside their usual lifestyle (impromptu conversation, 2017). Ellava Bodie said in interview that her motivation was “the female camaraderie ... it’s very honest” (interview, 2016). Performer Rusty Von Chrome saw it as an opportunity to explore other aspects of their identity (interview, Rusty Von Chrome, 2017). Another incentive, which was highlighted during the panel discussion “The Cultural Case for Diversity – The Burlesque Elephant in the Room” (HBBF, 2018), is activism – the desire to galvanise a group of like-minded people into action and/or awareness.

The Persona

A Burlesque Persona can be thought of as conduit that allows the artist to perform other routines and/or characters. As mentioned in the methodology section there are two kinds of persona:

1. A persona who performs routines or themes as the persona.
2. A persona who performs characters that perform routines, which is an extra layer of performativity.

A Burlesque performer’s name is the key to their identity and a vital factor in establishing their persona. My own experience of choosing the name Arabella Twist is discussed earlier in this chapter. A name can also be attributed to a particular Burlesque style or content and is, therefore, the performer’s first point of promotion. For example, audiences would not expect Titselina Bumsquash to perform a classic fan dance, as her name alludes to comedy; likewise Dottie Dynamo is unlikely to perform a delicate and sensitive tease, as her name suggests a feisty bump-and-grind routine.

The following is a list of types of names, with examples:

- Word play – Lou Safire (Lucifer), Millie Dollar (million dollar), Val Oh So Rapture (velociraptor), Anna Fur Laxis (anaphylaxis), Dick Slick, Utter Philth (utter filth), Celeste Steel (celestial), A’dora Derriere, Cherry Poppers.
- Comic – Titselina Bumsquash.
- Descriptive items – Wonderful Ginger, Dirty Martini, Scarlet Daggers.
- Alliteration – Havana Hurricane, Anne Addiction, Rita Rumpunch.

- Allusion to their skill – Celeste Steel started as an aerial performer with a hoop routine and pole routine; Twisted Nymph is known for her body contortions and circus skills.
- Spelling adjustment or alteration of actual name – Rubyyy Jones (a way of keeping the performer's real name whilst creating distance from the onstage persona), Oriana (removal of all other names).
- Association with other artists – Tallulah Wilde (Oscar Wilde), Purrsia Kitt (Eartha Kitt).
- Titles – Lady Wildflower, Agent Sazzle, Sir Midnight Blue, Empress Emerald.

After doing some research, one performer changed her name because she felt she had too much competition from a jewellery brand and was therefore not 'Google-able' (impromptu conversation, 2017). Another performer changed hers at least three times, to finally decide to use her own name with a different spelling as it suited her whilst the other names did not (Anonymous, 2017).

Persona Concept

Performers tend to create an image of how they wish to be perceived by their audiences, not only during performance but also at other times when they are onstage (e.g., curtain call), when choosing and working during photography shoots, and when interacting with audiences through social media.

In workshop, Velma Von Bon Bon asked participants to write down five things they wanted their performance persona to project to the audience (workshop, 2017). These adjectives varied from femme fatale – seductive, mysterious; to pin-up – cheeky, cheerful; to explorative – challenging, playful. With this in mind, the performer can begin to develop routines with a particular intention towards the audience that would work well for the persona. Also, performer biographies can be written using these adjectives to promote the performer to producers, and then, in turn, used by producers to promote the performer to audiences (see Appendix 13: Arabella Twist's Biography).

Burlesque Script

As briefly mentioned earlier, layered on top of every type of Burlesque routine is the 'Burlesque script'. This script is a series of cues performed onstage by the performer – through gesture, movement, and looks – to indicate to the audience how and when to respond. This script is simple and can be repeated several times throughout a routine whilst increasing the energy, volume, and intensity of the audience's responses. It often includes what Lady Wildflower, when teaching her beginners course, referred to it as STRIP (in workshop, 2016). The removal of the second glove in the routine 'Cruella Wants it All' gives an example of a Classic style glove peal (see Figure 29), and of how each action plays out:

S – Suggest: introduce the audience to the item of clothing that may or may not be removed by looking from the audience to the item and back again. (E.g., selecting an audience member far down stage left, I point at them with intent, move towards them, smiling, look at my gloved hand, look back at them, give them a wink, then look towards the whole audience.)

T – Tease: caress and enjoy that piece of clothing and the body part it is concealing; continue to engage the audience in the exploring and playing through eye contact and facial expressions, spending as much time as possible on this part to increase anticipation in the audience. (E.g., I stroke the gloved arm, outstretched towards the audience member; lifting it above my head I raise my gaze to the whole audience.)

R – Reveal/Remove: finally remove the item of clothing, looking at the removal of the item; facial expressions illustrate for the audience the feel of the action. (E.g., I begin to tug at each gloved finger and do bump hips to the beat of the music. Engaging the audience with eye contact, I move my focus to different sections of the audience with each tug.)

I – Interact: once the item of clothing is removed, play with it, explore its potential off your body. (E.g., I pull the glove from my arm above my head. Keeping hold of it in both hands I bite onto the glove and shimmy, keeping eye-contact with the audience. Then bringing it to my groin, I look at the audience, look at the glove and proceed to tug at it as though masturbating my own glove penis and enjoying it whilst I thrust my hips in motion with the tugs.)

P – Present: present the newly exposed body part to the audience. Through facial expressions and gesture convey the feeling of this exposure and the new sensations the reveal has enabled. (E.g., throwing the glove to one side, I look to my exposed hand, then at the audience, then at the prop puppy, and proceed to caress the fur of my cape with the newly exposed hand.)



Figure 30. Arabella performing STRIP with gloves, 2019. Photography: Darren McGinn Photography

The Burlesque script is a form of ‘call and response’ using visual and sound cues that quickly establish a relationship between the performer and the audience, with Buszek’s “awareishness” (1999). Breaking the theatrical barrier of the fourth wall allows the performer to demonstrate their awareness of themselves performing for the audience, of the audience watching them, and of the risqué nature of their performance. This can be further used, with improvisation, as a relatively easy way into the dialogic gaze (see 4. Beyond Awareishness – the Dialogic Gaze). I would go further and say that the whole STRIP is not required for the Burlesque script to exist: often, in virtuoso routines subtle and delicate gestures create this relationship, and in the case of other routines the reveal is not the removal of clothing. Please see Appendix 11 for further notes regarding the Burlesque script and its use in the two created routines, ‘Cruella Wants it All’ and ‘Frida’.

Improvisation

The Burlesque script, as a foundation for building, developing choreography, and creating a routine, is an anchor from which the performer can playfully deviate when performing live to an audience. Reading the audience's responses to the Burlesque script, the performer gauges how far they can improvise with the audience at that time (see 4. Beyond Awareness – the Dialogic Gaze). This can be as small and specific as a wink or as large as Tom Harlow climbing across the auditorium over the audience's heads and behaving like a puppy that wants affection (2017). Within the research, Arabella Twist, on one occasion, walked off the stage and allowed audience members to stroke her puppy (see 4. Beyond Awareness – the Dialogic Gaze). This improvised element of playing with the audience must be clearly communicated by the performer.

Intent and Gesture

With clear intentions communicated, the performer builds rapport with the audience using the Burlesque script. Regardless of the type of routine or visual style, all artists perform a narrative or story as part of their routine. This can be as simple as the performer seducing their audience with a Classic Burlesque routine; however, every gesture plays a different role in the seduction. Neo-Burlesque can often be more explicit in showing the motivation and intention of the performer, with an extra layer of story and character on top of the Burlesque script. For example, during Wildvixen's 'Whore' routine the audience sees her reading a fictional historical prop book titled *How to be a Woman*, whilst via voice-over the audience hears expressions of patriarchal societal expectations of women. Through the use of lip-sync, as well as of fetish play and sideshow costume choices and props (wax pour – like a glitter pour where the performer pours glitter over their semi-nude body, a wax pour uses wax from a burning candle poured on to the performer's semi-nude body), the Burlesque script is layered with overt and rebellious rule breaking as Wildvixen angrily reacts against these expectations and enthusiastically enjoys reclaiming her own sexuality (seen 2018).

According to Lady Wildflower, there are three effects a Burlesque performer wishes to bring about in their audience so that they think or feel that:

1. they want to touch you in the way that you are touching yourself or your props in the performance;
2. they want you to touch them in the way that you are touching yourself or your props in the performance;
3. they want to be you because you are having so much fun touching yourself or your props during the performance.

During the research, the third of these desires was the most prevalent amongst audience observations. When talking to other audience members, one woman said: “makes me think ‘perhaps I can be like her’ ... through my fangirling I support and empower them” (impromptu conversation, 2016). Another audience member pointed out that a good Burlesque performer would make you feel attracted to them even if they were not your usual sexual preference or ‘type’ (impromptu conversation, 2016). Lady Wildflower focuses on the audience and what they want, establishing the importance of their role in the performance of Burlesque.

The communication and intent of each move and gesture must be clear for the audience. When teaching a routine, Lady Wildflower was extremely clear that each move was supposed to elicit a reaction from the audience. Rather than raising a hand for cheers or cupping one’s hand around the back of the ear with the ‘I can’t hear you’ gesture, Lady Wildflower favoured use of the character’s facial expressions, eye contact, and gestures to directly encourage and engage the audience personally. As most performers are silent, the ability to communicate in this way is very important in building a rapport with the audience and thereby carrying them through a routine. An example of this clear intention and communication came up in reflective writing after I performed at *Burlesque Idol UK*:

I focused on the intentions I was projecting – seducing, conspiratorial, pleasure, desire, power, and to whom – the dalmatian, the audience, myself. I engaged with the audience easily, winking at them, singling out specific people I could see to lock eyes with, to blow kisses at and share my enthusiasm and performance with. It felt right. (reflective writing, 2017)

Here I describe the specific intentions, those I directed the intentions towards, and how I communicated the intent. By giving this ‘personal’ attention to different

audience members throughout the room I warmed the audience's feelings towards me as I included and welcomed them to join me on Cruella's fantasy journey.

From the audience perspective, performer Raven Noir giving one disappointed and annoyed look onstage whilst performing 'The Raven' – a dark mysterious sensual bump and grind with Isis-wings (see Glossary) – raised the audience's enthusiasm (Figure 30). As a result, everyone's enjoyment of her routine increased (2016). Had Raven implored the audience with hand gestures it would have broken her character and the routine's intentions, and diminished the strength and power she had established onstage. Raven had built a relationship with the audience, and expected them to be already engaged and to act accordingly, giving her as much attention as she was giving them.



Figure 31. Intent and gesture: Raven Noir, November 2017. Photography: Darren McGinn Photography.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on practice-as-research to address the research questions that the literature review uncovered and the practice review did not fully answer. By discussing the mechanics of Burlesque from the performer's perspective, using mine and others' experiences of crossing the threshold from audience to performer, it can be seen that I took one of many possible routes to create and perform as Arabella

Twist. I divided this exploration into two main sections – the event and the craft. The latter was further split into two sections: practicalities and function, and communication and interaction.

When exploring the event, I focused on the role of the compere, as discussed in 2. Practice Review, as a role integral to the smooth running of a Burlesque event. However, the audience sometimes overstep the line by treating the performers as objects and commodities with inappropriate touching and grabbing, which in any other setting could be deemed to be sexual assault. This type of abuse of the relationship was mentioned with more frequency than was that of a performer or compere abusing the audience. However, such abuses were almost accepted as part of the job and emphasise not only the importance of the compere's work in managing expectations, but also the need for the performer–audience relationship to be founded on mutual respect and agency.

Almost every element of being a Burlesque performer is precarious and risky, and makes the performer vulnerable: from comperes not creating the right expectations, to audiences being inappropriate, to the financial outlay on costume and props, to the revealing of a creative offering. Turning to examine the craft, with a focus on Novel-Burlesque rather than on Popular Burlesque, the economics of a Novel-Burlesque show are often the factor determining where it is staged, who attends, and, correspondingly, who will be selected to perform within a programme.

Most performers, professional and hobbyist alike, supplement their performing income with other work, because fees from Burlesque performance are insufficient to be a performer's sole income. For professionals, their other work is often related to theatre and Burlesque, such as being a costumier, a dance/Burlesque teacher, or a producer of shows. Finances determine the extent to which performers are 'DIY' in the way they create their performance. This may be seen either as a disadvantage, or as a creative incentive. Finance also determines the type of audiences in attendance and their reasons for attending.

To analyse the craft of Burlesque, I have created three categories: visual styles and content (see 2. Practice Review); practicalities and function; and communication and

interaction. As previously discussed, Contemporary Burlesque has the potential for vast creative scope, with both traditional and contemporary influences being drawn upon by performers. The only constraints encountered during the research were the performers' financial circumstances, the duration of a routine, and castings being determined by producers whose choices are influenced by their audiences and the types of audience they wish their shows to appeal to. There are many different motivations for someone wanting to perform Burlesque and the process by which each performer reaches the stage varies. The development of a persona and routine is personal to the individual, as the persona becomes a conduit for the individual to creatively explore their interests through their performances.

I identified the Burlesque script as a call-and-response visual dialogue between the performer and the audience, that can be used to build a rapport and as the basis for improvisation. In my own practice, I sought to alter the usual Burlesque script, which is often combined with the narrative script (the fictional creative story) of a routine to emphasise the same journey and climax. Using 'Cruella Wants it All', I shifted the climax of the narrative script – killing the puppy – to two-thirds of the way through the routine and ended the routine on a Burlesque script climax: tassel twirling and reveal of a dalmatian G-string. This separation and shift emphasised the need for the Burlesque script. Used throughout all routines, regardless of the visual style, genre, or type, the Burlesque script is an established performing method used to create the dialogic gaze with the audience. Through the performer's clear communication and intent, they frame the dialogue for the audience response, and within this framing the audience can respond to the performer. The response from the audience can be explicit, for example the loud audience appreciation throughout a vernacular performance, or may instead be a silent, highly attentive gaze throughout a virtuoso performance. This mutually understood format allows the performer–audience relationship to develop and be maintained from an understanding that becomes trust. This call-and-response relationship can develop into trust, mutual vulnerability, and consent, to create the dialogic gaze.

From this point, having now an understanding of the context – both the wider societal, as well as the narrower inner workings and the methods used to conduct

this research – we can progress to the core of this thesis, which is the performer–audience relationship.

4. Beyond Awareness – the Dialogic Gaze

From this point in the thesis, I focus on the dialogic gaze within the performer–audience relationship in Novel-Burlesque. I begin by analysing performer Perle Noire as a key example of the use of the dialogic gaze, before presenting my own practice in response to her performance, along with the experiences I had and themes I met with as an audience-researcher. I discuss Perle Noire’s Classic routines ‘Boudoir Fantasy’ and ‘Jade Fantasy’, which she performed at HBBF *Festival Gala* show 2016, alongside my own performances as Arabella Twist: ‘Cruella Wants it All’ at several events but with particular focus on my debut performance at *The Frou Frou Club* 2017, and my *Peel of Fortune* 2019 performance. Here, I use Perle Noire, a Classic Burlesque performer, as the baseline for further investigations. Noire uses the Burlesque script to quickly create a relationship with the audience and establish the dialogic gaze. It is her use of it, through offering herself, that enables the creation of an emotional connection with her audience, based on vulnerability and trust. Another interesting observation about Noire concerned her use of improvisation and the effect of that on the dialogic gaze in comparison with the more structured, choreographed routines of Rubyyy Jones, Cinnamon Cheeks, and myself, as Arabella Twist. I also discuss Dita Von Teese in performance as a point of comparison and an example of Popular Burlesque (The Art of the Teese, 27 October 2018, The London Palladium).

I have chosen these routines because I have seen them as an audience-researcher, and they best illustrate the foundations for the performer–audience relationship as mentioned in the introduction. In order to critically analyse these routines, I draw upon all types of practice-as-research methodologies undertaken: audience-researcher reflections, audience interviews and comments, performer interviews and comments, and performer-researcher reflections.

The Short Cut to the Dialogic Gaze

As discussed in 1. Literature Review, Western culture invests the sense of sight with much power and authority in comparison with the other senses (Classen, 1997; Howes, 2006; Kavanagh, 2004). We can see the enactment of this favouring of the

sense of sight in everyday language and idioms (Arbuthnot, 1712); in mythology (Carr-Gomm, 2010; Coe, 2003; Donoghue, 2008); in the declaration of truth (Butler 1990; Classen, 1997; Foucault, 1979; Howes, 2006; Kavanagh, 2004; Orwell, 1949); in the everyday performance of gender and identity-prescribing roles (Brownie, 2017; Carr, 2013; Mulvey, 1975); and even in the way society and individuals use the power of sight to assert control, agency, and judgement (Ashforth & Kreimer, 1999; Blithe & Wolfe, 2016; Banet-Weiser, 2015; Clare, 2013; Dennis, 2008; Wahab, 2002). As previously discussed in the literature review, practice review, and development of practice, the relationship between the performer and audience in Novel-Burlesque is more complex than that of passive voyeurism and in fact has the potential to be nuanced (Brownie, 2017; Carr, 2013; Dodds, 2013; Leipe-Levinson, 2001; Lintott and Irvin 2015; Montgomery, 2013; Nally, 2009; Regehr, 2011; Ranciere, 2011; Willson 2008; and see 1. Literature Review). The relationship between performer and audience in a Novel-Burlesque context is different to that between theatre audiences and actors (Freshwater 2009; Heim, 2016), where the relationship is described as either bi-directional and layered with different assumptions and expectations (Bennett, 2003); or policed and restrictive (Sedgman, 2018); or, as Heim describes it, as “an encounter between two troupes”, one troupe being the actors on stage and the second troupe being an expressive audience (Heim, 2016, p. 176). The performer–audience relationship within Novel-Burlesque also differs from that between patrons and strippers in strip clubs, which is just as complex. Leipe-Levison describes the stripper–patron relationship as a “form of active, dialogic conversations within the cultural imposition of sexual ‘normalcy’” (Leipe-Levison, 2002, p. 183). This description could be used to describe the Novel-Burlesque performer–audience relationship; however, due to the different intentions of the stripper–patron relationship and the fact that it is focused solely on sexual arousal and pleasure this description does not adequately articulate the performer–audience relationship within Novel-Burlesque .

As in 1. Literature Review I propose that the defining feature of the performer–audience relationship within Novel-Burlesque is the dialogic gaze – an oscillating multi-directional exchange that does not remove power or agency but in fact gives these to participants through mutual consent, appreciation, respect, vulnerability, and trust. By combining Bakhtin’s multi-directional exchange and relatability in relation to

language (1990) with Bohm, Factor, and Garrett's "in dialogue" theory where a group of people together and individually investigate presuppositions, ideas, beliefs, and feelings that subtly control their interactions, I propose that these two theories can be applied to Novel-Burlesque and the dialogic gaze. As an event and a space, both physically and metaphorically, Novel-Burlesque "provides an opportunity to participate in a process that displays communication successes and failures." (1999). Through exploring these additional theories and understandings I was able to articulate the Novel-Burlesque performer-audience relationship that I had experienced, in terms that went beyond existing terms and concepts within the literature on Burlesque, including Buszek's "awareishness" (1999), Dodds' "accumulative spatio-temporal exchange" (2013, p. 76) and Nally's "theatrical democratisation" (2009).

Throughout my investigation I observed performers using the Burlesque script (see 1. Literature Review, 2. Practice Review, and 3. Development of Practice) as a short cut to achieving a relationship with the audience and this is often how the dialogic gaze begins. What enables the relationship between the performer and audience to develop with relative ease is the pantomime nature of the Burlesque script. The safety of the panto-style 'call and response' relationship, along with the hyper-awareness of the audience and the performers, enables an immediate aural and kinetic energy to flow back and forth between stage and auditorium. This aural response (whooping and cheering) is seen most commonly with vernacular routines, but the energy and exchange of attentiveness in a quiet audience is usually seen with virtuoso routines (see 2. Practice Review). For the performer, there is no delay in receiving feedback because the audience are encouraged to show appreciation right away by the compere at the beginning of the event. There is an emphasis on the 'live', immediate, and intimate nature of the event where all thresholds are permeable. The call-and-response feedback loop easily includes the audience as part of the performative journey the performer invites them on. Having established this communicative relationship with the audience, the performer can go on to develop the relationship further, thereby creating the dialogic gaze. As audience member Ash identified, there is a "specific connectedness in that moment" which the audience returns to the performer (interview, 2016). This connectedness captivates the audience and encourages the dialogic gaze, but it also breaks down potentially

negative gazes, such as voyeurism, shifting the perception of the performer from potential sex object to “sexy subject” who has agency (Lintott & Irving, 2015; Sally, 2009). Lintott and Irving argue that ‘sexiness’ can (and should) go beyond the purely aesthetic, and branch out to include and acknowledge the whole person, their agency, and their reality without their being subjected to an external other’s (usually male) fantasy; as a result, I propose that, thanks to the dialogic gaze, Novel-Burlesque can be an enactment of Lintott and Irving’s theory, with its exchange of vulnerability, energy, power, and trust. It is the use and manipulation of the Burlesque script in the moment, by the performer, that takes the relationship beyond the script and creates the potential for the dialogic gaze.

Describing herself as a “feedback whore” (interview, 2017) in interview, performer Rubyyy Jones (see 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust) delights in hearing and seeing the audience and knowing that their performance is having an effect on them. Jones is fully aware there is a power in returning the audience’s gaze back to them: “This is no longer you watching, this is us dancing” (interview, Rubyyy Jones, 2017). This is a collaboration between performer and audience. Jones may have chosen the topic and started the journey, but the audience are fully involved and participating. Just as Jones screams at them, they scream and whoop back. The dynamism Jones exudes during this routine energises the audience and is, in turn, fed back to Jones. The immediacy of this live encounter and interaction between performer and audience is achieved not only through the returned gaze but also through the energy that circulates back and forth between the audience and performer without depletion or reduction.

Having worked professionally in conventional theatre as well as Novel-Burlesque, in interview Jones refers to a traditional theatre-going audience as “passive voyeurs” who absorb the action, whilst a Novel-Burlesque audience are “active voyeurs” who participate in the action (interview, 2017). Jones suggests that Novel-Burlesque is “an unpredictable art form” due to the audience engagement; therefore, the performer needs to be able to gauge the atmosphere and balance their own vulnerability, control, and freedom when emotionally connecting and performing a routine (interview, 2017). Their exposure and spontaneity during performance produces “real movements of emotions” (interview, 2017) that viscerally connect with

the audience. In doing this, particularly with their repertoire of Neo-Burlesque politically provocative routines (see 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust), Rubyyy explained that a performer like themselves connects with an audience emotionally, and continues to maintain this developing relationship and energy whilst performing onstage (interview, 2017). There is a sense here that the dichotomy between traditional theatre and Novel-Burlesque taps into a long-held debate between actors and performers (Shevtsova, 2014). Actors carefully craft and follow someone else's script and direction, whereas the performer draws from more personal and immediate inspirations because the material performed is their own and can be spontaneous in the moment of creation. Louise Peacock compares the actor with the clown performer:

Whilst an actor is aware of what he is doing, he cannot be aware that he is aware ... the clown has to be aware that he is aware, as it is this awareness that facilitates a direct communication with the audience. (2009, p. 11)

This also echoes Boal's Spect-Actor and Joker from his Forum Theatre (Boal, 2000; see 1. Literature Review). I propose that every Novel-Burlesque performer has an element of the clown performer, the trickster, due to the nature of their "awareishness" (Buszek, 1999), even if they are not performing outright comedy. Therefore, the Novel-Burlesque performer is able to interact and communicate directly with their audience on many levels – for example, the individual, the persona, the character in the routine – making for a more complex relationship with the audience. Similarly, in respect of the audiences, a traditional theatre audience sits, pays attention, enjoys, shows appreciation, and leaves, whilst Novel-Burlesque audiences are encouraged by the compere to interact with the performers and each other during the performance, and to have discussions and debates during the interval and after the show with the performers. Through this engagement the Novel-Burlesque event is, therefore, more participatory. Whilst a Novel-Burlesque performer has an additional level of awareness in comparison with an actor, likewise, the Burlesque audience has an additional level of awareness and engagement, and, as a result, a trickster space can be created. This idea is further developed over the next two chapters.

This awareness and responsiveness of the performer's interaction with the audience is an important quality of the dialogic gaze. A crafted Burlesque script routine can enable the bond to begin, but the work of maintaining the relationship is the responsibility of both performer and audience. It is in the moments of deviation from the choreography where the dialogic gaze is experienced at its richest. As a way to further unpack this aspect of the dialogic gaze, I will discuss the practice of Perle Noire as an exemplar of this use of and deviation from the Burlesque script in Classic routines.

As a performer, Perle Noire prefers not to rehearse in the space before a performance but to respond to the audience and the live nature of the performance in the moment (information I learnt after seeing her perform). Consequently, although there is choreography of a sort, unlike other performers' routines Noire's routine is not set to the music. Because she knows the music, her body, and her ability to adapt and improvise, Noire's performances are able to be fully responsive to the audience and the environment around her. As such, her use of the dialogic gaze is essential to her performances and creates a strong relationship with her audience.

In Detail: Perle Noire

To analyse how Noire demonstrates and uses the dialogic gaze to create emotional connections and shared experiences with her audiences I will reference my audience reflections and performer and audience interviews, as well as other source material such as web-workshops (Noire, 2019; Burlesque Bible, Autumn, 2016). I will also analyse Noire's offering of vulnerability, which elicits trust between herself and the audience. Please also see Appendix 14: Performer Links, where footage of Noire's routines can be accessed.



Figure 32. Perle Noire performing 'Boudoir Fantasy' and 'Jade Fantasy', HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.

Award-winning Perle Noire, the 'Mahogany Queen of Burlesque', was the international headliner for HBBF *Festival Gala* 2016. She performed two Classic routines that had very different types of energy: the pink 'Boudoir Fantasy' and the fan dance 'Jade Fantasy' (see Figure 31). Both of her routines were a journey of complex subtle emotions: 'Jade Fantasy' was a fan dance that was fierce and feisty, "a journey of self-discovery, of her worth, of her autonomy, of her own desire" (reflective writing, 2016), whilst 'Boudoir Fantasy' was a softer more sensual and tender routine, "the first steps of falling in love" (reflective writing, 2016). The HBBF *Festival Gala* 2016 was held at Todmorden Town Hall (for the first time, due to flooding at their usual venue – see Figure 32), which is a large Victorian hall with a low stage at one end and rows of chairs on the floor, and a balcony with raised seating. There were approximately five hundred audience members comprising locals, nomadic visitors, industry professionals, Popular Burlesque fans, and Burlesque 'virgins'. The *Festival Gala* is the highlight of the entire festival and audience members dress up for it in their most extravagant attire.



Figure 33. (top) Velma Von Bon Bon and (bottom) Lady Wildflower onstage at Todmorden Town Hall HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.

'Boudoir Fantasy' began with Noire onstage with her back to the audience, wearing a pink chiffon peignoir; we were able to see the outline of her figure and rhinestones on her lingerie as they caught the light. Turning around slowly, she allowed us to look at her, and take her in, as she did the same with us, looking directly at us. She softly reached out to us with both hands, looking at the audience – acknowledging us and engaging us in her exploration. One hand found the other hand, caressing her arm. Noire's eyes closed, enjoying the touch. This tenderness was felt and enjoyed,

and I imagined how it would feel to be touched like that. She was a conduit allowing these emotions and experiences to be felt by me. There was a sensuality and strength in her presence onstage. Her 'dialogic gaze' was bountiful and caring. There was a pleasure in the delicate slowness she showed that contrasted with the rest of the evening, which was a line-up that mixed Burlesque comedy with circus skills. I was witnessing something, someone, special; therefore, I too was special, for being there to witness and partake in its creation onstage. I wrote in my journal that evening: "When she looked at you, I know rationally she probably wasn't looking at me or anyone else in the audience in particular, but you felt special, as if this was all for you." (reflective writing, 2016). She always looked back at the audience, not to check we were still with her but because she cared about us, and she was responding to us (see Figure 33). The audience around me were divided into those who sat in silent awe (showing the usual response for a virtuoso routine) and those who could not contain their enjoyment and whooped occasionally (the response to a vernacular routine).

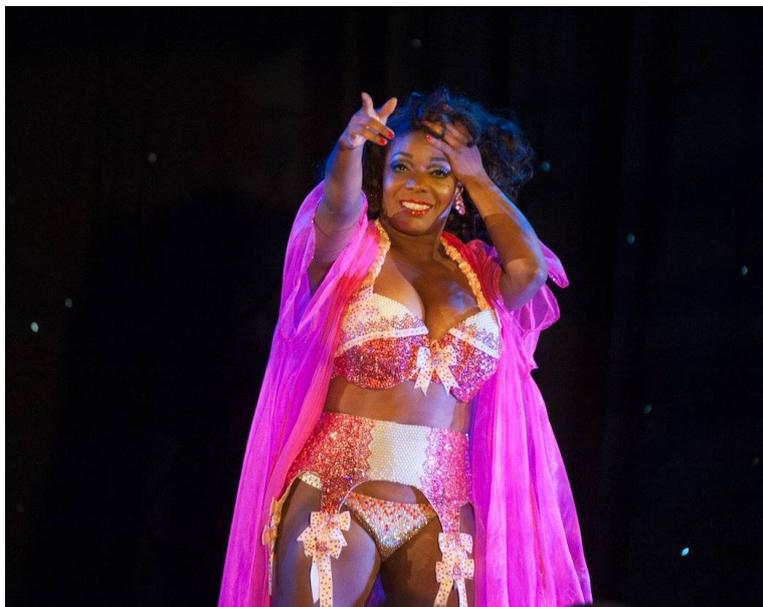


Figure 34. Perle Noire performing 'Boudoir Fantasy', HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.

Noire punctured this slow sensuality with a rough sauciness as the routine ramped up in energy and pace. Swirling in the chiffon peignoir, playing with it as it floated around her, teasing the audience with what could be seen and what could not; watching Noire perform I reflected in my journal that I felt "I was witnessing the first intoxication of love, the losing of oneself, fear of incompleteness or total surrender,

the strength to be vulnerable and generous.” (reflective writing, 2016). Noire conjured these emotions and feelings in me, and having talked to others in the audience (interview, Miss Glory Pearl, 2016; interview, Ash, 2016; and interview, Wonderful Ginger, 2016) I know that I was not alone, and through her performance I experienced them as she experienced them onstage.



Figure 35. Perle Noire performing 'Boudoir Fantasy', HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.

In interview, performer Miss Glory Pearl, who was an audience member for Noire's performance, referred to what I propose is Noire's dialogic gaze as "a definite exchange of energy in the room", which she likened to that of a comedy show:

I do a comedy show and I create an energy in the room and hold that. A good performer does that. But it almost feels like Perle Noire is throwing, liberally throwing out amazing energy into the room and that comes from a position of power essentially but what I like about her is there is also a softness to it and a vulnerability to it. (interview, 2016)

The focus of her energy can be witnessed in her gaze that always returned to us, the audience; however, it was also more than her awareness of us. She responded and anticipated the audience's needs in the moment. Noire never allowed us, the audience, to become complacent. Even though we knew the Burlesque script to be followed, Noire's use of it, together with her almost total abandonment of set choreography, enabled her to be spontaneous and more attentive to the audience.

This constant communication with the audience, the dialogic gaze, was vital to Noire's performance (see Figures 34 and 35).



Figure 36. Perle Noire performing 'Boudoir Fantasy', HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com

The moment was electric when Noire stepped off the stage for the first time in 'Boudoir Fantasy'. The audience was very aware of the absence of the fourth wall because performers had crossed it earlier in the evening. However, Noire's crossing felt different. There was a sharp intake of breath. When she came amongst us, she removed any semblance of the ethereal untouchability or distance that can be created in virtuoso routines or by her contemporary Dita Von Teese (discussed in detail further on), who appears awe-inspiringly aloof and detached. This was a moment of explicit generosity and trust. Noire had creatively and physically exposed herself onstage as an offering for the audience, and then gave more. In her own words: "I allow myself to be a gift to the audience and I show my imperfections ... It's the vulnerability that draws people to me when I am performing" (Noire, 2016, p. 10). This statement mirrors one of my journal entries:

It was beyond just sex or sauciness or entertainment, it felt like Perle was giving something of herself to us and we had to look after and protect it with our lives – And we would! (reflective writing, 2016)

As a result, the audience accepted this and took it very much to heart; trust was developed and later enacted, when a photographer became an obstacle in Noire's second improvised routine.



Figure 37. Perle Noire performing 'Jade Fantasy', HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.

During her second routine, 'Jade Fantasy' (see Figure 36), Noire crossed the stage threshold again (see Figures 36, 37, and 38). However, this time a photographer refused to move whilst she performed in the centre aisle and towards the back of the auditorium (ensuring every audience member was included in the performance). Up until this point the audience had been sharing the experience with each other, but mostly as individuals who were part of a collective (Figures 37 and 38). In that moment, the whole audience was galvanised, tuned into Noire's need to perform in a certain way for them; they all had one goal – to protect Noire's vision and gift of herself. In contrast, the photographer lacked this awareness; perhaps because he was viewing through a lens, he was not experiencing the performance as a dialogue and was therefore not a part of the communication. Undeterred, Noire continued her path and the audience made space for her by moving chairs and themselves; this activity and Noire's determination signalled to the photographer that he needed to move. After he hastily retreated, Noire rewarded us with the splits and a whirlwind of dance moves. The audience were visibly unified with Noire in this moment (Figure 38). Performer Velma Von Bon Bon noted that in Burlesque the "audience is such a key element for everything" and when they share a moment of "complicité with each other ... the audience are like a team, and they're all in it together" (interview, 2017).

As with all live performance, the audience is aware that anything can happen, particularly in Novel-Burlesque, yet in this moment of overt improvisation on Noire's part, the audience had a heightened awareness of her journey. Perle Noire and the audience had created and maintained a relationship, and an environment, that enabled this moment of complicité and unity.



Figure 38. Perle Noire performing 'Jade Fantasy', HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestrmillar.com.

Noir's performances demonstrate that her liberal use of the dialogic gaze not only encouraged the audience to respond vocally (whoops and cheers), but also increased their trust in her to the point of creating a community effort. As an audience-researcher, I felt swept up in her emotion, her dance, her journey, as she was able to interweave her routines, moving between virtuoso and vernacular styles. Through the unfiltered, responsive, and spontaneously vulnerable experience offered by Noire, she became the audience's conduit to experiencing her truth and her journey onstage as she performed. Noire trusted that the audience would be receptive to her performance and her vulnerability onstage, and that the audience would be respectful as she stepped off the stage during her routine. Over the course of these two routines, Noire united the audience and, less overtly, developed mutual trust between them and her.



Figure 39. Perle Noire performing 'Jade Fantasy', HBBF Festival Gala 2016. Photography: jamestmillar.com.

Performer Miss Glory Pearl stated: "Watching people like Perle, you feel something and that to me is powerful and that to me shows Burlesque has value as a genre" (interview, 2016). I have experienced other performers who, like Noire, exposed their vulnerability from a position of strength, and generously offered it to the audience: Havana Hurricane, Tronicat Le Meiz, Raven Noir, and Eliza Delight, to name a few. Havana Hurricane also exudes generosity and energy when performing onstage ('Shake 'n' Quake' routine, *Wildvixen's BHoF Extravaganza*, 2016; and 'Super Vixen' routine, *Legends in the Making* HBBF, 2016). Hurricane's dialogic gaze differs from Noire's because it is as infectious as it is vivacious. With a coy smile directed towards the audience whilst teasingly removing her gloves with her teeth, finger by finger, Hurricane draws in the audience with joyous energy. However, both performers (as well as the others mentioned) display a purity of truth and experience onstage that the audience experiences and feels. They are in that moment with the audience, opening up to them and giving them their full attention. Consequently, the audience are more easily able to connect emotionally with them, strengthening the dialogic gaze and the relationship created and maintained throughout the performance.

Due to Noire's generosity of energy, creativity, and vulnerability through her autonomy, we were unable to objectify her in terms of voyeurism. She did not become a sexual object for our consumption and titillation. Noire was powerful and

gave us an experience. The care and attention she showed towards the audience whilst performing created and maintained, through the dialogic gaze, a strong emotional connection and allowed a trusting relationship to form. The audience's power lay in witnessing her and giving her the space in which to offer her vulnerability, and in sharing the experience with her. Noire trusted the audience with the gift of her self, and they returned trust back to her. Thanks to her generosity of self onstage and the fierceness of the support from the audience, this transitional moment created a unifying togetherness that was breathless and exquisite to experience as we journeyed through her routines.

In Detail: Dita Von Teese

Dita's own self-produced, internationally touring show, *The Art of the Teese*, has very little diversity, with most stage time being weighted towards the slim white female retro-sexual Classic Burlesque performers typical of Popular Burlesque. In *The Art of the Teese* (October 2018) three out of six performers were slim white women: Dita Von Teese, Ginger Valentine, and Gia Genevieve; the other performers were: one plus-size white female performer (Dirty Martini); a slim black female performer (Zelia Rose); and a white muscular male performer (Jet Adore); because Dita performed four routines in the show, only three of the nine routines were performed by people other than slim white women. All the routines were Classic in genre with almost all of them being a feature routine (see 2. Practice Review; or Glossary), using huge props or gimmicks. These routines were perfect for the opulence of the venue, The London Palladium, giving the audience a sense of occasion and luxury. At this sold-out show, that has a seating capacity of approximately two thousand three hundred, the audience was a mix of Novel-Burlesque locals, nomads, Popular Burlesque-goers and Burlesque 'virgins', as Dita Von Teese and her headline performer line-up attract newcomers and fans alike.

In Von Teese's performance that evening, she exuded an untouchable decadence that I, as an audience member, was in awe of. Her theatrical craft in creating spectacle is breathtaking; however, I felt very little connection with her in comparison

with the connection I felt to the other performers; there were several reasons for this difference, notably her not employing a dialogic gaze.

One reason for this disconnection was Dita's use of her 'Vontourage' (two highly trained male dancers), who undressed her in almost every single routine (see promotion videos of the show in Appendix 14: Performer Links). These lavish and decadent scenarios depicted fabulously unattainable fantasies for the audience, and relied on huge expense and the agency of others to assist Dita (the Vontourage removing her clothing). By removing her clothes for her, the Vontourage removed any onstage depiction of Dita's own agency or control over her situation, the only exception being an occasional languid hand gesture from her. Because there was little acknowledgement of the audience's responses, a fourth wall was created, and I felt detached from the action rather than participating in it. The audience was not necessary to the scenarios being played out and consequently, in comparison with other performers I had witnessed, both that evening and elsewhere, I felt isolated.

However, during her 'Swan Lake' routine Dita physically took more control of the space by teasing the audience without assistance from the Vontourage. At the very end of the routine, she looked directly at us, adjusted her fishnet stockings under her buttocks, tapped them to illustrate their plumpness and smiled at the audience. In my reflections after the show, I wrote of this moment:

When she looked out at the audience, it felt like a window had opened between me and her, however I didn't feel invited into her fantasy. I felt I was put in my place to watch in awe and wonder ... It felt like that one moment she actually showed us a little of her actual personality, a little playfulness.
(reflective writing, 2018)

The impact of this moment was starkly felt in comparison with the rest of her performance. This insight behind the perfectly constructed glamour was tantalising yet also disappointing, because it was a small moment that had a relatively much greater impact than the rest of her routine. The potential for a connection between the audience and performer was there briefly; however, an exchange, and therefore a reciprocal relationship, was never established, despite the Burlesque script being played through very beautifully. I became a consensual voyeur because Dita placed

me in that position by her lack of acknowledgement of me; this was ‘consent’, because she expected and wanted my presence as an audience member. She anticipated my enjoyment without wanting to engage with it and with me as an audience. I was in the position either of an audience seeing traditional theatre or of a punter watching a peep show. From that position, I did not find the same enjoyment I find from watching other Burlesque performers, because of the lack of engagement. If it were not live entertainment, I could have been watching a Golden Age of Hollywood film.

I was not alone in this assessment. One audience member commented, saying: “Well she [Dita] is no Bettie Bon Bon” (impromptu conversation, 2018) referring to a Burlesque performer in London who uses the dialogic gaze in performance to playfully include her audience. Performer Vanity Dare tends to agree: “I don’t actually think of Dita as a Burlesque heroine. She’s a model, a commercial figure, and an extremely successful businesswoman – but not in the league of (performers) Perle (Noir), Dirty (Martini) etc.” (impromptu conversation, 2018). Perle Noire and Dirty Martini have both been in *The Art of the Teese* line-up. On the night I attended, Dirty Martini was performing alongside Dita Von Teese. Like Noire and Dirty, as Arabella Twist I take pride and pleasure in measuring and controlling the tease and in playing with the audience’s response as though the audience were the lover, or wished to be the performer themselves.

Neo-Burlesque performer Rubyyy Jones acknowledges Von Teese’s accomplishments, but notes:

[Von Teese] has cleared the way for some possibilities of growth. But where my criticism lies is that I worry about what sort of sanitising and standardising and narrowing that she’s impacted on the industry, and how much we have to work to prove to people that that’s not all Burlesque is.

(interview, Rubyyy Jones, 2017)

These concerns are not Jones’s alone. The lack of diversity shown onstage at Popular Burlesque events that are produced to mirror Dita Von Teese’s own success, depicting, in fantasy contexts, narrow retro-nostalgic values concerning the performers (slim white able-bodied young women), results in the viewers being

distanced from the performers and, therefore, potentially enables objectification and voyeurism. The Dita-effect has elevated this specific style of vintage Classic Burlesque, and this impacts upon all Contemporary Burlesque by further attributing value and quality to the costume styling rather than to the quality and execution of the performance.

Everything was meticulously staged for the ultimate visual spectacle, which was stunning yet out of reach, including Dita herself. Arguably, in being so precisely perfect in the creation, Dita becomes the very two-dimensional thing Burlesque as a genre was originally, historically, lampooning and satirising. With very little acknowledgement of or engagement with the audience through the dialogic gaze, there is minimal political, critical, feminist, questioning of female sexuality and power in Dita's performance; her show, therefore, is dangerously close to depicting an objectified retro-sexual retro-nostalgic misogynistic stereotype of female sexuality that leads feminist discourses, such as that of Siebler (2014) and others, to be critical of the art form (Levy, 2005; Walters, 2010).

Creating, Experiencing and Interpreting the Dialogic Gaze

The interpretation of a routine by the audience cannot be dictated. However, due to the way a Novel-Burlesque event is produced, there are several elements that strengthen and aid the dialogic gaze that is created between the performer and the audience. The absence of the 'fourth wall' allows the performer to cross over either physically, or subtly through direct eye contact with the audience. This blurred boundary allows the performer to be aware of their own performance, the context, and the audience, enacting Buszek's "awareishness" (1999), and therefore the performer's autonomy. Other opportunities (as discussed in detail in 2. Practice Review) are then opened up, with the compere guiding the audience through the event and encouraging their participation, giving clarity with reference to consent and respect. In addition, the producer's juxtaposition of different types of performance material and different performers in the line-up results in the audience being constantly alert and engaged, creating a shared experience that involves everyone. These are factors that aid the creation and development of the dialogic gaze

between the performer and the audience, in that they form a framework for the maintenance of this relationship.

The dialogic gaze reduces the potential for abuse through voyeurism or for the removal of agency at a Burlesque show. However, as Miss Glory Pearl pointed out, a performer cannot prevent an audience member from obtaining sexual titillation (even if that was not the performer's intent) from a performance:

We objectify people all the time and it is ridiculous to say that just because I am stripping, I will be sexualised, or I am sexualising myself. Yeah, sure some people are going to see me like that, and some aren't, and actually it's out of your control what people have taken from your show. (interview, 2016)

At an event where I performed as Arabella Twist, a group of men had clearly come with the intent of being voyeurs. An audience member said after a show: "Some people wanted naked ladies, but they weren't given the opportunity to see it that way. You performers [Arabella Twist included] demanded respect and attention from them" (July 2018). The men in question had bought tickets for a 'stag do', and were clearly looking for strippers. However, these men appeared to really enjoy the show once they realised that this was not the evening of entertainment they had been expecting. During the evening their attitude changed. They were no longer voyeurs. They quickly realised that they were also on view and the performers would respond as they saw fit, rather than solely for their pleasure. To extend Lintott and Irvin's theory, everyone, both audience and performer alike, within the Novel-Burlesque event is viewed as both sex object and sexy subject (2015), or as Dr Lynn Sally quotes from Carole Schneemann, "an image and image maker" (2009).

In interview, performers Velma Von Bon Bon, Rusty Von Chrome, and Rubyyy Jones highlighted the power balance that is at play in Novel-Burlesque, and how it relates to voyeurism. Velma Von Bon Bon: "What we do isn't voyeurism because we invite the audience to watch, otherwise it wouldn't be a show." (interview, 2017). She emphasised the importance of seeing the audience's gaze as an exchange, whilst also acknowledging that consent is a key factor in removing the term 'voyeurism' from Contemporary Burlesque. Recognising what may appear societally unusual, Rusty Von Chrome articulates: "[Audience] This is very strange, I'm allowed to look.

[Performer] You can look – we are letting you look”, and continues: “In Burlesque you demand attention ... whereas stripping, the voyeur demands the attention.” (interview, 2016). There is a power shift within Novel-Burlesque that performers identify – the performer’s consent undermines the potential power grab that is experienced with voyeurism.

However, from a performance-based perspective and reflection, I would argue that the power does not lie solely with either one party or another in Novel-Burlesque. The ‘dialogic’ aspect of the dialogic gaze is the constant moving of focus and power from one participant to another. My debut performance as Arabella Twist highlighted how the dialogic gaze aided in the creation of community and shared experience; I wrote:

This immediacy of feedback [during but also] after the performance I felt was an extension of the performance and added to the dialogic gaze and to the sense of community. We were sharing an experience that united everyone in that space. (reflective writing, 2017)

The dialogic gaze transformed the usually segregated ‘them and us’ relationship between performer and audience into a collective ‘our’ experience. In interview, performer Velma Von Bon Bon describes this as “complicité” (interview, 2016) and brings us back to Jones’s “this is us dancing” (interview, 2017), in the moment and connected. Admittedly, both power and focus are weighted towards the performer onstage, but they are willingly shared and constantly in motion, oscillating back and forth. The maintenance of this connection with the audience through the dialogic gaze, as well as other factors (see 2. Practice Review) that are curated at Novel-Burlesque shows, enables a shared experience, as seen in the case of Perle Noire, and is discussed in more detail in chapter 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust.

For my first investigation I wanted to see how the Burlesque script facilitated the dialogic gaze. Perle Noire’s experience and professionalism as a performer allows her to improvise very freely with the Burlesque script. However, most Burlesque performers I have observed have set pieces of choreography, and for my first Burlesque performance I felt it would be good to start with some sort of framework to

push against and deviate from. So, as Arabella Twist I debuted 'Cruella Wants it All' on 4 March 2017 at *Lady Wildflower Presents The Frou Frou Club*, at Hebden Bridge Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge.

In Detail: Arabella Twist

It was integral to my methodology to perform at the venues and events in which I had experienced Novel-Burlesque as an audience-researcher, in order to understand the relationship and dialogic gaze from the performer's perspective in as similar a context as possible. When onstage as the performer Arabella Twist, I responded and reacted to the audience who were reacting to my performance. In doing this I experienced the resonating and vibrating of the physical dialogue that was taking place. In the following text I quote from my reflections on my performance experiences as well as quoting from audience responses to my performances. To view video footage of my routines please see Appendix 14: Performer Links.

As a Neo-Burlesque performance, Arabella Twist's routines question contemporary society. Consequently, as a Neo-Burlesque 'alternative contemporary' performer I am often billed alongside a comedian compere, two Classic Burlesque performers (one of whom is often the event producer), a singer or musician, and, depending on the number of performers, another performer who presents a circus or variety skill.

My routine 'Cruella Wants it All' was created to explore the dialogic gaze using the Burlesque script and the STRIP formula – Suggest, Tease, Reveal/Remove, Interact, Present (workshop, Lady Wildflower, 2016; for a detailed analysis, see 3. Development of Practice) – as a prompt and as a base line for further investigation. Playing towards my strengths in theatrical storytelling, and using the opportunity to perform outside my casting type, I chose to perform as the villain Cruella de Vil.

The routine opened with the Disney theme tune "Cruella de Vil" by Dr John. I entered the stage as Cruella, swinging a swag bag, which, when the music changes to "I Want it All" by Queen, is revealed as containing a dalmatian puppy. I enacted the

character's fantasy of capturing, and in her excitement killing, a dalmatian puppy. Desiring to feel the fur against my skin I, as Cruella, needed to remove my clothes. As Cruella, I enjoyed the audience's attention; I was drawn towards them. Like Noire, I constantly made eye contact to make sure they were watching me and were with me, showing them myself and the indulgent pleasure I gained from the puppy's fur and, later, death.

The routine explores themes of perfectionism and desire. Usually, in a routine that follows the Burlesque script the final reveal is the huge climax; however, I altered this to separate out the Burlesque climax (tassel twirling – see Figure 40) from the narrative climax (the killing of the puppy – see Figure 39). The narrative climax of the routine happens over half-way through, when Cruella kills the puppy; only then does she remove her clothes to feel the fur, revel in the excitement, and reveal a dalmatian G-string and tassel twirling.



Figure 40. Narrative script climax: killing the puppy, 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).



Figure 41. Burlesque script climax: tassel twirling and revealing dalmatian G-string, 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

When performing the routine, I frequently look at the audience and back to my action not only to make sure that they know exactly what I am thinking and feeling, but also to gauge their responses. There are specific moments where I lock eyes with one audience member (e.g., second glove removal) and perform an action just for them, making them feel special. At other times, I look out into the audience using Dirty Martini's technique (2016) of imagining them collectively as a person in front of me and looking at different parts of them – their chest is the front row, their lips are the middle of the stalls, their eyes are the back of the auditorium, hair line the balcony, and top of their head the back of the balcony or the gallery. This ensured that even if the lights were blinding me onstage, I was able to give equal attention to the whole audience. If I could not see them due to the stage lights, I could, nevertheless, feel their gaze, hear their appreciation, and feel their energy and attention. After performing my debut at *The Frou Frou Club* I wrote:

The more I [eyeballed the different parts of the audience] actually felt the eyes on me, it felt like the whoops and cheers became more responsive to my actions rather than the general feeling of support and generosity I received when I first walked out. I began to enjoy the performance more as this response was now in conversation with myself and felt focused and meaningful to my performance and actions. As such I responded in a more

exuberant manner, I eyeballed the (semi-) darkness, bit my lip at individuals.
(reflective writing, 2017)

By using these eye-contact and body-language techniques during my performance, to engage as many people as possible, Arabella was able to make the whole audience feel included and special. Everyone was part of the journey, the collective dialogue, and the shared experience (see 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust).

As mentioned earlier in 2. Practice Review, the framing of a performer's routine by the compere is vital in establishing how the performer–audience relationship begins. If it is done badly or expectations are not managed well by the compere, this can result in the performer having to work harder to get the audience on the same journey as them. When I performed my first routine, 'Cruella Wants it All', for my examination performance (8 December 2019) the audience's enthusiasm was overflowing but unfocused. Jonathan Mayor had wrangled their attention but not their focus. I had to connect and focus them quickly by using the Burlesque script and make sure that my eye contact landed with the audience and was specific, so that I did not lose their attention. By the time I came to rip the dog's head off, I was in harmony with the audience; we had built our dialogic gaze through the Burlesque script, an oscillating exchange, and had started to create trust in each other. At this point in the routine the relationship was also impacted by a prop malfunction that changed the narrative pacing of the routine because the confetti cannon did not explode at the right time (the ripping off of the dog's head), so stage manager Paula decided to let it off at the final reveal, therefore meaning that the audience reacted to the narrative in a more subdued manner during the routine whilst more emphasis was placed on the final climax and reveal. This alteration caused me to have to improvise in my audience engagement in order to ramp-up tension to the final reveal of tassel twirling. We began to work together, performer and audience enjoying this partially improvised, partially choreographed journey by maintaining and developing a mutually trusting relationship, as the routine came to an end.

Due to the influence of a number of factors – the slight mis-framing of my routine in relation to Christmas expectations, audience drinking and demographic, my prop

malfunction causing changes to the pacing of the routine and necessitating more improvisation – the routine I did during the examination performance (8 December 2019) highlighted and reinforced my understanding of how fragile the dialogic gaze can be in terms of developing mutual trust and vulnerability. It was through knowing my routine material thoroughly and trusting in my ability to perform that I was able to improvise and explore ways of capturing the audience’s focus, holding it, and developing and then maintaining a relationship with them by doing this. (This is similar to performer Perle Noire, who trusts in her knowledge of the music, her costume, and her body, as well as in her ability to respond and improvise in the moment onstage with the audience.) I had learnt these skills from my previous performances, in particular at Manchester Pride (2017), Barefoot Festival (2019), and *Peel of Fortune* (2019).

Every moment of ‘Cruella Wants it All’ is choreographed using the Burlesque script, and each action has an emotion I would like the audience to feel or to know that I am feeling. For example, my first glove removal indicates frustration, leading to desire whilst caressing the puppy; in contrast, the second glove removal, which is playful, leads to sexual arousal on feeling the fur cape. I communicate this to the audience through my facial expressions, body language, and the way in which I engage with props, costume, and particular audience members.

I was able to deviate from the choreography and improvise, knowing that certain points were unmovable, to make sure the routine kept its intended narrative. ‘Ad-libbing’ and improvising, using the choreography as a framework, was made easier when the venue space allowed me, the performer, to walk amongst the audience. For example, during a performance for Manchester Pride (2017), after revealing and showing the dog to the audience, I allowed an audience member to stroke it. I wrote in my reflections: “As she did, I made the dog jump at her using an old puppetry trick, making an inanimate object come unexpectedly to life.” (reflective writings, 2017). It was a risk: she could have pulled its head off or it could have fallen off in the audience, the entire routine was vulnerable at that point. Audience interaction is always unpredictable, as performer Meena Helvetia experienced (Barefoot Festival, 2019) when an audience member she had invited to remove her glove insisted on holding onto the costume item. This was his attempt to take control of Helvetia’s

narrative and remove her power. However, during my engagement with the audience at Manchester Pride (2017) it felt worth the risk:

She jumped back in her seat, which in turn made others jump around her. As Cruella, I laughed; as Arabella, I winked at her, as I caressed the dog.
(reflective writing, 2017)

In that moment, I deliberately chose to move outside of my routine structure and engage with the audience in an improvised interaction. As I played outside my choreography, I was given the opportunity to play with my identities as well. I could let the routine's character, Cruella, respond one way – the laugh – and Arabella, my Burlesque persona, respond another way – the wink. This in-the-moment decision was not a slipping of persona but a heightened awareishness and was a multi-faceted way of communicating something extra to the audience through the dialogic gaze. It was Arabella's commentary on the action, her personal touch, and an acknowledgement for the audience that is often left until the end of the routine. Rather than distancing myself (Willett, 1986), this additional commentary actually intensified the dialogic gaze, allowing for a more complex relationship between myself and the audience. As a result, the audience were willing to be playful with me, investing emotionally in a stuffed toy dalmatian puppy. The intensified dialogic gaze enabled trust to be built, earned, and held by both parties mutually respecting each other and the experience we created together.

This slipping *between* me, the persona, and the character was something I had taken for granted as an audience-researcher and I had not realised not only that I could use it to good effect, but also that it was very different from slipping *out* of persona. As audience-researcher, I had seen performers finish their routine, accept their applause, and, as they moved off stage (before they are concealed from the audience), drop their persona. The energy that kept the mutual dialogic gaze engaged and the power balance in tact would disappear at that moment. Consequently, the performer seemingly shrank inwards, which made it uncomfortable for me to watch. I wrote of one such experience in my journal:

The performer appeared to remember society's norms, that they are semi-naked, wrapping their arms around their body as though to protect them from

unwanted looks and shame. Cold and exposed, like a child or teenager at the swimming baths having just got out of the water. (reflective writing, 2016)

Of other similar experiences I wrote that this type of exit undermined the fabulous performances that had just taken place; they tainted the shared experience, as I did not wish to see the performer in a state of unconsenting vulnerability (audience observation, 2015, 2016, 2017). For those who wish to find voyeuristic opportunities and capitalise on them, a venue with a long walk back to the changing rooms can provide that potential. However, most performers keep these voyeuristic opportunities at bay, whenever they are in the view of the audience, by not removing their Burlesque persona, and by allowing their performative energy to create a personal space around them that demands respect.

As a way to explore improvisatory and character processes (as well as play with my persona) as part of the dialogic gaze, using my 'Cruella Wants it All' routine I took part in the *Tawny Kay Presents: Peel of Fortune* show (2019). The performers were given their running order by spinning the wheel of fortune once and then, on a second spin, received a forfeit in an envelope. This was all done in full view of the audience and included audience participation and suggestions, should the forfeit require it. The forfeits included: music mash up, audience suggestion, mystery prop, 'Magic Mike' lap dancing, duet, and using no hands. The idea was for the performer to try to perform their routine as closely as possible to the forfeit request. I was given 'reverse striptease' (meaning I had to start from the final reveal and put my clothes on) as my forfeit. For 'Cruella Wants it All' this meant that my choreography had to be abandoned and I had to rely heavily on the Burlesque script, on storytelling, and on my ability to improvise. This is the nearest I have come to fully improvising my performance (as Perle Noire does on every occasion). I started with the premise, 'What happens next?' After the dog is dead and Cruella has achieved her fantasy, what does she do? This led to an almost slapstick performance of Cruella on the run, trying to hide the murder and revive the dog (see Figure 41).



Figure 42. Reverse striptease for Peel of Fortune, 2019. Photography: John Utton.

What was interesting, however, was how much more reliant I was on the audience feedback to know whether I was entertaining them or not. The relationship I created with the audience felt raw and fluid as we were both learning from each other where this journey would take us, neither of us knowing the full outcome. It was an incredible experience of not being in full control, not relying on my crafted interactions and the audience's responses, but willingly relinquishing them to find a new path and narrative with the audience. Arabella, as a personality, came more to the forefront as she commented visually on what Cruella the character was attempting to do, giving the audience an occasional shrug when something did not work, a wink when an idea struck, or a smile when Cruella had successfully managed to put an item on. The relationship between myself and the audience was crucial, and the dialogic gaze was therefore so much more intense. When I performed a moment that the audience particularly enjoyed, it was like striking gold, as we were all on the same trajectory and of the same mind. For example, after attempting to scoop up the red confetti and put it back into the dog, frequently looking at the audience and trying to be seductive, but aware of the police, I then performed CPR on the dog, at which the audience roared with whoops and cheers (see Figure 42). It was exhilarating, and audience members who came to talk with me afterwards told me that they too had found the experience thrilling because what might happen next had truly been an unknown for both parties. One audience member told me "I knew you would nail it" (impromptu conversation, 2019). We

placed trust in each other that we were in the experience together whatever happened. Relinquishing control over the choreography placed me in an even more vulnerable position as the routine could have been an absolute disaster, but that was not what was important. During this show the emphasis was not on the slickness of the choreography or the polished quality of the routine but on the shared experience and connection with the audience, the creation and developing of something together.



Figure 43. Reverse striptease for Peel of Fortune, 2019. Photography: John Utton.

Conclusion

The dialogic gaze is an oscillating exchange between the performer and audience. Everyone in attendance participates and is therefore seen as both object and subject as power shifts back and forth, never leaving either participant. Everyone has agency and is consenting. Pushing Lintott and Irvin's theory further, everyone participating in Novel-Burlesque is a "sexy subject" (2005). Power is suspended and shaped between all in attendance as a form of energy or magnetism. This can be created using the call and response of the Burlesque script to develop a visual kinetic vocal and aural exchange typical of vernacular routines (see 2. Practice Review). It can also be created through a visual and kinetic energy exchange that is more akin to the experience of virtuoso routines. Importantly, the dialogic gaze is a

relationship that is maintained throughout the live performance and is based on trust and mutual vulnerability.

The call-and-response Burlesque script is a shortcut to establish a rapport between the performer and audience. However, it is the further use, manipulation, deviation, and maintenance of this relationship with the audience that creates the dialogic gaze. The performer's willingness to accept the 'live' situation of the moment with the audience, to improvise and divert from the Burlesque script, intensifies the dialogic gaze, because anything can happen when the moment is built together between performer and audience. There is potential for a heightened sense of connectivity and camaraderie when the performer does deviate from their choreography. The willingness and openness with which the performer invites the audience on their performative journey sets the framework for the vulnerability and trust to develop as part of the dialogic gaze and is different from 'just going through the motions' of the Burlesque script and choreographed routine.

The audience, too, display an extra layer of awareness and involvement beyond that of passive spectators, which is reinforced and encouraged by the constructs of the Burlesque event. They too display "awareishness" (Buszek, 1999). They are equally as responsible for the maintenance of the dialogic gaze as is the performer, and it is their attentiveness and involvement that supports the performer on the shared creative journey.

When improvising, I discovered that the splitting of performance identities added extra complexity and richness to the dialogic gaze and thereby intensified my relationship with the audience. There was both a mutual need and dependency upon each other to create the performative journey together. I was also able to slip between the character (Cruella) and the persona (Arabella) onstage, and therefore comment on my own performance and my interactions with the audience, which created more camaraderie with the audience.

These observations illustrate that the Burlesque performer–audience relationship is far deeper and more complex than critical literature on Contemporary Burlesque has previously described. It goes beyond the theories of Buszek's "awareishness"

(1999), Nally's "theatrical democracy" (2009), or Dodds' "spatio-temporal exchange" (2013), as mentioned in the literature review. The dialogic gaze involves more than an awareness, a democracy of power, and an exchange: it involves a presence in the moment, an emotional connection to the work and to the audience, and a willingness to be spontaneous, and it is dependent upon both performer and audience to create the performative moment together. The dialogic gaze that is used in the performer–audience relationship also requires mutual trust and vulnerability.

Emerging from this investigation into the dialogic gaze, I felt it was necessary to shift my focus towards vulnerability, attending particularly to the role vulnerability plays in the performer–audience relationship as part of the dialogic gaze, and how it is experienced by both performer and audience in Novel-Burlesque.

5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust

Using the richer and more deeply nuanced definition of vulnerability (see 1. Literature Review; and Glossary), this chapter focuses on vulnerability and the strategies that come out of the state of vulnerability in Novel-Burlesque. These strategies are performed and experienced by performers and audience members. From a place of vulnerability, the audience provoke the performer through their reactions and the attention they give to the performers; in turn the performers respond to the audience, and thus the dialogic gaze is developed further. Being provoked into, or accepting an offering of, a vulnerable state allows everyone involved to become open to experiences and understandings beyond their own perceptions. As the audience step outside their daily lives into Novel-Burlesque they offer their willingness and trust, and within this environment they are able to challenge themselves and the perceptions others have of them by being vulnerable, and by enacting and witnessing risqué acts.

Neo-Burlesque performer Rubyyy Jones is a key example of a performer using the dialogic gaze to push the audience into a state of vulnerability, curiosity, and unease. I examine their signature routine, 'Potty-mouth Princess', performed at Wildvixen's Burlesque Hall of Fame *Extravaganza Challenge* 2016, HBBF *Diversitease* 2016, HBBF *Festival Gala* 2017, and also their routine 'Tellinnng' performed at HBBF *Diversitease* 2017 (see Appendix 14: Performer Links). Jones provokes their audiences into a place of potential vulnerability by playing with the dialogic gaze and with taboo material to inform and explore the power balances onstage. As explored in the previous chapter, Noire (as a Classic Burlesque performer), demonstrates the baseline of Neo-Burlesque dialogism. From this basis, Jones challenges the Burlesque script and its formula, as do I as Arabella Twist. This chapter also examines the offering of self-as-a-gift, as both Jones and Noire do, and as I have explored in the creation of the routine 'Frida'.

In action, the dialogic gaze may elicit a trust that can be mutually experienced by those participating, creating a community both during and outside the time frame of the event. The extension of self-exploration and discovery into everyday life is encouraged. Vulnerability and trust are integral in the process of creating such an

environment. This can be seen in classes, at casual networking events, and in the way that audience members interact with each other at shows. These experiences of community will be critically analysed as were the performers' routines, as I draw upon all practice-as-research methodologies undertaken: audience-researcher reflections, audience interviews and comments, performer interviews and comments, and performer-researcher reflections. This chapter also examines how the community around Novel-Burlesque is built in what can be described as a trickster space, with its playing out of alternative narratives and diversity of participants; this is discussed in relation to trust and the revealing of disability in the following chapter: 6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability.

Employing the previously used funnelling technique, I first examine wider concepts and the global community before narrowing my frame to explore local events and communities, and finally focus on the performer–audience relationship by looking at the performers Rubyyy Jones and Arabella Twist.

The Creation of New Spaces and Communities – Trickster Space

As previously stated in the literature review, it is fairly well documented that from the 1800s music hall Burlesque, as illegitimate entertainment, offered a space for an unconventional narrative to be enacted, giving voice and opportunity to women in particular as well as to various minorities (Allen, 1991; see Introduction; and 1. Literature Review). At this time, women used performance as a medium with which to question and offer alternatives to societal norms, explore gender fluidity and sexual politics, and intellectually lampoon contemporary politics (Adams & Keene, 2012; Allen, 1991; Farson, 1972; Gillies, 1999; Greer Conklin, 1912; Hartley, 1875; Howe, 1992; Routledge, 1860). During that historical period (1800s to early 1900s) all these topics were considered off limits for women, which therefore made the performance, performers, and audience all the more vulnerable and scandalous. Many researchers (Dodds, 2013; Montgomery, 2013; Nally, 2009; Sally, 2009) agree that despite Popular Burlesque's mainstream dominance, Contemporary Burlesque still has the potential to give minority voices a platform.

In their writing, Butler highlights how people of minorities assemble to connect with one another to build a community and enact the changes they wish to see within society (2015). Within their work regarding ethnic minorities in the UK, the Black feminist writers M. NourbeSe Philip (2017), Sylvia Wynter (2000), and Sara Ahmed (2017), debate the need for new spaces to be created and new communities to be forged to offer true diversity and inclusivity. Wynter calls for an alternative “demonic space” (2000) where new rituals can be made away from societal judgement, which can potentially influence wider change within society. Augusto Boal proposed that theatre is the place for this dialogue to happen (1974). Suggesting that alternative narratives can be found through theatrical exploration, Boal’s Forum Theatre offers performance where the boundaries of actor and spectator are broken down and guided by an external player known as the ‘Joker’, who mediates this blurring of lines. Hyde’s ‘Trickster’ figure is known for uncovering silenced voices and opinions as well as deliberately provoking and challenging their audience and society (1998). As an art form, Burlesque incorporates many of the Trickster traits, and with all these theories in mind, I propose specifically that Novel-Burlesque is a ‘trickster space’ that holds the possibility for the enactment of new rituals and spaces, as Wynter desires. Where others have discussed Contemporary Burlesque in terms of Bakhtin’s carnival and carnivalesque (Montgomery, 2013; Nally, 2009; Sally, 2009) these terms fall short of my understanding and experience of Novel-Burlesque because ‘carnival’ has a set time frame in which it occurs and then stops (Bakhtin, 1984, 1999; Welsford, 1935; Willeford, 1969; and see 1. Literature Review). This trickster space goes beyond Bakhtin’s carnival and carnivalesque because, unlike with carnival, the alternatives enacted there can permeate beyond the prescribed time frame of the event. Regehr writes: “one of the goals of contemporary feminism is to ensure sexual agency, sexual health and the right to sexual exploration” (2012, p. 155). With the many entry points (books, films, workshops, and online forums) into Contemporary Burlesque for both professional and amateur performers, Regehr proposes that Novel-Burlesque’s supportive community and safe environment is a space in which this goal can be achieved. Novel-Burlesque as a trickster space is a produced environment that allows for debate, exploration, and the enactment of complex social and cultural interactions, highlighting voices and topics which might otherwise be marginalised or silenced.

The experiences and values that can be felt and learnt through Novel-Burlesque can and do infiltrate into everyday practice or life, beyond the specified time of the event. Vulnerability and trust are integral to the process of creating such an environment, as can be seen in classes, at casual networking events, and in the way that audience members interact with each other at shows; this is seen particularly on the rare occasion that things go wrong and these values are then overtly enacted. Through mutual vulnerability, respect, and shared experience, out of the performer–audience’s dialogic gaze a trust is built, thus making the Novel-Burlesque environment safe from societal judgement.

Global Community - Generosity and Learning

As the art form is continually evolving and allowing space for unheard voices, the historic and global foundations of Burlesque are not forgotten. There is an emphasis within Burlesque on acknowledging both its historical roots and the wider context, rather than only the context of contemporary society. Las Vegas museum the Burlesque Hall of Fame (BHoF) holds a four-day BHoF Weekend, which celebrates both contemporary and past performers. During this weekend, one evening is reserved for the ‘Living Legends’ (performers of the 1940s–80s), who come out of retirement and perform again on the ‘Titans of Tease’ stage, regardless of age or ability (Fraser, 2015). There are many fundraising events worldwide, such as the previously mentioned Wildvixen’s BHoF Extravaganza Challenge. These events provide financial assistance to Legends and contemporary performers who are selected to perform at the BHoF Weekend. The Legends attending the BHoF Weekend are included in the Contemporary Burlesque community with the help of a younger performer chaperone, who also assists them to perform at the ‘Titans of Tease’. Performer Matt Fraser describes watching the Titans: “They feel the love of the crowd, the respect of their successors, and they get down and dirty with it.” (2015). This emphasis on acknowledging Burlesque’s past illustrates how Contemporary Burlesque cherishes and respects its history and predecessors.

In interview, performer Rubyyy Jones described Burlesque as an “old industry” that has transformed; with women now driving the industry, inclusivity and diversity are the contemporary additions:

We are still holding onto our past. That's why people go to BHoF, they want to remember our legacy and our history. Obviously, we are looking at American history and style, but that's a very poignant [and significant part of Burlesque's development as an art form].

Jones continues: [Burlesque is] really fascinating because it's such a long and diverse history that has so many intersections. (interview, Rubyyy Jones, 2017)

In the UK, producers and performers recognise and maintain this historical and transatlantic connection by running fundraising events, as well as inviting Living Legends to perform at special events. For example: British performer and producer Wildvixen created a fundraising show in 2016 and hosted the Living Legend Camille 2000, who also performed at the show in 2018; British performer and producer Morning Star hosted Living Legend Satan's Angel as a judge for the 2018 Tea Time Tassel Off competition, flying her over several times for the different competition heats; British photographer and producer Nez Kendall, who is also a BHoF museum board member, has a touring pop-up Burlesque and Striptease Museum, gives talks regularly, and fundraises to bring Legends over to the UK; performer Havana Hurricane has her own personal project researching the history of British Burlesque; and performer Millie Dollar has a history-of-Burlesque podcast titled *Cabaret, Darling*. Recognising these Legends, and learning from and supporting them is the Contemporary Burlesque community's way of giving back to the women who pushed the boundaries of society to enable Contemporary Burlesque to be where it is today. The art form keeps its history alive, placing the contemporary community in a wider context and thereby enriching it.

Within the Contemporary Burlesque community, this culture of generosity feeds the reciprocal relationship and contributes to the performer–audience relationship. The history and culture of Burlesque is taught by teachers in workshops and by comperes at shows. During every course, class, and workshop I have attended, the teacher has placed the work within the wider context of performance. For example, in her two Burlesque courses, Lady Wildflower urged all her students not only to watch live Burlesque but also to research its history, and when taking inspiration from others to acknowledge it (2016–2017). At events, comperes give potted

histories (e.g., John Mayor's at *Cherie Bebe's Burlesque Revue*, 2016–2018); share anecdotes from which to learn (e.g., Bella Beseame at *Slippery Belle*, 2016; Heidi Bang Tidy at HBBF 2016–2019); and explain performer homages and tributes (e.g., Abigale Collins at *The Frou Frou Club*, 2017; Rubyyy Jones at HBBF 2017).

Consequently, audiences are also educated about and aware of the legacy and history of Burlesque. With this awareness and understanding of the wider context, and positioning within the art form, the participant, whether performer or audience, becomes a part of a living and constantly evolving art form. Consequently, I propose that Novel-Burlesque as a trickster space is a living art form (Ling Wong, 2015) with a culture of shared values (Brown, 2015), which produces the enactment of the changes participants wish to see in society (Butler, 2015) through the redefining of relationships, rituals, and spaces (Wynter, 2000).

Community Bond

During conversation, performers Dottie Dynamo, Oriana, and Wonderful Ginger all agreed that Novel-Burlesque attracts people who are body positive and sex positive due to the context and medium of Burlesque as an art form. Having a willingness to explore different perspectives consensually and respectfully, and therefore being careful not to cause harm to others (as cultural appropriation can often do), the participants are relatively more open-minded and less judgemental. Dynamo pointed out in interview:

If you're the kind of person who gets onstage and takes off your clothes, you're definitely going to be more open minded about anything: someone's lifestyle choices or preferences. So, you don't feel that judgement from people. (interview, Dynamo, 2016)

Dynamo described her first experiences of Burlesque classes and being backstage as “being surrounded by some of the smartest, most independent, and amazing women I had ever met in my life.” (interview, 2016). Oriana described being able to do “all this shallow stuff, all this really vain stuff ... with people who are really super intelligent and really understand that that's not all there is.” (interview, 2016). The juxtaposition of perceived vanity and femininity with intelligence, questioning, and knowingness lies at the very crux of Burlesque. Lavish theatricality rubbing up

against harsh realities has been a part of Burlesque since the very beginning, when Lydia Thompson's *Burlesque Blondes* lampooned classic texts and the politics of the day (Allen, 1991; Willson, 2008). One of the most renowned Burlesque Legends, Gypsy Rose Lee, was known for her intellectually witty monologues whilst emphasising the tease, as demonstrated in the 1943 film *Stage Door Canteen*, where she performed a sanitised version of her renowned 'Psychology of a Strip-Tease Dancer' (Borzage, 1943). This dynamic is openly acknowledged by the Contemporary Burlesque community, where most participants are aware that there is more to a routine and the performer than the glitz and glamour of what is seen onstage (Brown, 2006; Butler, 2015).

I found from my own backstage experiences that there was a camaraderie amongst the performers and stage crew. With everyone working together and supporting each other to produce a great show experience for the audience there was a sense of belonging and unity. Conversation topics ranged from performance and beauty tips to contemporary politics, with discussions around a myriad of subjects that could be considered 'academic', for example, mythology and psychology, as well as my own research (impromptu conversations, 2017–2020). These conversations and experiences formed the basis for friendships, new understanding, and learning as everyone had come to Burlesque through different avenues and for varying reasons. The exposure to new perspectives, together with the open-mindedness and ability to debate and discuss amongst participants of Novel-Burlesque allows for the exploration and critical questioning of the art form's knowingness and satire. Contemporary Burlesque has the potential to demonstrate Brown's creativity and building of bonds through vulnerability (2006, 2010) along with Butler's idea of a community enacting the changes they wish to see (2015). This openness, critique, and vulnerability allows for boundaries to be pushed without participants risking being shamed or ostracised through the application of societal norms (Brown, 2006; Clare, 2015).

The backstage camaraderie and community are also mirrored in the audience (as mentioned in 4. Beyond Awareness – the Dialogic Gaze): through the shared experience, the audience bonds together, galvanises support, and follows the performer's journey. Camaraderie and generosity also come to the forefront when a

performer is debuting, or a malfunction happens onstage and the whole audience champions the performer, urging them to continue. Audience member Tony Heath noted that generally speaking Burlesque performers were able to try new things, make mistakes, and fail onstage (interview, 2016). He deemed the environment safe for experimentation in performance, referring specifically to *Cabaret Roulette*, London, as well as to student showcases and debuts. The audience's support enables the performer to experiment and take risks with their own artwork. This view is echoed by performer Rusty Von Chrome (interview, 2016) and others (interview, Rubyyy Jones, 2017; interview, Velma Von Bon Bon, 2016), who described the audience as being an important part of the performer's development and progression onstage. For example, at Wildvixen's BHoF Extravaganza Challenge (2016), which functions as a fundraiser for the Burlesque 'Legends', performer Millie Dollar returned to the stage after a hiatus. After witnessing this event I wrote:

Millie Dollar's reception was one of support and warmth ... I felt the nerves of her return, I felt Millie was vulnerable ... [from the audience] I was experiencing a family welcoming home a loved and missed relative. The more she performed onstage the stronger and more determined I perceived her [and the audience supporting her] to be. (reflective writing, 2016)

On that night, the audience was a mixture of nomads and locals with a high number of performers also attending. The care felt by the audience and their enthusiasm for Dollar's return to the stage were palpable. The foundations of this encouragement lay in the fact that the entire event was a fundraiser for performers of the past, present, and future to attend the annual BHoF Weekend. Other performers returning to the stage included Goodtime Mama JoJo (the UK's only Burlesque Legend), who performed and gave workshops to raise money for the Burlesque Legends who could no longer earn a living.

Performer Velma Von Bon Bon notes that the audiences at certain Novel-Burlesque events "all trust each other" (interview, 2017), particularly those who have a community that has grown around them, such as at the Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival, *The Frou Frou Club*, and at *The Wet Spot*, *Titters and Tassels*, and *Cherie Bebe's Burlesque Revue*. Von Bon Bon goes further to describe this camaraderie as "complicité" (interview, 2016), meaning togetherness and ensemble, as described in

4. Beyond Awareness – the Dialogic Gaze. However, this camaraderie is rarely overt and therefore goes unnoticed, but is often enacted by audience members looking out for one another and for the performers. For example, at certain venues, a performer has to walk through the audience to reach the stage from the changing rooms. After a performance in such a venue, the audience applauds and demonstrates their respect for the performer's larger-than-life personal space, by allowing them through the audience. However, (as I have discussed earlier in this thesis) on one particular occasion (2017), after I had finished performing 'Cruella Wants it All' and was walking through the audience in a G-string and pasties, a man attempted to grab me and pull me into a hug. To me, his action felt as though he was attempting to reduce my agency (performed onstage), to possess and objectify me. Through my performance I had experienced a feeling of strength and power in my own presentation that jarred with his desire to envelop my semi-naked body in a hug. I did not allow him to take physical control of the situation: as he tried to make his move, I locked my hands into his elbows, forcing distance between us, and gave him 'air-kisses'. Several other audience members had noticed this man's behaviour and made clear eye contact with me to show that they were available to help me out of the situation if needed. Later, these same audience members checked that I was okay and felt safe. They explained that they had talked to the man about respecting a performer's space as they come off the stage (*Cherie Bebe Burlesque Revue*, 2017). These types of self-regulation, education, and subsequent caring check-ins from the community were not uncommon when, on rare occasions, a new Novel-Burlesque audience member acted inappropriately.

Another example of the Novel-Burlesque community coming together to care for one another was when an external issue caused a person to emotionally breakdown at an event (August 2019). A woman, a 'Burlesque virgin' audience member on this occasion, had a traumatic relationship break up with her partner at the event and was left distraught and abandoned both physically and emotionally at the Novel-Burlesque event. Five audience members (performers and non-performers) who had discovered the woman found a safe space to chat, initially starting in the toilets and subsequently moving to behind the bar. They proceeded to take care of the woman, now alone, and informed the production team, who in turn contacted someone the woman trusted to pick her up. After further conversation, the woman decided she

wanted to stay, so a buddy system was created to make sure that she was safe throughout the night and that the trusted person picked her up at the end. The situation was handled with care and sensitivity with concern for the woman's safety at the forefront of everyone's actions. The enactment of care and trust in dealing with this situation is an illustration of how Novel-Burlesque enacts the changes it wishes to see in society by creating a supportive community.

With its emphasis on being a safe space within which to experiment without judgement, there is a sense in Novel-Burlesque of gathering for protection (Butler, 2015). Consequently, as audience member Cat said in interview, Contemporary Burlesque is like other alternative subcultures in that there is a "protectiveness and knowing that these vulnerable situations could go wrong and be traumatic for people ... [we] watch each other's backs" (2016). This awareness of vulnerability and shared experience leads to a sense of self-preservation as the audience and performers create bonds that can appear to others as cliques. The attempt to ward off unwanted judgements, perceptions, and attitudes, and the desire to protect and support can be read by others as exclusivity. In its attempt to include, and protect from judgement and shame, as many diverse voices as possible, Novel-Burlesque can inadvertently be perceived to exclude people from its culture and expectations.

Defining Performance Strategies

There are two words that have arisen frequently in my research in relation to vulnerability and the performing of a routine that creates such a state: provoking and challenging. 'Provoking' is seen as referring to an action undertaken by the performer to gain the audience's attention (e.g., Rubyyy Jones screaming at the audience); whilst 'challenging' refers to the content of the performer's routine (e.g., Rubyyy Jones's 'Potty-mouth Princess' tackles gender inequality and abuse). Together, both types of action place the performer and audience in a vulnerable position because the performers tend to engage in a topic about which they are passionate, and the audience are made to encounter a perspective or topic they may not have experienced or considered.

Performer Rubyyy Jones notes that all their acts are deliberately provocative and challenging: “I just want [the audience] to feel something ... it’s about shaking up the stagnant-ness, passiveness, and voyeurism and making them active in what’s happening.” (interview, 2017). Emerging from my interviews with other performers and audiences was a consensus that one of Novel-Burlesque’s purposes is to ‘provoke’: to move the audience from one emotion or position to another (interview, Ash, 2016), or to start them on a journey of understanding about a particular life experience or issue (interview, Velma Von Bon Bon, 2016; interview, Rubyyy Jones, 2017). Burlesque audiences and performers desire to provoke and to be provoked from one state to another. Artist Joseph Beuys wrote: “To provoke means to evoke something.” (1990, p. 86). He theorised that art and creative action had the power to provoke individual transformation and, consequently, social change. Likewise, Burlesque has the ability to transform the participants from one state to another, whether that be an individual revelation within a shared experience, or a communal shared transformation that shifts the audience from being individuals to being a collective.

As mentioned in 1. Literature Review, another strategy of or element in the mutual vulnerability that is discussed in this chapter is ‘offering’. The author of *The Gift*, Lewis Hyde, defines the gift as an offering and when applying this idea to art he states that art is not a bought commodity but “the spirit of an artist’s gifts [that] can wake our own” (1983, p. xii). Hyde’s book expands upon Marcel Mauss’s (1924) notion of the three obligations of gift exchange – to give, to receive, and to reciprocate – and applies it to the value of creativity in a capitalist culture. I would argue that all three obligations of Mauss’s gift exchange are applied in Novel-Burlesque through the performer–audience relationship. The performer gives the gift of revealing oneself through creative routine; the audience receive this gift and reciprocate with their own gift of respect, attention, and openness. This grateful reciprocation can be seen most overtly through kinetic and aural communication during performance and applause at the end of the routine or show. This was identified in the previous chapter (4. Beyond Awareness – the Dialogic Gaze) in relation to Perle Noir, who generously offers herself and her creative journey to her audiences. As mentioned in the literature review, Hyde further explains that the cyclical gift exchange enables a “decentralised cohesiveness” (Hyde, 1983, p. xiv)

similar to that of Nally's "theatrical democratization" (2009, p. 637) in Novel-Burlesque. This re-enforces the notion that Novel-Burlesque can be seen as a site for new rituals (Bakhtin, 1984; Wynter, 2000), diversity of community (Brown, 2006; Ranciere, 2011; Wynter, 2000), and the enactment of change the collective wishes to see (Brown, 2006; Butler, 2017) – the trickster space.

Revealing of Self

Audience experiences of vulnerability are rarely discussed in literature on Contemporary Burlesque, and although participation is occasionally referenced, such mentions usually focus on moments when the audience member goes onstage as a chosen participant or volunteer (see 2. Practice Review). However, the audience attending an event tend not only to dress up for the occasion, but also to take the opportunity created by the safe environment to explore their own identities by performing parts of their personality that may not be accepted within their daily lives (interview, Ash, 2016; interview, Cat & Kirsty, 2016; interview, Freida, 2016; interview, Diva, 2017; interview, Tony, 2017). As performer Rusty Von Chrome notes, there is a "serious lack of spaces where you can peacock." (interview, 2017). In doing this, the audience are exposing themselves to potential criticism and judgement, just as the performer onstage places themself in a potentially vulnerable but supported situation to play with their own identities. Novel-Burlesque exposes the audience to a diverse range of performers and alternative narratives, which can render the audience's understanding of social norms and the societal status quo vulnerable, thereby opening up their awareness to different possibilities and the experiences of other people.

Audiences are given the opportunity and are encouraged to play with and reveal potential identities that they perhaps would not feel comfortable exhibiting in their daily lives or that they may ordinarily be ridiculed or shamed for (Brown, 2006, 2010; Butler, 2015). Audience member Gill said in interview:

I love the fact that everybody is all shapes and sizes and even the big girls can look glamorous and sexy. It's given me, as a big girl, confidence. I would never have come out in this outfit tonight if I hadn't been to a few Burlesque

shows. But even now I'm a bit "Ooo! Ooo! If my mother could see me now!"
[laughter] (interview, 2016)

This illustrates how the watching of performers of a similar identity can inspire audience members to push their own boundaries and dress in what they feel society (in this case personified as a mother) would shame them for. Other alternative cultural groupings and identities (see 2. Practice Review) are performed and, in some cases, revealed for the first time. For husband and wife audience members Cat and Kirsty, the dressing up and performance of an exaggerated version of themselves is part of the whole occasion and a reason for attending (interview, 2016). Kirsty described the audience's performativity as "letting your freak flag fly" (2016). Within this context alternative aspects of identity are proudly performed.

Audience member Cat described performers' use of a "fiction suit" as a stage persona but he went further to note: "there are people who are wearing a fiction suit in the audience, which is marvellous." (interview, 2016). Interestingly, Cat used the term 'fiction suit' when referencing Grant Morrison, author of *The Invisibles* (Greear, 2012; Hiatt, 2011); the concept of 'fiction suits' is recognised in various subcultures (such as cosplay communities and fetish communities) and in game theory, and the term describes what Goffman would call a "front" (1990), where the encoding and aligning of certain symbols or design styles indicates belonging to one or many social groupings. Through performance, fiction suits can reveal tastes that are alternative to the status quo and therefore also reveal the vulnerabilities of the person. During one audience-researcher experience an audience member commented on the performers, in conversation, saying: "I imagine when they are up there performing, they can be themselves. Sort of like when I go out [to a Novel-Burlesque event] in my femme persona." (impromptu conversation, 2016). This is true. Fantasies and different elements of the performers' and audiences' personalities can be explored creatively, performed, and offered safely within the Novel-Burlesque space. For example, within Novel-Burlesque, I have seen audience members dressed according to their preferred kink – leather or PVC fetish wear – or colourful rockabilly or vintage stylings. The revealing of this aspect of their identity can signal their alignment with a particular subculture. Novel-Burlesque is seen as a safe space in which audiences can reveal themselves.

Another theatrical example of this performativity is seen with the audiences who attend cult classic stage show *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975). In interviews and conversations with performers and audience members, many referenced this film and musical as an inspiration of or influence on their discovery of Contemporary Burlesque (interview, Cat & Kirsty, 2016; interview, Rusty Von Chrome, 2016). However, these audiences tend either to dress within the Rocky Horror theme (lingerie, corsets, fishnet tights, and pearls) or to impersonate the characters; in contrast, Burlesque allows individuals to reveal themselves and thereby encourages glamorous, alternative, and often sex-positive subcultures to come to the fore, including rockabilly, steampunk, PVC and leather fetishes, both off stage as well as onstage.

On seeing Novel-Burlesque for the first time one audience member said:

Seeing the confidence those women had in a nightmare situation [being almost naked in public]. Their confidence. I have no confidence. We just fancied seeing something different to the usual. I have never seen women so confident in who they are. Incredible. (impromptu conversation, 2017)

This person experienced a revelation about herself through witnessing Burlesque performers enact and embody possibilities she had thought closed to her due to the shame she felt or feared being exposed to. The performer's role shifted to that of conduit for this audience member. Through her experience of witnessing the performer, the audience member was able to see her own ability to change her relationship both with her own body and with others.

Performers may be perceived as being vulnerable because they are physically exposed; however, very few of those interviewed would describe themselves as being vulnerable during a performance, neither did they see themselves as 'naked' (interview, Bobbie Dazzler, 2016; interview, Rusty Von Chrome, 2016). When describing their feelings and experiences of performing onstage in front of audiences, performers used words such as "strong" and "powerful" (interview, Dottie Dynamo & Wonderful Ginger, 2016). In response to my question about being vulnerable onstage, performer Bobbie Dazzler replied: "I'm a fucking Rockstar!" (interview, 2016). Off stage, performers viewed vulnerability as a negative term,

describing the experience of vulnerability as a state that leads to shame and ostracisation and that is the result of “secondary objectification” (Clare, 2015), due to society perceiving Contemporary Burlesque as taboo. They did not wish to be framed in that light.

During the process of this investigation, I personally encountered secondary objectification and prejudice in a domestic setting from a close friend, who will be called Helen for the purposes of this thesis. This encounter was a direct result of Helen engaging in the narrative that all sexual entertainment is degrading and immoral, and supports misogynistic stereotypes and values concerning women. Helen had not seen a Novel-Burlesque show when she made these claims but had “done her own research”, quoting several anti-Popular Burlesque narratives. Amongst many tactics she used my MS disability as one of her arguments against my performing Burlesque, on the basis that it was not a safe space for me (2016). This enactment of secondary objectification made me feel out of control, vulnerable, judged, silenced, and as though I had been objectified out of context and without my consent. Several performers and audience members that I interviewed described similar experiences (audiences: Ash, 2016; Kirsty & Cat, 2016; Tony Heath, 2016; performers: Rusty Von Chrome, 2017; Anonymous, 2018). This type of vulnerability, forced upon me by Helen’s judgement and shaming led to my own need for and development of shame resilience, as well as to my further seeking out the Burlesque community in their role of offering support and being enactors of change (Brown, 2006, 2010; Butler, 2015). As a result of this experience, I propose that Novel-Burlesque as a subculture offers a platform and a community for performers and audiences that is formed in part out of a need for shame resilience (as conceived of by Brown, 2006, 2010), and in part out of a need to enact the changes they wish to see, as described by Butler (2015). The external judgements made about Burlesque by people who do not themselves engage with it (Helen, for example), have a substantial negative impact on Contemporary Burlesque as an art form and on the individuals who do participate in it. “Secondary objectification” (Clare, 2015) can result in a narrowing of diversity as it inhibits those with alternative voices from participating, thus leading to self-censorship and creating difficulties in producing an inclusive and safe platform in which such voices can be heard.

However, Perle Noir (online workshop Q&A, 2016), Rubyyy Jones (interview, 2017), and Havana Hurricane (impromptu conversation, 2018), conversely, discussed being vulnerable onstage as a strength and as a gift to the audience through which they could give generously of their energy and creativity. They are aware of and acknowledge the intricate intertwining of vulnerability, creativity, autonomy, and strength which, when brought together, can create empowerment. Unlike Popular Burlesque, which associates Burlesque's quality of empowerment with the removal of clothes, Classic Burlesque performers such as Immodesty Blaize (2016) and others (performers Havana Hurricane, 2018, Perle Noir, 2016), point out that removing clothes is not itself empowering, but being given the space in which to be creatively heard *is* (Burlesque Undressed, 2010). Performing in that space using your own personal and creative self-expression is a vulnerable position to be in, but also an exhilarating and empowering one. Noir, Jones, and Hurricane all described and understood the nuanced definition of vulnerability I developed in my literature review (Brown, 2006, 2010; Butler, 2015), and its connection to the offering of a gift of oneself to the audience from that position of vulnerability (Hyde, 1983).

As explored in the previous chapter, the nuanced notion of slipping *between* identities (as compared with slipping *out* of persona) displays a similar dynamic to that which can be seen to be at play with vulnerability. The vulnerability the Burlesque performer enacts is displayed through choice and agency. However, when this choice is forcibly removed by the audience, rather than respected, the oscillating dialogic gaze is shattered. As an audience-researcher, I experienced one such occurrence of explicit objectification and voyeurism by the audience at a mis-advertised 'Boylesque' event (2016) (see 2. Practice Review; and Glossary). The producer and venue failed to construct any theatrical narrative, intention, or expectation and therefore the audience did not know what their role was. With the majority of the audience not having experienced Novel-Burlesque, and the compere not performing their role adequately, some particularly vocal audience members (who were expecting to have a lap dance, or strip club experience) led the rest of the audience. After some time, it became clear that the performers were strippers, as their performance intentions were different to those of Burlesque performers (they intended to sexually titillate their audience) and the apparently all-women audience objectified the male performers as a result of following the more vocally dominant

audience members. The lack of clarity in expectations led to one inexperienced performer being disarmed by a smile and eye contact from myself, wrong-footing them for the rest of the routine. Such a smile and eye contact would have been the correct Burlesque etiquette for when a performer was straddling you, yet in this situation I was expected to focus on his groin (which was close to my face), grab at his muscles, and claw at his backside as other audience members were doing to the other performers. Later, the power balance tipped too far in the audience's favour, as another performer lost control when their audience volunteer began to dominate and to enact their own agenda onstage. Witnessing this as audience-researcher, the situation felt uneasy and exploitative to me, as I became a voyeur and participant in someone else's fantasy rather than in what the performer had intended (reflective writing, 2015). The audience member in question later commented: "I was a stripper, so I am taking my revenge" (impromptu conversation, 2015), showing little consideration for the performer in question and the rest of the audience watching. The relationship between the audience and the performer was abusive and uncomfortable for both parties, as neither I nor the performer had consented to this participation.

There are risks involved in choosing an audience volunteer. Audience member Tony Heath, who is a regular 'chosen participant' at Novel-Burlesque shows (see Appendix 3: Interview Participants' Profiles) reflected and noted that they felt this was partly due to their shy nature: "You don't want somebody who's going to try and upstage the [performer] because that'll take away from the act." (interview, 2016). At the 'Boylesque' evening, the audience and performers had different expectations for the performer-audience relationship, and even within the audience, expectations differed. Some of the performers were inexperienced in stage craft and, unfortunately, their rigidity and inability to improvise a live situation led them (and the audience) to reveal a state of negative vulnerability that was not consensual.

In 2018, I experienced two mothers and their two daughters (between approximately eight and ten years old) gazing at me whilst performing 'Cruella Wants it All' at Chester Pride. The event was free and housed in a tent with clear 'Parental Guidance' signs. Reflecting on the experience afterwards, I wrote this in my journal:

Rainbow flags flying. Drag Queens and Bears in leather singing YMCA. Tassel twirling, children look on with faces of excitement and awe. Mothers pretend to shield their children's eyes, for others' sake, whilst enjoying and giggling themselves. Tent is clearly labelled 'Parental Guidance' as Cruella leaves the stage. (reflective writing, 2018)

It was a shock to see children in the audience; however, after entering and interacting with the audience I quickly assessed who they were with and whether they were willing participants. Clearly the mothers wished for their daughters to experience LGBTQ+ Pride celebrations and were willing for them to see the human body in a Novel-Burlesque performance. This reminded me of several comments made by secondary school teachers who have talked to me after shows, saying how they wish the teenage girls in their school could watch Novel-Burlesque and see the variety of women onstage loving their own bodies and performing creatively. With this in mind, I wanted these girls to feel comfortable, seeing my body as I wish for it to be seen. I gave them a wink as Arabella Twist and a snarl as Cruella. By using the dialogic gaze, I cared for them and their experience. They delighted in the killing of the puppy; however, the mothers made a pretence of covering their children's eyes as I tassel twirled. This was the moment when the mothers perhaps felt the most vulnerable, and demonstrated their awareness of external expectations and possible "secondary objectification" (Clare, 2015) regarding their collective decision to educate their children about LGBTQ+ and to allow them to see Novel-Burlesque. This action only made their children want to see more, as well as making them aware that, within wider society, there can be negative and taboo connotations to viewing the naked body. This gave the performance a more conspiratorial feel, and everyone in the tent became willing accomplices in challenging social mores and educating these children. In contrast, when I performed at the Barefoot Festival (2019) the children were encouraged to sit at the front so they could see the performances better, and the show was seen as being like any other except that the audience mostly comprised families. In both instances it felt as though the Novel-Burlesque environment and community held and cared for these audience children and their education and understanding of the human body. There is a subject area here around Burlesque, education, motherhood, and age that has the potential to be the basis of an extensive investigation and that warrants further research.

Provoking

For some performers their embodied provocation is visually explicit, as with disability activist Cinnamon Cheeks and South East Asian performer Lilly Snatch Dragon. Within the context of Popular Burlesque these performers would not be hired, but neither would a tattooed woman, as the majority of such shows are heavily influenced by the Dita-effect and therefore promote the white slim cis-gendered retro-sexual woman as 'normal'. Interestingly, these shows appear to follow the notions of historic freakshows and sideshows as to what should and should not be seen on or in the 'main' stage or tent. The Novel-Burlesque show, which this thesis focuses on, is not perfect and is still problematic (as is discussed later on); however, it is more accepting and welcoming of diverse bodies and people on the stage. The performers to which I previously referred, in particular, go further than performing Burlesque purely as a provocation; they use the art form to directly engage with their embodiment as disabled performer or South East Asian performer respectively. There are other performers who present ostensibly as normative or typical bodies, like those promoted by the Dita-effect, but who perform routines that are challenging in the material they tackle, and provoking in the way it is performed, yet it could be argued that these issues have an external impact on the performer rather than being an embodiment.

In many acts there is an element of the performer exorcising their demons and problems, which in turn makes them vulnerable, and in addition raises societal issues within the safe space of a Novel-Burlesque event. The performer creates the routine from their experiences and uses their own body as their artistic tool to do so. The result is a creative offering, or provocation, that is deeply connected with the performer, or that the performer wishes for others to see and gain an understanding of. It is important for these provocations to be witnessed and heard by the audience. The audience needs to be present and engaged to do this. Rubyyy Jones explains how their performance style, particularly their screaming at the audience to startle them, is a direct strategy aimed against the "Western" desire "not to feel" (interview, 2017). They continued: "we don't have the tools for dealing with emotions and process ... so we engage outwardly to separate ourselves from that level of

emotion.” (interview, 2017). Jones’s acts are deliberately provocative and challenging to force the audience to be present in the moment with them.

This strategy was experienced a number of times during my own audience-researcher observations, most notably with performer Rubyyy Jones’s unapologetic demands for attention through screaming at the audience and throwing clothing at them (2016–2018). Other performers include Ruby Wednesday, whose raw visceral use of wax play on their body to illustrate self-harm due to societal ostracisation (2017) I likened in my journal to Francis Bacon’s ‘screaming Pope’ series of paintings (1953); another is Lilly Snatch Dragon, who challenges South East Asian stereotypes by physically struggling against chains whilst dressed in South East Asian traditional dress (a routine called ‘Chains’), and displays her own shocking and comical emergence from a laundry bag as a ‘Thai Bride’, using placards written in English as she searches for an English husband (2016–2018).

Outside Popular Burlesque, there will usually be a routine or performer on a Novel-Burlesque line-up that stops the audience from becoming too comfortable in their entertainment pleasure. Through their performance actions this performer provokes the audience to attention or challenges them and their expectations through the content of the routine. The Novel-Burlesque show *Cabaret Roulette*, produced by Vivacity Bliss, was known for its highly political and issue-based performances as the performers were given an audience-chosen theme and three months in which to create a new routine. Even though this presents a creative challenge to the artists, their interpretations have led to both performatively provoking and intellectually challenging routines that have often become performers’ signature routines. For example, Lilly Snatch Dragon’s ‘Chains’ was created for *Cabaret Roulette: Corruption* (October 2015) and ‘Pi to 9’ was created by Pi the Mime for *Cabaret Roulette: Metamorphosis* (July 2014). In this respect, the *Cabaret Roulette* audience do not know what to expect from one performer to the next.

In interview and conversation, audience members often mentioned (Cat & Kirsty, 2016; Anonymous, 2016) that they attended shows to experience the performance of alternative narratives, the questioning of expectations, and the upturning of assumptions onstage. Audience member Ash acknowledged his position in society

and desire to be provoked: “I’ve learnt a lot about myself ... I am glad that I am looking at other things ... I want to be challenged, I want to talk, listen, learn about myself and others” (interview, 2016). Audience members like Ash often enter a Novel-Burlesque event with an awareness of the performance possibilities they will encounter and are willing to bear witness to the performers’ provocations and offerings. Ash mentioned how his position, views, and perception of others has shifted since attending Novel-Burlesque events (interview, 2016) (see Appendix 3: Interview Participants’ Profiles). The performer gives the audience member the opportunity to look at themselves from a different perspective, to open up and expand their own possibilities and understanding of self. Through this, the audience becomes empowered. Another audience member, leaning heavily on a cane, said to me after seeing Arabella Twist perform ‘Cruella Wants it All’:

When I was told I would love this act, I wasn’t convinced but they were right. I loved it. When they said you had health issues I thought “Wow. I could give that a go.” Perhaps not perform but definitely have a go at classes.

(impromptu conversation, 2017)

The woman quoted from above had several conditions that caused her mobility and cognitive difficulties. We discussed how we manage in day-to-day life but also how we both should not let our difficulties hold us back from trying new things and rethinking the way we present ourselves to others. The assumption often exists that to be disabled is to be either non-sexual or too fragile for exposure, or that people would not want to see imperfections (Brownie, 2017; Lintott & Irvin, 2015). Yet, through Novel-Burlesque these audience members were provoked into reassessing internalised societal beliefs that had a damaging effect on them. This is one of many reasons why diversity onstage is so important, as it enables a wider range of audience to relate to the performers. A good performance by an artist can transcend visual identity stereotypes to enable connection with an audience member and subvert their expectations. Visibly diverse performers positively reinforce the message for all audience members that they too can be performers and that Novel-Burlesque is accepting of everyone regardless of their identity differences (be that ability, race, age, gender) and encourages conversations to include them and their perspectives.

With this in mind, I now examine Rubyyy Jones in detail to analyse how they (as a Neo-Burlesque performer) push the boundaries of their audiences' expectations of Contemporary Burlesque into potentially vulnerable areas, as well as the way they express their vulnerability through the dialogic gaze.

In Detail: Rubyyy Jones

Throughout this example, I reference my reflections and performer and audience interviews, including a semi-structured interview with Rubyyy Jones (2017). The qualitative data produced from these interviews, as mentioned in the methodology section, was analysed using thematic analysis in accordance with Braun and Clarke (2006).



Figure 44. Rubyyy Jones, 'Potty-mouth Princess', HBBF Festival Gala 2017. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

Rubyyy Jones was given the moniker 'Queen of Queerlesque' by drag queen Meth and is an advocate for plus-sized LGBTQ+ Burlesque and cabaret performers and communities. Originally from Canada, and at the time of interview living in London, they relish in being unapologetically body positive and brash (see Figure 43).

'Potty-mouth Princess' is Jones's signature routine, a version of which won them 'Most Innovative' at the BHoF Weekend (3–4 June 2017). Having seen this routine a number of times throughout my research, I here draw upon two performances in

particular that I watched as audience-researcher, together with my auto-ethnographic reflections: Wildvixen's BHoF Extravaganza Challenge, 2016; HBBF *Diversitease* 2016; and HBBF *Festival Gala* 2017. Wildvixen's BHoF Extravaganza Challenge (2016) was the first fundraising event organised by Wildvixen to raise money for the Burlesque Legends (retired performers of the 1950s–80s) so that they could attend and perform at the BHoF annual Weekend in Las Vegas. As it was an event supporting the history and community of Burlesque, an extremely high percentage of the audience were Burlesque performers and nomadic audience members. The event was held at Sutton Coldfield Town Hall and consequently was also attended by some of the local residents of Sutton, including 'Burlesque virgins'. The event was well attended, but tickets for the large venue were not sold out, in contrast to HBBF *Diversitease* 2016, which was a sold-out event at the more intimate Hebden Bridge Little Theatre, holding one hundred and twenty audience members as part of the Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival. As previously discussed, the HBBF audience is a mix of locals, nomads, and industry members. Due to the nature of the *Diversitease* line-up and the scheduling of the show (it is the second show of the evening after the comedy show), the audience is ethnically diverse, liberal, and alternative in its make-up.

Jones's 'Potty-mouth Princess' routine juxtaposes societal expectations of being a woman with Jones's own experience of reality. Jones plays upon the extremities of their own Burlesque persona by flipping between feminine sweetness and demanding diva. During this routine Jones wears bright pink, alluding to the phrase 'pretty in pink' and the many contemporary stereotypes that attribute feminine qualities to the colour pink. Jones lip-syncs gracefully to "I Feel Pretty" from the musical *West Side Story* (Wise, 1961) to the audience. Jones's facial expressions change as they struggle to maintain the happy feminine 'pretty' façade, similar to the style of comedian Lucille Ball. The audience laugh and sing along, enjoying the lampooning nature of the routine so far – the difficulty of keeping up with societal expectations of women. The track is cut short by a child shouting "What the fuck!" at which Jones removes her cape, throwing it to the floor in anger (see Figure 44). With the audience invested in the routine, and in Rubyyy, this anarchic departure from the initial set-up of the routine feels exhilarating.



Figure 45. Rubyyy Jones, 'Potty-mouth Princess', HBBF Festival Gala 2017. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

Rubyyy proceeds to lip-sync to the voice-over from the viral video “Potty-mouth Princesses drop the F-Bomb for Feminism” (FCKH8, 2014). The video depicts five young girls (aged between six and thirteen years old) dressed as princesses who ask the question: “What’s more offensive? A little girl saying f*ck or the sexist way society treats girls and women?” (FCKH8, 2014, 00:13). The girls in the video proceed to tell the viewer facts regarding society’s continued sexism, stating statistics about gender inequality and rape. In Rubyyy’s routine the girls’ voices can be heard on the voice-over. These voice-overs are spliced with the song “Standing in the Way of Control” by the band Gossip, to which Jones dances and strips. During the dancing sections, Jones begins to remove layers of clothing, to fully remove them only after pausing to emphasise the statistics heard via the voice-over about domestic violence, rape, and gender pay inequality. With each reveal of their body, another revelation about society is spoken by the girls’ voice-over and shouted by Rubyyy. Sitting in the audience at HBBF *Diversitease* 2016, I witnessed that the energy this provoked in the audience was electric. The audience, composed mostly of women, nodded and whooped to show that they too had, in one way or another, experienced such prejudice. After watching this routine, my assumption about the audience reactions was later confirmed, as during the interval I heard many conversations about individual experiences of gender inequality and abuse. Jones licks their own armpit hair as they would a glove in a Classic Burlesque routine and relishes in the audience watching. Removing a glove, they shove it down their skirt,

wipe their genitals whilst smiling at the audience, and then throw the glove at/to the audience, whilst screaming (see Figure 45). Jones aggressively shouts words from the track, which emphasises their rage towards the injustice. Husband and wife audience members Cat and Kirsty described this performance:

Cat – My god. To have that quite brutal dialogue about the inequalities and vicissitudes facing women across the world still. Having it being presented by, let's be blunt here, a fat woman with big boobs taking her clothes off, and shouting. [Rubyyy Jones identifies with they/them pronouns]

Kirsty – Thank you Rubyyy! (interview, 2016)

Jones incited an edge of conspiratorial anger within the audience as demonstrated by Kirsty's expression of thanks. Their grotesque 'laddish' behaviour and child-like rage towards gender inequality only emphasised the restrictiveness of society's morals and behaviour towards women.



Figure 46. Rubyyy Jones, 'Potty-mouth Princess', HBBF Festival Gala 2017. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

This routine deliberately challenges and goes against societal expectations of how women should behave in public. Rubyyy Jones obliterates every taboo regarding 'lady-like' feminine beauty whilst still using the Burlesque script to some extent. Their teases do not build tension using desire; instead, they use frustration. Jones's reveals are not of ecstasy but of pent up anger and dark humour being finally released. This is a stark departure from the Classic Burlesque style and Popular

Burlesque, and when performed alongside those styles, Jones's routine places their audience in a vulnerable and potentially uncomfortable position. Jones recognises this themselves, as they explained in an interview:

There's an element of contemporary Burlesque moving past what we consider to be traditional voyeurism, which is very vulnerable, [to a place where it] is vulnerable for both parties, which I think is unique to the art form.

(interview, Rubyyy Jones, 2017)

The audience is faced with a determined formidable person who will not be silenced, forcing them to pay attention and consider the issue presented: gender inequality. Some audience members do not wish to be challenged, particularly by feminism, and wish for their entertainment to be just escapism (reflection, 2016). Audience member Ash, who attended HBBF *Diversitease* 2016, described his experience of watching Rubyyy Jones perform and his changing attitude. He also describes another audience member who did not want to be challenged:

She was hardcore feminist ... The hairs on the back of my neck stood up! All the blokes sat in the audience went, "Ooooh! I can feel my heckles coming up!" She was fire ... somebody complained about that, he sent an email to [the producers] and complained. "Feminism. I didn't expect feminism." Do you know what, the stuff she was saying was really valid. Really valid, and really important to get that message out there and get it across and change people's attitudes towards it. Sometimes you've got to bang on your drum. The show was called *Diversitease*. (interview, Ash, 2016)

Like Ash, and the person in his statement, some audience members are forced to re-evaluate their perceptions and experiences of everyday politics and society, whilst others find comfort and validation in their values and/or positionality. In every viewing of the 'Potty-mouth Princess' routine, Jones galvanises the audience, particularly the women, into a shared experience, not only of the present moment but also of past injustices, and makes a call for future action and awareness (Beuys, 1990); this is noted in my journals and accounts of the interval and of after-show conversations.



Figure 47. Rubyyy Jones, 'Potty-mouth Princess', HBBF Festival Gala 2017. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

Jones goes beyond the primary taboo of a woman taking up space to reclaim and perform with their own agency by removing their clothes in public. “To those people who don’t understand our fucking privilege to get naked, so we will exercise our right to strip” (performance, Rubyyy Jones onstage at HBBF, 2016). Taking it a step further, Jones occupies many diverse identities which are neither the social norm nor often seen in Popular Burlesque. In the ‘Potty-mouth Princess’ routine, they unpack layers of social conditioning and reveal the raw emotion that these injustices can, and do, elicit in the audience. Onstage, Jones directly questions society’s morals and behaviour towards women. In this performance, they are enacting exactly what I and the, mostly women, audience wish they could do – have the freedom to scream against the system (interview, Kirsty, 2016; interview, Freida Nipples, 2016; impromptu conversation, Anonymous, 2016). In this moment, as an audience member, I wanted to be them, I trusted Jones as our champion, and I would have fought alongside them.



Figure 48. Rubyyy Jones, 'Tellinnng', HBBF *Diversitease* 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

Another of Jones's routines, 'Tellinnng' (HBBF *Diversitease*, 2018), which focuses on abusive relationships, uses a different departure from the Burlesque script. In contrast with 'Potty-mouth Princess', which is a gender equality rallying cry for the audience, 'Tellinnng' is a routine where the audience are simply asked to bear witness to, acknowledge, and be aware of the issues that surround domestic violence (see Figure 47). Jones created this routine for *Cabaret Roulette: Nightmare* (2015). In it, they lip-sync to the song "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going" (by Jennifer Hudson) whilst being physically abused by an invisible assailant and lover. It was harrowing to see Jones recoil and react as various physical beatings were inflicted on their body, and they continued to profess their love and devotion to this person. With their arm forcefully twisted behind their back Jones is able to 'reach' the top notes of the song, lip-syncing "I'm not living without you". The beatings increase in violence to the point where Jones is being choked; their pleading "love me, love me, love me" turns to horror as a gunshot is heard, and we see Jones collapse to the floor. Dressed in relatively simple cream lingerie and a short peignoir that is never removed, this routine does not glamourise abuse or violence. The routine exposes the vulnerability of love and dependence and the abuse that can take place when this vulnerability is taken advantage of, depicting this from the perspective of the often-silenced victim. Rubyyy Jones had the unusual privilege of giving their own introduction as compere of the show, and had, therefore, full control over the framing of their routine for the audience. They made it clear that this routine was far from

Popular Burlesque and escapism, and that as a personal and dark routine it needed to be viewed differently by the audience. Both routines challenge not only society (its status quo, taboos, and control over whose voices are heard) but also Burlesque as an art form, and require different engagement from audiences compared with the engagement demanded by Popular Burlesque.



Figure 49. Ruby Jones, 'Tellinnng', HBBF Diversitease 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

Ruby Jones's 'Potty-mouth Princess' routine highlights the vulnerability the audience is placed in by a performer when they are provoked by actions that are considered taboo by society within the 'safe' space produced for Novel-Burlesque. By defying societal expectations of women, Jones became a conduit for me as an audience member to experience freedom from polite etiquette and to acknowledge my anger towards injustices that had been highlighted by Jones and experienced by myself. Even though Jones led the way as the performer, the power balance felt near equal in vulnerability and strength as the audience actively participated by screaming back, giving standing ovations, and leading conversations about inequalities and the routine during the interval.

Ruby Jones is not alone in using Novel-Burlesque to encourage awareness, enlist support, and create change. As previously mentioned, performers Cinnamon Cheeks (see 6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability) and Lilly Snatch Dragon (who may appear to audiences to be outside mainstream perceptions of what

Burlesque should be and portray) go further, using the art form to engage directly with these uncomfortable, often avoided, discussions. Using her routines, Lilly Snatch Dragon directly challenges her audiences to question racial stereotypes (such as 'Orientalism') that have been diluted and normalised in popular culture: the comical 'Thai Beginnings' depicts a South East Asian mail-order bride and touches on sex trafficking, whilst another of her acclaimed routines, 'Chains', tackles the cultural misappropriation of South East Asian culture in the Harry Potter series of books and films. Both these performers push the boundaries of what is comfortable to explore and see, as the audience are confronted with their own prejudices, or even their own likeness, onstage. Through this, the performer is witnessed and acknowledged, creating discussion and the potential for change amongst the audience. Through performance, and using Novel-Burlesque as a platform, the performers' voices are valued, validated, and treasured.

Offering

As previously discussed in 1. Beyond Awareness – the Dialogic Gaze, Perle Noir demonstrated how, through use of the dialogic gaze, the more 'liberal' she was with her energy, the more the audience responded with whoops, cheers, and applause. Performer Miss Glory Pearl described Perle Noire's willingness to be vulnerable and to liberally offer her energy to the audience as "generous" (interview, 2016). Pearl stipulated that performing Contemporary Burlesque is "not about what you can get from being onstage, it's about what you can give [to the audience]" (interview, 2016). Whilst all performers interviewed agreed that performing onstage enabled them to bask in attention that they would not otherwise be given in society, or would be shamed for, they also recognised that their performances are for the audience to engage with and be entertained by (interview, Dottie Dynamo, 2016; interview, Bobbie Dazzler, 2016; interview, Rubyyy Jones, 2017; interview, Velma Von Bon Bon, 2016). These performers offer a gift of themselves to the audience, placing themselves vulnerably at the audience's disposal, and they trust that the audience will acknowledge their offering.

Performing a routine that has been developed through hours of a performer's creative labour is, in itself, a vulnerable and intimate act, regardless of the level of physical exposure involved (reflection, 2017; interview, Rubyyy Jones, 2017). Velma Von Bon Bon described the process thus: "you do what you want ... It's a very personal creation." (interview, 2016). She explained that even though you can seek advice from others, the crux of the matter is that Burlesque involves a performer offering themselves: "This is me ... Ta-Dah!" for five minutes of the audience's time (interview, 2016). The performer lays bare their creative heart, soul, and intellect onstage, offering it to the audience to experience. Von Bon Bon concluded: "It's such a strange art form ... You wouldn't get to do that with any other art form." (interview, 2016). Despite the performer's persona being an extra layer of emotional armour, the performer nevertheless exposes themselves to critique and judgement by performing onstage.

There is a dynamic energy in the hiding (behind a Burlesque persona) and the revealing (physically and creatively) of a Burlesque performer. The performer's vulnerability is often the element that is, in fact, being played with in those moments. Performer Rubyyy Jones described the vulnerability they brought to their routines:

There is never a lack of vulnerability in solo performance ... I am still very vulnerable in that moment. Because I am a person ... I work in persona, not a character [like actors do] ... an extension of me. (interview, 2017)

In interview, several performers (interview, Dottie Dynamo & Wild Ginger, 2016; interview, Rusty Von Chrome, 2016; interview, Velma Von Bon Bon, 2016) expressed the need to be authentic and true to themselves onstage, exploring and trying out new aspects of themselves. Whilst the performer onstage reveals a vulnerability, an authentic truth about themselves that connects with the audience, they have their Burlesque persona to return to. Even though it is an extension of self, it can be used by performers to protect themselves, as a shield, and a frame to contain the vulnerability displayed in a routine, whilst processing feedback. Performer Oriana describes her experiences onstage: "I am baring who I am and not just my body." (interview, 2016). The performer undertakes an existential exploration of themselves in the creating, developing, and performing of a routine.

In Detail: Arabella Twist – Making the Invisible Visible

Recognising something of yourself in the performer onstage as you sit in the audience is an emotional connection and an illuminating experience, but it can also extend beyond the performance into further rumination and thought. When Classic bump-and-grind performer Millie Dollar performed at *Diversitease* 2016, I knew little about her. Whilst watching her I found it curious that she was on that stage because she presented as a tattooed white slender woman. Later I discovered that she is deaf. Audience member Cat recognised that “putting yourself on [the HBBF *Diversitease*] bill is an identifier” (interview, 2016); a performer’s invisible disabilities, gender, sexuality, or race backgrounds are highlighted simply by performing on that particular stage. Dollar chose to put herself forward for the show, to openly divulge what cannot be seen, a disability that could have been hidden and never known. On that occasion there were also two deaf interpreters who worked throughout the evening interpreting the compere and the music. Seeing a performer who could pass for ‘normal’ choose to reveal her ‘diversity’ was encouraging for me, because I have an invisible condition (MS). As an audience member I felt it was acceptable for me to consider my disability as a part of my mostly able-bodied identity, rather than shamefully hide it because being seen as ‘normal’ would make life easier. I realised that the Burlesque persona I was about to create did not have to reject disability in favour of the popularised glamour and perfection of Popular Burlesque, that whilst it’s not a visible disability, it is still part of my performance identity, and if made known, could potentially foster connection with audience members. Dollar’s performance enabled me to question my own perceptions about myself, Novel-Burlesque, and the Burlesque persona I wished to portray. As a result, to really understand what it meant to connect with the material performed and be truly authentic and open with my audiences, I realised I would have to explore this part of myself onstage. This meant becoming vulnerable.



Figure 50. (left) Dirty Martini as Lady Justice. Photography: Tony Heath Photography.

Figure 51. (right) Demi Noir as Josephine Baker. Photography: Neal Rylatt Photography.

I needed to explore my own identity and disability (MS – see Glossary) to be able to research vulnerability, the relationship between the material performed and the performer, as well as the emotional connection between the performer and audience. I am often in denial about my disability, MS, seeing it as a weakness, a failing, a negative vulnerability. As I grew up I helped my mother to manage with her spinal injury, and so from an early age, and throughout my childhood, Mexican artist Frida Kahlo was a recurring figure as a symbol of resilience and hope. I intended to use disability icon Frida Kahlo in the same way that I had seen other performers use icons: as a shorthand to help the audience visually understand the basis for the routine. For example, performer Dirty Martini begins her ‘American Patriot’ routine dressed as Lady Justice (who is a mythological archetype – see Figure 49) with weighing scales and a blindfold, to then discuss America’s greed and obsession with monetary value (2016); similarly, Miss Taboo Blue performs as Marilyn Monroe in a harrowing interpretation of Monroe’s suicide, to explore the negativity of fame (2016); and there are the joyous homages to Josephine Baker’s banana dance by Demi Noir (2018 – see Figure 50) and Zelia Rose (2020). I wanted to investigate using Novel-Burlesque to explore more difficult emotions beyond escapism, humour, and sexual titillation. Up until this point, I had heard about and seen videos of Novel-Burlesque routines that explored more serious topics in a non-sexual way: for example, Rubyyy Jones’s ‘Fridaaa’ (based on the moment of Kahlo’s crash) and ‘Tellinnng’; I had yet

to experience Shir Madness's 'White Queen' but had seen Pi the Mime's living statue routine (about the awareness of a fleeting moment of joy and the pathos as it disappears). Consequently, I carefully constructed 'Frida' (with some mentoring from Lady Wildflower and Ruby Jones), which debuted at Spare Rib's Halloween show, The Magnet, Liverpool on 26 October 2017. With the research aim of exploring the vulnerability of revealing self and provoking the audience into the unknown, I devised a routine that would create conversations around invisible disabilities, provoked by revealing my own.

Originally, this routine was intended to explore the pain, confusion, and frustration often experienced with chronic illness, using my own experiences and key moments of Frida Kahlo's life to create the performance. Through the rehearsal process and development, four key moments in Frida's life and artwork became visual hooks by which to navigate difficult emotions and experiences of chronic illness; I allocated a body part with which to lead my movement through dance:

Part one (see Figure 51) – *Frida on White Bench* by Nickolas Muray (1939) (0:00–1:50) – Lead with the arms and hands; escaping the painting to explore, indulge, and play joyfully with the colours of life, her flexibility and femininity.

Part two (see Figure 52) – *Self Portrait with Cropped Hair* (1940) (1:50–4:08) – Lead with the heel of the foot and groin; progression into political activism and communism, marital issues with Diego, her strength in silence and masculine persona.

Part three (see Figure 53) – Various photographs of her painting medical corsets throughout her life and on display at the V & A exhibition, *Frida Kahlo: Making Herself Up* (2018) (4:08–5:07) – Lead with the chest and heart; pain and frustration of being medically bound to find release in painting her medical corset.

Part four (see Figure 54) – *The Broken Column* (1944) (5:07–5:37) – Lead with the spine; freedom from the medical corset, a new Frida accepts the medical cage that supports her and continues with hope and determination. The butterfly wings reference her quote: "Feet, why do I have you when I have wings to fly?" (Kahlo, 1953, quoted in Fuentes, 1995, p. 274), and her use of them as a symbol of hope throughout her works. In 2019 I changed the nipple pasties from simple white sequined circles, in keeping with the medical cage, to anatomically correct red

rhinestone hearts to represent the linked hearts in Kahlo's painting *The Two Fridas* (1939).

By using "Misa Criolla: II Gloria" by Ariel Ramirez and Los Fronterizos, a piece of music with four distinct sections, I was able to move from one experience to another. The routine transformed into a piece about resilience, determination, and hope. It became a homage to her life and a way for me to express those feelings and connect with others in the audience who have had similar experiences.



Figure 52. Part one of 'Frida'. Photography: Darren McGinn Photography (left) 2020, (centre) 2018; Neal Rylatt Photography (right) 2018.



Figure 53. Part two of 'Frida'. Photography: Neal Rylatt Photography (left) 2018; Darren McGinn Photography (centre) 2019; Neal Rylatt Photography (right) 2018.



Figure 54. Part three of 'Frida'. Photography: Neal Rylatt Photography (left) 2018; Darren McGinn Photography (centre) 2019, (right) 2020.



Figure 55. Part four of 'Frida'. Photography: Neal Rylatt Photography (left) 2018; Darren McGinn Photography (centre) 2019; Neal Rylatt Photography (right) 2018.

Beyond my personal affiliation with Frida Kahlo, she had long been a disability and feminist icon. In recent years, with the rise of feminism and the #MeToo movement Kahlo's image has become a symbol for social and cultural circles championing change; coupled with the commodification of Kahlo's image (Valentish, 2018), this has led to the famous portrait of her taken by Nickolas Muray (1939) and other of her images being seen everywhere and on almost everything (see Figure 55).



Figure 56. Mine and Hannah's homage to Muray's famous photograph of Frida Kahlo, Betty Noir Studio, 2016.

Through watching my 'Frida' routine, audiences engaged not only with my personal offering but also with Kahlo as a person, whose whole complex story has often been overlooked or reduced to one dimension. There were conversations in the audience about my routine as an experience, about her life, disabilities, and about what Burlesque (as an art form) actually is and could be. One performer observed the change in the audience during this routine:

The most love for Frida Kahlo [from the audience] last night ... You stimulated a conversation ... you're providing something to take away ... I think your performance spoke to [them] in all the ways it should.

(impromptu conversation, Val Oh So Rapture, 2017)

'Frida' challenged audiences on many levels. Firstly, it goes against the Burlesque script as there are no references to sexiness and no tease is performed. Secondly, it introduces challenging material and emotions as the audience journeys through not just Kahlo's life, but also my own experiences and emotions. Unlike 'Cruella Wants it All', where the tease holds the audience's attention, it is the unknown that holds the audience's attention during 'Frida', and they stay attentive through their curiosity. After one show, an audience member said: "I felt like you really took me on a journey. I had never heard of the woman but now I feel I should. I've had a taste of her life. I want to go and find out more." (impromptu conversation, 2017). For this person, the routine had taken them from a position of not knowing to experiencing

the offering, which in turn provoked curiosity. Another audience member commented:

Was it supposed to be uncomfortable? Because it was at one point. I wasn't sure what to do. I just had to watch and take it in. When the paint brushes came out, I was like "phew! I can breathe again" and laughed a lot.

(impromptu conversation, 2018)

The paint brushes coming out of the medical corset after the silence – like the tail sewn onto the bottom of Cruella's red satin knickers, revealed after she kills the puppy – create a moment of comic relief. I created these moments to act as a safety valve, releasing the tension created throughout the routine so that the audience could breathe and reflect briefly on what was happening, to allow them to acknowledge the uncomfortable nature of the routine or the tension of the unknown and unexpected created by watching the routines.

At Matt & Phreds (examination performance, 8 December 2019) the compere, Mayor, aroused the audience's curiosity with both his introduction and my appearance as Frida. The start of the music (and hence of the routine) waited for me to be in position onstage, rather than beginning from my position in the audience, as had been done with 'Cruella Wants it All'. The audience also had to wait for me to be in the correct position for 'Frida' before the routine started, building the anticipation. When I performed 'Frida', Mayor wrangled the audience's expectations brilliantly and therefore framed my performance appropriately so that the audience gave me their concentration from the very beginning. This routine demanded their full focus from the outset, and they were with me on the journey from the very beginning. As a result, the dialogic gaze was quickly established despite the absence of the Burlesque script, and due to the lack of visual cues the audience was in a vulnerable position. They were unable to anticipate my actions and responses, therefore I held the audience's attention and curiosity through the unknown and this helped to build a relationship between us. To understand and gain enjoyment from the routine the audience had to trust that I would lead them on an entertaining journey and I had to trust the audience to accept my offering. Throughout the course of the routine a reciprocal flow of energy, trust, vulnerability, and enjoyment was created and experienced, which supported the findings of previous performance experiences.

At the examination performance show (8 December 2019) the audience's reactions to the two routines also differed. The audiences (nomadic and regulars), who had seen both of my routines before, knew where alterations had been made or malfunctions had happened. Most felt that whilst they enjoy 'Cruella Wants it All' for its frivolity and anarchy, my performance of 'Frida' continues to improve each time because they see it in different ways (impromptu conversation, Rapture, Addiction, & Steel, 2019). There was one unsettling audience member present, whose behaviour with performers is known to verge on inappropriate. His reaction as I left the stage after 'Cruella' was to try to hug me whilst I was semi-naked; having encountered this before, I side-stepped the exchange and smiled, nodding acknowledgement, and keeping my distance. However, after 'Frida' his response was very different. He continued to clap and then offered a high-five. Clearly something had changed in his reception of me, possibly due to my earlier reaction towards him or because of the effect my performance as Frida had had on him. Either way, I had reinforced my agency off stage, as well as onstage, and as a result he respected my boundaries. Another audience member who had wandered into the club at the interval for a drink, waited until after the show to explain that he had been clueless about the event and had stood at the back, and that 'Frida' was unlike anything he had seen before. It had "powerfully affected" him (impromptu conversation, 2019) in a way he was unable to describe at that moment, and he thanked me for giving him new insight. Other audience members on that night, and at previous performances, have come up to me and described how emotionally charged and provoking the 'Frida' routine is compared with 'Cruella Wants it All'; they describe the experience as going beyond witnessing the empowerment of the performer (as with 'Cruella') and being actually empowering and motivating for the audience too (2017–2019).

As Arabella Twist, I am able to perform and reveal different aspects of myself. By taking inspiration from archetypes (the seducer – Cruella de Vil) and icons (Frida Kahlo), as so much of Contemporary Burlesque performance does, the routines have an additional cultural significance for both the audience and myself. I am not trying to *be* these characters and enact their roles, but am rather using them to express myself, and to connect and communicate with the audience. Burlesque performers use archetypes and icons as a shorthand to be able to visually

communicate a lot very quickly to the audience as most routines are no more than five minutes long. As a long-held disability icon within the disability community (interview, Kirsty, 2016), Frida was a perfect shorthand.

Performing On The Edge – Proximal Identification

However, as a visibly white able-bodied performer, I have had conversations with other performers, audience members, and producers about 'Frida' as a potentially problematic routine in terms of Mexican cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation is where a performer from a dominant culture uses, as costume, items or clothing that are sacred or of cultural significance for a minority culture that has been systematically oppressed (Sinner, S., & Deville, C., 2016). It refers to furthering and profiting from the ridiculing, inappropriate use, and promotion of harmful cultural stereotypes. These cultures and races are lived experiences and not costumes that can be put on and later discarded. Burlesque has a long history of cultural appropriation and is still not free of this issue today (Shanghai Pearl, 2013; 21st Century Burlesque, 2013).

During the period of research, the global Contemporary Burlesque community's attention has been focused on the negative effects of cultural appropriation, rather than cultural appreciation, and on casting tokenism. Tokenism is where a producer hires a performer to fulfil a symbolic attempt to be inclusive. During the research period there have been at least three occasions when performers have been offensive and insulting due to their use of cultural appropriation in their performances: firstly, Mele Kapunkt and Stormy Heather reinforced historic racist stereotypes by performing a duet routine illustrating 'black savage' and 'white colonial' stereotypes that included 'blacking-up' (Sinner, S., & Deville, C., 2016); secondly, the performer Janet Fischietto wore a sacred warbonnet and performed the routine 'Native American Cutie' (2017) whilst performing a bump-and-grind striptease; thirdly, Fafa Bulleuse used race as an accessory when performing a Nina Simone tribute in which she painted herself in full-body blackface onstage, at Toulouse Burlesque Festival 2017. This last example saw eight other performers walking away from the festival and releasing a statement explaining their actions (21st Century Burlesque (f), 2017; 21st Century Burlesque (g), 2017) because

Bulleuse and the festival producers refused to alter or stop the performance of this particular routine. The local audience responses to these controversial incidents at the time were not documented. However, social media audiences have expressed mixed views, ranging from defending the performer's right to freedom of speech and artistic expression, to pointing out the historical lineage of oppression and ridicule of minority cultures and races. Historically, indigenous Native American, African, and South East Asian cultures have all been appropriated in Burlesque. It has also been argued by some audience members, performers, and festival organisers that in the place that these artists performed (Toulouse, France) the use of these cultural and racial 'props' and 'stereotyping' was seen as culturally normal and should therefore not be censored or taken as being offensive (21st Century Burlesque (f), 2017; 21st Century Burlesque (g), 2017). In response, performers of colour stated that they felt ridiculed and insulted by the use of their culture and race as narrative tools and performance props (Vixen, V., 2018). Whilst some of the performers in question have apologised publicly for "any offense they may have caused" (Sinner, S., & Deville, C., 2016; Burlesque Big Sister/Brother Project, 2017), they have not answered performer Coco Deville's public question regarding "why [they] thought 'blackface' and feeding into cultural harmful archaic stereotypes was a good idea" (Sinner, S., & Deville, C., 2016). Cultural appropriation is hotly debated on social media within the Contemporary Burlesque community. Whilst performances were once excused on the grounds of the ignorance of the performer, producer, and audience, there is no longer any excuse for ridiculing other cultures or minorities given the advent of global connectivity and the accessibility of resources for research online. There is a strong sense of not wanting to replay and, therefore, teach audiences about the harmful mistakes and crimes of the past, yet there needs to be an acknowledgement of them with a willingness to discuss and educate further.

In this context, my routine 'Frida' sits on the threshold of what is acceptable within Novel-Burlesque. The art form flirts with the edge of what is acceptable and what is not, between exploitation and exploration. Yet, as Montgomery (2013) and others (Dodds, 2013; Nally, 2009; Sally, 2009) all attest, Contemporary Burlesque never attempts to provide all the answers to the questions it poses but it, importantly, offers a platform and space in which to provoke learning and thinking. This platform for provoked learning and thinking is similar to that of a group of thirty-seven

researchers, artists, and community leaders who were brought together by Haruko Okano to look at ways to “identify and de-activate colonial habits of being, and to gesture towards the possibility of decolonial futures” (<https://decolonialfutures.net/> 2020). Looking directly at racism and cultural appropriation, together they created the principles of The Haruko Accord. This accord states that the group’s experiments aim “to interrupt harmful habits of being related to systemic, historical and on-going violence, and to patterns of unsustainability” for pedagogical and/or artistic collaborative processes (The Haruko Accord, 2020). They aim to do so by acknowledging these habits and patterns, and growing from them with an ability to understand the complexities and find a new way of understanding and self-reflexivity (The Haruko Accord, 2020). To do this learning there needs to be a willingness, an openness, and an acceptance of vulnerability from all participants and a trust that these attributes will allow for an authentic new learning experience. An environment is required that can hold space for such learning – a ‘trickster space’ – which Novel-Burlesque provides. On the verge of what is considered acceptable, by presenting a critical dialogue Novel-Burlesque creates an environment that is not didactic, and in which people can learn for themselves as part of co-learning.

I was very careful in the construction of ‘Frida’, extensively researching Kahlo’s life and work to create the routine and making performance choices based upon that research. Whilst Frida Kahlo’s strong connections with Mexican culture cannot be ignored, the routine’s focus is on the iconic individual, celebrating her life and work, rather than on Mexican culture or a stereotype of Mexican people. Mexican culture is only referenced during the performance in relation to Kahlo’s relationship with it and her depiction of it (for example, the wearing of Tehuana dress adopted by Frida to show her support of indigenous Mexicans, though she herself was of mixed heritage, but also used to conceal and distract from her disabilities). This is only one element of Kahlo explored onstage, as the routine progresses to look at her artworks, politics, her personal relationships with her father and with her artist husband, Diego Rivera, and her health struggles. I do not perform her disability either. I am disabled; I use my experiences of this as I visually depict pain, internal frustrations, and determination onstage. Therefore, I am not ‘cripping-up’ (see Glossary), but using my ability, at the time of performance, to express the feelings I experience when I am not physically able. Our disabilities are different: Kahlo had multiple disabilities,

including polio as a child that damaged her right leg and foot, spinal and pelvis damage from a tram accident, and possible spina bifida; I have the neurological condition MS, where my immune system attacks and damages the nerves in my brain and spinal cord causing neurological sensations, pain, and possible paralysis or blindness. Kahlo was known for making her visible disabilities as invisible as possible, carefully curating her appearance and what people saw of her so as to not elicit pity (V & A, 2018). This is something everyone with a disability, visible or invisible, contends with as they try to live their lives managing their disabilities (interview, Kirsty & Cat, 2016; impromptu conversations, anonymous performers, 2018, 2019). The 'Frida' routine is not comedy or satire or striptease. The routine is Burlesque in the respect that I, as the performer, am aware of my audience and the context in which I perform, and in that during the performance I reveal a narrative journey for consideration and conversation. On this basis and after watching the routine, the majority of those who have questioned the legitimacy of me performing 'Frida' (2018) have been satisfied that the routine is cultural appreciation, not appropriation. Due to my extensive research into the life of Frida Kahlo, Mexican history, Tehuana culture, and her relationship to it, I was able to present Kahlo as a nuanced individual, not a stereotype. I remove the Tehuana-inspired outfit onstage with the utmost joy, respect, and reverence for the values it embodies. The focus of the routine is on Frida and exploring her as a person. It is not a comment on Mexican culture, of which she is part. One producer, however, was adamant that Frida is solely a Mexican icon and therefore representative of the entire culture (personal correspondence, 2019). As discussed briefly in 1. Literature Review, I remain in a position of 'white privilege' and the creation of this routine can be described as an act of "white innocence" (Thompson, 2021). This routine is therefore problematic. In seeking to find a way to articulate identifying with others – and to do so with actual respect, not the policing respect Sedgman highlights (2018) – I found and looked to The Haruko Accord for guidance.

Black Burlesque and cabaret performer Sadie Sinner the Songbird, asked white performer Fafa Bulleuse, who 'blacked-up' onstage to perform a 'homage' to Nina Simone: "Do you think a crowd of Black people would praise you for this monstrosity? Do you think Nina would praise you?" (Sinner, 2017). Historically, 'blacking-up' has always been racist and demeaning for the Black community as it

perpetuates the kind of negative stereotypes that Nina Simone spoke out against. Frida Kahlo spent her life and work exploring her different identities and roles; yet today, her 'image' has become a cultural 'commodity', and consequently it has lost the spirit of her original intentions. Unlike the Burlesque script and tropes, my intention with this routine was not to use Kahlo as a stereotype, but rather to use Novel-Burlesque to open her up to the audience, to expand their knowledge beyond her famous unibrow and floral hair crown. Kahlo became an icon to so many minorities and oppressed groups of people as she moved through her many identities that her influence is hard to contain. Openly bi-sexual and having an open relationship with her husband, Diego Rivera, Kahlo had many relationships with women and also explored gender, and therefore the LGBTQ+ community honour her (Appelbaum, 2018; Kohler, 2020). Her defying of gender roles and societal beauty standards as well as her expressing the truth of women's experiences in her paintings have heralded her as a feminist icon (Bakewell, 1993; Karbo, 2019; Pankl, 2015). Her courageous actions and determination to continue her life and painting despite her many disabilities have made her a symbol of resilience amongst disabled communities (Chavarria, 2020; Daunton, 2015; Jones, 2018). Often forgotten, Kahlo was highly politically motivated, supporting left-wing anti-imperialism throughout her life (Jacolbe, 2019) and is therefore still referenced in pages of *The Socialist* (Galea, 2017). Frida Kahlo is more than Mexican culture; she is intrinsically a part of Mexican culture, but she is also a multi-faceted icon, and this is what I bring to the stage through the disability perspective.

After much discussion and out of a desire not to offend, I fathomed that to reduce Frida Kahlo to being purely a Mexican icon would be to deny the other aspects of her life that are also worth honouring, that she was proud of, and that a wide variety of people relate to and connect with. On seeing my routine, one audience member said: "How you worked the many different sides of Frida into that act was stunning. I just loved the changes and how you showed them." (impromptu conversation, 2018). As such, producers have booked my 'Frida' routine for specific and varying reasons particular to their events: for example, the LGBTQ+ community for Chester Pride 2018 and Oxford SPUDS 2019; the family-orientated Barefoot Festival 2019; and the International Women's Day March 2020. With an awareness that the routine 'Frida' and my identification with a Mexican artist (from the disability icon perspective) may

be seen as drawing upon this uncomfortable history and practice, I hope that my response is seen as a furthering of awareness for Kahlo as a complex individual and as cultural appreciation.

There is an area that was unanticipated and uncovered within the research that needs to be considered and researched: proximal identification, which addresses how a group of people can identify with different specific aspects of an icon whilst still acknowledging the icon as whole. By acknowledging intersectionality, which highlights a person's overlapping identities and their unique experiences, proximal identification acknowledges the specific perspective by which another can identify with that person and still appreciate them and their many identities as a whole. By the time I had completed the major part of my practice-as-research many diverse issues had been revealed, but there was, unfortunately, little time left in which to explore them. This particular topic can be considered to be an area for further theoretical and practice-based research within a post-doctoral enquiry.

By delving deeper and confronting an aspect of my own identity, which holds a lot of anxiety and insecurity, I was able to offer the audience something very different to celebrate and experience. Compared with the exuberant vibrancy and confidence of the 'Cruella Wants it All' routine, 'Frida' explores areas of my own identity that are difficult for me to come to terms with and presents these to the audience for criticism, exploration, and perhaps celebration. Through performing 'Frida' and engaging in the conversations it led to with producers, fellow performers, and audience members, I began to acknowledge and accept that disability is a part of my identity. So too are the resilience, defiance, and hope that I illustrate in 'Frida' when I perform the routine. Putting myself in the position of performer and of having to explore my identity (personal and emotional aspects) has led to greater self-knowledge as well as a much more nuanced understanding of the Burlesque 'performance text' (Schechner, 1988, 2004) process. Through the creation of this routine, I was able to challenge my own understanding of my identity and confront the shame (and consequently denial) I felt towards my disability, which has actually been more damaging to my health and wellbeing than the disability itself. The process tapped into an area of learning and exploration that had not been considered in attempts to tackle these issues in myself through past therapies and medical applications – the

visual and the narrative. The role of Burlesque as a form of creative practice with therapeutic potential is discussed again in the next chapter (6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability). By using the Burlesque form to explore and explain my experiences through the visual depictions of Frida Kahlo and by building a clear narrative revealing her identities, I was able to communicate the pain, the struggle, the shame, the desire to conceal weaknesses (in this case disability), as well as the strength needed to reveal, acknowledge, accept, and live with those weaknesses. The process of performance creation and self-reveal to the audience was, for me, a crucial part of acknowledging, accepting, and living with MS. Arguably, this can be seen in the work of other performers discussed in the following chapter. This routine transformed my own thinking about my disability and encouraged conversations with audiences about Burlesque, invisible and visible disabilities, and what society expects regarding all three issues.

In terms of the Burlesque performance text, I recognise my privilege in being able to present as a white relatively slender cis-gendered able-bodied performer, in contrast to Cinnamon Cheeks, Lily Snatch Dragon, and Rubyyy Jones, whose provocations and vulnerabilities are more visibly obvious. I deliberately break the Burlesque script in my routines to explore and play with the conventions, whereas Cheeks's body breaks the Burlesque script not through choice but through physical disability (see 6. Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability). I have chosen to discuss and highlight my invisible disability only after beginning to perform, just as Millie Dollar did, whereas Cheeks and Snatch Dragon live with their visible diversity. Yet through revealing our vulnerabilities we challenge not only society's expectations of Burlesque as an art form, but also what can be discussed onstage and who should be able to perform.

Conclusion

The performer–audience relationship, using the dialogic gaze, is informed and shaped by the curation of Novel-Burlesque events as a whole but particularly by the performer's routines, in which they are able to provoke through their actions,

challenge both the audience and themselves with the performance material, and thus offer their vulnerability through an exposure of themselves (emotionally and personally, as well as physically) to the audience. As a consequence of this, the audience is placed in a position of vulnerability at the point of performance, and they too place themselves in a precarious position by offering themselves as willing participants to witness and learn from the performers and to explore their own identity. As such, I discovered that within the Novel-Burlesque event there is a mutual vulnerability between the performer and audience.

With a sense of open and respectful mutuality, both performers and audience members are able to feel safe and supported within Novel-Burlesque to reveal and explore elements of themselves that would otherwise be shamed or rejected as not conforming with society's status quo. In this potentially safe and supportive space for mutual vulnerability, using the dialogic gaze and the performer–audience relationship that is maintained, trust is crucially developed between the participants. This enables the opportunity for individuals, onstage and off, existentially to consider themselves and their relationships with others and the world, without having to comply with expectations and perceptions. By doing so, the participants demonstrate willingness to discuss and debate experiences and understandings different from their own. This can lead to psychological, social, and political discoveries and manifestations, thanks to the mutual vulnerability and trust developed by the oscillating dialogic gaze that forms a 'safe space'.

The link between the mutual vulnerability and the trust developed through the dialogic gaze caused me to re-evaluate and re-examine my performer–audience relationships during the performance, and the moment of this personal realisation is discussed further in the next chapter (see 6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability). When undertaking this research role (whilst acknowledging the presence of trust within the wider context of Contemporary Burlesque as a community), my research parameters broadened to acknowledge and include the global community, historical connections, and my off-stage interactions, mentorships, and rehearsal development, in addition to my public research performances and attendances. The generosity of self and trust extends beyond the performer–audience moment during an event into the wider community. These values permeate amongst the participants

with the support of workshops and courses that create safe spaces for vulnerability and growth. This can be seen in the teaching practices that make Burlesque a living art form, the fundraising events for performers of the 1950s onwards, during the times when a group of people care for a stranger who is distressed, and also in the way that, whether intentionally or unintentionally, Novel-Burlesque can be used as a creative therapeutic outlet for self-discovery and affirmation. As previously mentioned, this is an area to be considered for future research.

As a consequence of the liberation and freedom to be vulnerable and to explore oneself within a safe and supported environment, the creative possibilities for both performer and audience can potentially be endless. Novel-Burlesque enables the performer to continually question themselves, their practice, and their surroundings, to create routines that are rooted in autobiography and personal understanding, and then to share that creation and its discoveries with the audience. This, furthermore, allows the audience space for self-reflection and gives them the opportunity to explore and offer a version of themselves that perhaps would not ordinarily be seen in society, whilst also respecting and bearing witness to the performer's offering. Both parties use the conduit of the Burlesque performer's persona to slip between identities, possibilities, and experiences. This potential for alternative narratives to be enacted and explored further strengthens the argument for Novel-Burlesque to be seen as a trickster space in terms of its being a place and an enactment of new understanding, ritual, and diversity, as well as a living art form (Ahmed, 2017; Brown, 2015; Butler, 2015; Ling Wong, 2015; Lintott & Irvin, 2015; NourbeSe Philip, 2017; Wynter, 2000). The opportunities for a voyeuristic gaze to arise are limited as the offering of vulnerability is respected, consenting, and mutual.

However, when this vulnerable state is abused by one party or the other, voyeurism as legally and medically defined – where there is no consent or respect for the other party – can develop. Due to the vulnerable nature of the participants, this abuse can then create shame and trauma around the experience. This abuse can come from misconceptions about Contemporary Burlesque due to misunderstandings or stereotypes of the Popular Burlesque form, secondary objectification, a performer's persona slip, or the audience's firm intention of being voyeuristic, regardless of the

many elements put in place to disrupt this gaze. Equally, performers and comperes can abuse their position by forcing either themselves or a situation, such as performance participation, upon an unwilling audience member or by using them as a scapegoat for comical relief. During my investigation, I encountered both situations and, whilst rare in Novel-Burlesque, this does not make them acceptable.

The performers directly challenge societal issues, taboos, and fascinations, provoking the audience to question their own understanding of art, diversity, and what it means to be sexy. Explorations of societal issues such as gender equality and domestic violence (e.g., Rubyyy Jones's routines, 'Potty-mouth Princess' and 'Tellinnng') are given the space to be seen, experienced, and discussed alongside the escapism of Classic Burlesque. Potentially taboo fascinations that have been diluted and normalised in popular culture (e.g., Lilly Snatch Dragon's routines: 'Thai Beginnings', about South East Asian mail-order brides and sex trafficking; and 'Chains', about the cultural misappropriation of South East Asian culture in the Harry Potter series of books and films), or that would have once been considered shameful and reserved for production behind closed doors or even in historic freakshows (Cinnamon Cheeks's routine 'Stroke Survivor', about her reclaiming of body, disability, agency, and sexiness) are also given a platform on which to be addressed and exposed. The beauty of Novel-Burlesque is that it is not a purist art form; its integrity is based upon the celebration of diversity and not on a notion of 'purity' which when enacted eventually reduces, sanitises, and then becomes Popularised Burlesque. The impurity of the art form allows for vulnerabilities to be understood, limitations and challenges to be uncovered, assumptions and perspectives to be re-examined, and boundaries to be pushed and learnt from, by both performers and audiences, through shared experiences of performance.

Through my practice-as-research I experienced a moment of revelation as an audience member whilst watching Millie Dollar performing on the *Diversitease* stage (2016) where she, as an apparently able-bodied performer, revealed herself as a person with an invisible disability. This moment of discovery was crucial in my research as it challenged my own understanding of my identity as a person with an invisible disability and a Burlesque persona. In fact, it challenged my perception of Burlesque as an art form in general. Consequently, this led to my research need to

perform material that would expose me emotionally and personally in order to sincerely connect with the audience by becoming vulnerable onstage.

Through the creation of 'Frida', my research revealed a number of things. I deliberately did not follow the Burlesque script and relied on my self-awareness and awareness of the audience to create Burlesque rather than using 'teasing'. I held the audience's attention with the unknown and their curiosity. The aim of the routine was to explore disability, and invisible disability in particular. To do this visually, I carefully created a homage routine to the icon Frida Kahlo. This in itself opened up questions around story creation and ownership, cultural appropriation, and the complexity of identity and character creation. As a result, I discovered an area for further research regarding proximal identification, as icons are multi-faceted and often have many aspects that are revered by different groups of people for different reasons.

This process of exploration and communication using the Burlesque art form also personally challenged my relationship with my disability, MS. I would never have ostracised another person with the same disability; however, my perception of it within myself was extremely damaging, with denial causing more problems than it solved. The creation of the routine 'Frida' transformed my relationship with my disability from one involving shame, insecurity, and self-hatred to one of acceptance and self-worth. I was able to communicate the range of emotions experienced, and show the distraction techniques that Frida performed throughout her life, illustrating to myself and others with disabilities that we are not alone in these experiences, as well as conveying the determination, struggles, and coping mechanisms. This routine created an authentic bond between me and my audience that was deeper than purely enjoyment and pleasure through entertainment, due to the challenging and vulnerable nature of the material for myself and others. The therapeutic potential of using Novel-Burlesque as a creative form to explore personal difficulties is addressed again in the next chapter; however, this area does warrant more investigation and could be addressed in further research.

There is another important area for further research that needs to be considered, which is the grouping of diverse performers in specifically 'diverse' settings, rather than the integration of diverse performers into all settings. Audience member Kirsty

(2016) noted the concern, despite her love for shows like *Diversitease* that explicitly recognise diversity, because such groupings may promote the ghettoisation of racially, culturally, and physically diverse persons. There are several collectives in the UK that offer safe spaces and platforms for performers of a particular diversity, such as *The Bitten Peaches* (pan-Asian cabaret collective), *The Coco Butter Club* (performers of colour cabaret collective) and *DisabiliTease* (performers with visible and invisible disabilities). These collectives promote and showcase, through their own events, the performers who struggle to be seen on the contemporary Novel-Burlesque circuit and are rarely if ever seen on Popular Burlesque stages.

Unfortunately, it could be argued that their impact is limited to the small number of audiences who attend these very specific events catering for diversity and/or Novel-Burlesque events where the producers are known for being more progressive. Thus, these collectives make very little, if any, impact on Contemporary Burlesque as a whole, including Popular Burlesque, and therefore initiate little change. However, since I began my research, there has been a slow integration of diversity into the Novel-Burlesque and Popular Burlesque circuits. In 2015, The Black Burlesque Directory website was created by the performer Po'Chop to make it easier for producers to find performers of colour around the world (The Black Burlesque Directory, 2020). On a local level, performers have been trying to encourage producers to create diverse line-ups by not performing at a show if the line-up is completely white and able bodied and by offering alternative suggestions.

Unfortunately, performers rarely know who is on the line-up until it is publicised and often it is too late to withdraw at that point. There are also financial implications for the performer stepping back that need to be considered. On a more global level, during the timeframe of this research, the BHoF (see 2. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust) annual Weekend event has seen more diverse performers competing on their stage and winning the top awards, including Rubyyy Jones ('Most Innovative' 2017). Also, the 21st Century Burlesque magazine's annual public vote has also seen a worldwide increase in diverse performers being voted for since I started my research (21st Century Burlesque (h), 2020).

Whilst Novel-Burlesque remains problematic it is a lot more progressive than Popular Burlesque, although there is a lot of work to be done that would be in the self-interest of Novel-Burlesque. In fact, at the point of writing (2020) there is a global overhaul in

progress which Contemporary Burlesque, including Popular Burlesque, cannot ignore and is adapting to: the Covid-19 virus is forcing whole countries into lockdown, and consequently producers are creating online shows and content that allow disabled artists to perform from their own homes, without restrictions. In addition, the Black Lives Matter movement has highlighted the inequality that is faced by performers of colour, thus putting pressure on producers to have more diverse line-ups on their online shows as performers are no longer limited by destination and can perform from across the world. Some producers (e.g., Trixie Blue, *House of Trixie Blue*) have promised that regardless of lockdown easing they will continue to host online events as they recognise the ease of accessibility not only for performers, but also for audiences who find attending a show physically difficult. I have focused my research on the importance of live performance in the way that the dialogic gaze is built and the relationship maintained with mutual vulnerability and trust between the performer and the audience, and it stands to reason that the phenomenon could not be the same with online performance. The way that the online medium impacts on the performer–audience relationship is, however, another area of research that could be conducted as post-doctoral research.

By focusing on the creation of a routine using provoking actions, challenging material, and offering of the personal as a way to create a mutual vulnerability in Novel-Burlesque (through my performing practice-as-research), I found that trust was another element to the performer–audience relationship. I have discussed here the use of autobiography as an offering, a challenge, and a place of vulnerability, but by doing this practical exploration with the routine 'Frida', I discovered that trust was a factor that needed to be examined both in its ability to create collective community (discussed at the beginning of this chapter) and for its effect individually on audience members and performers. Within the limitations of this research, I felt that rather than create a new routine to explore this, I needed to perform 'Frida' through the lens of the trust dynamic. Having explored the creation of collective trust within the community built throughout an event, and which can be experienced beyond the time frame of a production, in the following chapter I focus on the individual experience of trust in Burlesque using my findings gained through the lens of trust and reveal. Chapter 6 also looks in detail at performer Cinnamon Cheeks, who exemplifies the

offering of self-as-a-gift in the form of trust and autobiography, thus, contributing to our understanding of the performer–audience relationship.

6. The Enactment of Trust and Reveal of Disability

Out of the investigative practice-as-research focus on vulnerability, it became clear to me that 'trust' is another key element of the dialogic gaze and the performer–audience relationship in Burlesque. As discovered and experienced, trust in Novel-Burlesque is enacted in a number of different ways, both onstage and off. Having already established how trust is enacted through the creation of community and the framing of performances during the event, in this chapter I explore the contribution of autobiographical performance by disabled Burlesque performer Cinnamon Cheeks and others, their practice of placing trust in the audience, and their impact on the art form.

Neo-Burlesque performer Cinnamon Cheeks illustrates her trust in her audience through offering her explicitly autobiographical multi-media performance 'Stroke Survivor' (seen at *Diversitease*, HBBF 2018; a video of the routine can be seen at Burdy.com, "Feature Act: Cinnamon Cheeks" – see Appendix 14: Performer Links). Cheeks is a disability and sex activist as well as a plus-sized performer, who was hit by a stroke on Christmas Day 2004, a month after giving birth to her first son, at the age of twenty-four. Unfortunately, performers with physical disabilities are often excluded from Burlesque stages due to the inaccessibility of venues, which often have small dressing rooms and steps leading on and off the stage. This is before any consideration by a producer of their act or performance ability or the potential audience reaction. Therefore, when Cheeks performed at HBBF 2018 the standing ovation from all in attendance (as well as later conversations with audience members) demonstrated that this was a significant moment for everyone, and this is discussed in detail within this chapter.

One of the more noticeable ways that the enactment of trust can be seen is when a performer creates an overtly personal and autobiographical routine that they offer to the audience. Novel-Burlesque performers trust that the audience will be open to the journey, and to witnessing, acknowledging, and perhaps learning from the experience, if that is the performer's intention. In simple terms, the audience trusts the performer too, to take them on a journey, to know their destination, and to guide them through the experience, be that one of seduction, or a transitional journey from

emotion A to emotion B, or a transformative experience. To have a positive experience of vulnerability, one has to be open to trusting others and acknowledging one's own interdependency with others: in this case, the performer and audience.

Beyond the moment of the dialogic gaze in action, trust can be felt and mutually experienced as part of the community that is built around Novel-Burlesque, which offers space in which to engage in self-exploration and discovery. Performers with disabilities (I include myself in this) may feel that Novel-Burlesque offers a space and opportunity in which to increase awareness in the audience of their perspectives and experiences in a safe environment. These experiences are born out of my practice-as-research, my own struggle in coming to terms with disability as part of my identity and being open with audiences about it. Only after the fact did I come to the academic field of disability studies, and this is very much the beginning of my journey. These experiences of disability, trust, and the performer–audience relationship will be critically analysed as were the performers' routines, as I draw upon all practice-as-research methodologies undertaken: audience-researcher reflections, audience interviews and comments, performer interviews and comments, performer-researcher reflections, and subsequent academic reading.

Framing and Instigating Trust

Whilst the performer's gift of self through their creativity onstage seems somewhat obvious, the offering and trust given by the audience is less so. The audience's gift of self is through their participation, their bearing witness to the performer, and their openness to accept, respect, and connect with what the performer has to offer as part of the dialogic gaze. The audience hold a space for performers and routines that are potentially raw, sensitive, or unknown. During the HBBF 2018 *Diversitease* show, Rubyyy Jones, as the event's host, prepared the audience for what was to come. Unlike their usual performances, Jones put aside their 'potty mouth' persona and went straight to the heart of the evening, asking the audience to be aware of the very things a Novel-Burlesque event enacts, but often overlooks. They warned us of challenging performances that would be raw and painful for audience and performer alike, referring particularly to her own domestic violence routine and Cinnamon

Cheeks's routine. Jones asked for our generosity and trust in the performers and in ourselves as audiences to sit in an uncomfortable space and be present in it. By highlighting what happens within Novel-Burlesque, Jones deliberately framed the unique exchange of trust that was about to happen, with an awareness that is normally more subtle and often subliminal (between the performer and audience). Heightening everyone's mindfulness of each other and of the shared experience created a room of trust. There was a palpable bond throughout the night that held the audience and performers together as the evening was a rollercoaster of emotions and spectacle. Rubyyy asked us to "bear witness to these many different voices" (performance, Jones, 2018) and as such I wrote later that evening: "the event was powerful, poignant, at times playful but also triumphant" (reflective writing, 2018).

The act of purely witnessing and not intervening to offer a 'helpful' gesture to relieve the struggle of the performers was challenging, thought-provoking, and in some cases infuriating. My desire to interrupt the narrative to make everything better would have silenced the performers' voices and distracted from the essence of their routines, which was to present specific messages, to be seen, and to have their narrative heard. I had to be an empathetic or compassionate audience member, not just a sympathetic one.

In Detail: Cinnamon Cheeks

Cinnamon Cheeks performed her routine 'Stroke Survivor' at HBBF 2018 on the *Diversitease* stage (see Appendix 14: Performer Links). Cheeks was the first visibly disabled artist to perform at HBBF. In the past there had been performers with invisible disabilities, for example Millie Dollar, who had performed at that show as a deaf performer two years previously. As a consequence of her stroke, Cheeks's right arm has limited range and movement, and, as well, other of her movements are limited and jarring. Through performing her multi-media (image and word projection alongside live performance) autobiographical routine, Cheeks was not only revealing herself to the audience and exposing her vulnerabilities, but was also challenging

perceptions of disability and sexuality which are often considered taboo. In order to analyse 'Stroke Survivor' I reference my reflections, performer and audience interviews, and other source material (Burlesque Idol, U.K. 2019; Cheeks, 2018c; Cheeks, 2017).

During this investigation, I got to know the HBBF audience and *The Frou Frou Club* audience very well, having attended almost every event (either as an audience member, front of house volunteer, or as a performer) and interviewed several key people within the community (interview, Ash, 2016; interview, Cat & Kirsty, 2016; interview, Bambi 1, 2016; interview, Bambi 2, 2016). Consequently, I knew that a substantial proportion of this audience was made up of visibly and invisibly disabled people, with a myriad of health issues and chronic illnesses. At this particular *Diversitease* show in 2018 there was increased anticipation from the audience as there was going to be a performer whom they could relate to: Cinnamon Cheeks. Rubyyy Jones's framing of this piece and the way they managed the audience's expectations and interactions led to the audience being encouraging, generous, and complicit in a framework of trust. This heightened awareness of each other and of the shared experience created an intense connection held by the audience and performers together. This was acutely felt when Cheeks was assisted onto the stage at the beginning of her performance.

Taking her time, Cheeks positioned herself on a chair (see Figure 56). Her movements and right arm were visibly awkward, as she sat there in a hospital gown. The projector screen at the back of the stage described the autobiographical series of events that led up to her stroke: pregnancy, labour, the hope and expectation of motherhood that was derailed by the stroke, and the difficulties that came afterwards. The slides were informative, but also visual, with personal and medical pictures as well as text. It was a shock to realise that this had happened when she was twenty-four years old, in 2004, and that her prognosis was that she would not walk again. Our knowledge of these facts and her trusting us with her backstory made her live performance all the more poignant and affecting. Her personal life and Burlesque persona merged; she was trusting us with her personal story. Cheeks was giving us the opportunity to celebrate her capabilities now, to see how hard she had worked to get to the point where she could perform for us.



Figure 57. Cinnamon Cheeks performing 'Stroke Survivor', HBBF Diversitease 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

Cheeks performed as 'normal' with the left side of her body and lip-synced the words to Lady Gaga's song "Till it Happens to You" to her right arm and the audience. As her right hand could not perform the same as her left, her left hand would assist her right (see Figure 56). When slowly removing the glove to reveal her limp right hand and arm the impact of the song and Cheeks's deliberate engagement with the audience was one of sorrow and frustration that became defiant and heartfelt. As she fell clumsily to the floor (intentionally), to rise up and remove the hospital gown to reveal a black peignoir with white rhinestoned lingerie, the audience went from silent to whooping and cheering, not just because of the Burlesque script, but in recognition of her resilience and strength (see Figure 57). Cheeks continued to perform the Burlesque script, removing the peignoir, a shimmy belt, and specially adapted bra, performing floor work and allowing the audience to see how her body moves. Her final reveal was to will her right arm up into the air to create the 'V' like arm pose with both arms (see Figure 58). I later wrote in my reflections:

We could very visibly see her exertion as her hand almost uncurled itself and the triumph that was ... She focused upon her right arm, the audience silently willed her on and cheered even more so when she achieved her own goal to physically raise her right arm up and uncurl her fingers. The effort and exposure Cheeks performed was heartfelt and heart-wrenching.
(reflective writings, 2018)

As an audience-researcher, the act of witnessing and not intervening to offer a 'helpful' gesture to relieve Cheeks's struggle was challenging and thought-provoking. It made me question how and why I might want to interfere to help. Would my actions actually help the other person or hinder them further, or even remove their agency all together; would they thereby only result in making me feel virtuous for having acted on my assumption that they required my help?



Figure 58. Cinnamon Cheeks performing 'Stroke Survivor', HBBF Diversitease 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).



Figure 59. Cinnamon Cheeks performing 'Stroke Survivor', HBBF Diversitease 2018. Photography: Solstice Photography (formerly known as Joust).

Cheeks's vulnerability was visible; her body breaks the conventions of the Burlesque script through its lack of mobility, yet she is determined to perform as closely to the Burlesque script as possible. It is her choice for the audience to witness her physical and unaided struggle and the vulnerability that is so often unseen in society, and for them to learn from it. In her own words:

I knew I wanted my act to question people who are disabled, to prove that we are sexy too, we have had a hard life but ANYONE can do whatever they want. I'm a stroke survivor, in theory I should not be up on a stage, I should be tucked away where know [*sic*] one can see me.

(Burdy.com, n.d.)

Cinnamon Cheeks had not only presented the audience with something they had never seen on that stage before – a visibly disabled performer – but she had also reinvented expectations of Contemporary Burlesque, of sexiness, and of strength. Audience members who had not previously seen themselves represented onstage felt that finally they were included in the Novel-Burlesque conversation. Seeing Cheeks's experience onstage laid bare, along with her presentation of her body, was a privilege. I found I was not alone in feeling this way as I conversed with several audience members who felt honoured and thankful that they had experienced Cheeks's very raw and intimate routine. Later that evening I wrote:

The audience collectively held her performance, and each other as they passed tissues back and forth. At the end Cinnamon Cheeks received a standing ovation of woops, cheers, applause, stomping of feet, and raising of canes and disability aids. (reflective writings, 2018)

Audience members who had visible disabilities told me that they saw themselves onstage, that they too could be a part of Novel-Burlesque onstage and not just in the audience (impromptu conversations, 2018). The shift from being *told* 'Burlesque is for everyone' to actually *seeing* the onstage representation of 'Burlesque is for everyone' shifted the audience's thinking after they had the privilege of watching Cinnamon Cheeks performing.

Cheeks challenged a future I personally feared – that MS could prevent me from performing and being creative. Before seeing this routine, I knew that logically

speaking there were ways to continue performing regardless of the possible physical effects MS could have on my body (including blindness, mobility issues, spasms, slurred speech) because I follow the work of many disabled performers (Burlesque and non-Burlesque) around the world. However, witnessing Cheeks's live performance changed my perspective on my own future, and I later wrote: "I saw my future self on that stage ... [Cheeks] gave me options and possibilities" (reflective writing, 2018). Should my physical health deteriorate, I could still find a way to perform. Through the witnessing of Cheeks's vulnerability, my self-criticism and perceptions of my own disability were challenged and transformed. Where I used to think negatively about my disability and the future, this changed. Seeing Cheeks's strength and determination, I refused to let the disability define me and my capabilities. I had already started performing 'Frida' as Arabella Twist, and my experience of witnessing Cheeks onstage reinforced my need to perform and develop that routine. I would no longer carry my disability with shame; through experiencing Cinnamon Cheeks's routine, I gained the courage to talk about my disability.

Cinnamon Cheeks embodies her provocation explicitly and goes further to present challenging autobiographical material as part of her Neo-Burlesque routine. By directly engaging with her embodied provocation as a disabled performer, Cheeks trusts that the audience will respect, listen, engage, and learn from her experiences and her performance. Cheeks explicitly shares her daily lived experience with the audience, creating a routine that uses her own body as both a tool with which to communicate to the audience and the source material she wishes to communicate. Consequently, the routine is a creative offering, or provocation, that is deeply connected with Cheeks as the performer. Thinking in broader terms, the Burlesque performer who creates such routines wishes for others to see and gain an understanding. It is important for these provocations to be witnessed and heard by the audience. The authenticity of the performer, and their personal connections with the routine they have created and then performed for the audience, is felt instinctively by the audience.

Routines that challenge society or encourage self-reflection and provoke thought in the audience (like those created by performers such as Cheeks, Jones, and Snatch

Dragon) tend not to be seen on the Popular Burlesque stage. Producers' tailoring of their events towards fantasy and escapism for their audiences to ensure ticket sales, together with the inaccessibility of backstage in many live entertainment venues for performers who have disabilities, leads to the marginalisation, or at worst the silencing, of these voices. This intentional and unintentional censorship furthers the idea that these issues are too political, too risqué, and therefore taboo. This censorship runs the risk of inadvertently transforming the safe spaces for different diversities into modern-day side/freakshows where voyeurs can gather to satisfy their particular desires. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it was noted by audience member Kirsty (interview, 2016) that HBBF needed to be careful that the *Diversitease* event did not become a ghettoisation of diverse performers. Two years later, in 2018, Cheeks performed at what was to be the last *Diversitease* at HBBF; it is my understanding that the festival's co-producers took advice from regular audience members with diverse backgrounds when deciding to remove the show. I have noticed that since 2018 the line-up for all events across the festival weekend has become visibly more diverse; however, at the time of writing (August 2020) I do not have any data to confirm this observation.

Within Novel-Burlesque, topics such as disability in youth, disability and sex (Cheeks), the gender pay gap, the rise in domestic violence (Jones), and racism towards South East Asian Women in popular culture (Snatch Dragon) are voiced and explored. Novel-Burlesque endeavours to be a safe space so that performers who live daily with or have experienced socially taboo issues can have a platform on which to be seen and heard. There is a desire in Novel-Burlesque audiences to be provoked out of their comfort zones, to feel something other than pleasure from watching Contemporary Burlesque (see 2. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability). These autobiographical issues perhaps remain unresolved, but they are certainly witnessed and experienced by proxy, by audiences who have either experienced similar, or are open to hearing, learning about, and understanding both their own and the performer's position in society and their lived experiences.

In Detail: Arabella Twist – Trusting Self

Six months before I had the opportunity to see Cinnamon Cheeks perform, I debuted 'Frida' for the first time at The Spare Rib in Liverpool (October 2017). I was unwell: anxiety had caused my MS symptoms to flare up. I had worked hard to create the routine for this performance. After watching Millie Dollar (see Figure 60) perform several times, as well as other performers with invisible disabilities who acknowledged the disability as part of their performing persona (in particular, Diva Hollywood, who also has MS – see Figure 59,), rather than denying it, I really wanted to acknowledge my own disability onstage. This has already been discussed in the previous chapter in relation to vulnerability; however, there was one moment during this particular performance that needs to be highlighted because it was a moment of revelation onstage that I had not anticipated. I felt something beyond mutual respect and attention, which was linked to the mutual vulnerability in the performer–audience relationship: I experienced trust. This moment overtly highlighted trust as an element of the performer–audience relationship that I had previously overlooked when performing 'Cruella Wants it All'.



Figure 60. (left) Diva Hollywood performing her 'Drag King Pirate'. Photography: Neal Rylatt Photography.

Figure 61. (right) Millie Dollar, 2019. Photography: Darren McGinn Photography.

At two minutes into 'Frida', after a whirlwind of colour and joyous choral singing there is a silence of six seconds (transitioning from part one to part two, see 5. Strategies

for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust); the tone of the routine turns sombre. I wrote in my reflections after the performance:

I was surprised, I hadn't realised how quiet the music was at this point and how much of a difference it made with/and for the audience ... During the section I needed to be strong, powerful, and resolute however I did not feel this. I knew I had to fake it – perform it. The audience was with me, I hadn't lost them and couldn't lose them. I had to keep them with me in this very drastic change of tempo. I felt their generosity and curiosity at this point and that carried me. (reflective writings, 2017)

A moment of shock, silence, and vulnerability. In that silence I hesitated as a performer. I was just as surprised by the audience's reaction to this change as they were to experience it. However, I felt we had started a journey together, and as the performer it was my responsibility to continue it to the final conclusion I had mapped out. I trusted that the audience would keep their attention, be open to my offering and join me, even if it was uncomfortable due to the absence of the Burlesque script. Afterwards, I talked to audience members about that moment, and they spoke of how uncomfortable it made them feel. One person in particular said "I wasn't sure what to do, I just had to watch and take it in" (impromptu conversation, 2017). Another audience member said: "I felt like you really took me on a journey" (impromptu conversation, 2017). There appeared to be a consensus that the audience knew I would not leave them in that silence without an explanation or some sort of reward. The audience trusted me as performer to take them on a journey only I, as the performer, could navigate. Backstage, performers often tell each other what to expect from audiences, and one recurring point that would often be discussed on my return after performing 'Frida' was how no one spoke during the silence – because I had so "entranced" and "engaged" the audience (impromptu conversation, Val Oh So Rapture, 2018). The silence and stillness as an interruption to the usual performer–audience exchange allowed for this point of clarity and discovery with regard to the dialogic gaze. Breaking the vocal and kinetic exchange between the performer (me) and the audience exposed the trust that had formed between us, which had been taken for granted when performing 'Cruella Wants it All'. However, trust is crucial in maintaining a relationship of equals.

The performer–audience relationship is built on, and maintained through, the dialogic gaze, which is founded on trust and shared vulnerability within a safe, consenting, risk-taking environment. It can extend beyond the temporal space of the event to promote agency, consent, and trust in other aspects of life. For example, in conversation regarding a mutual friend, one audience member said to me: “Have you seen the way she walks, how she holds herself now? That’s from [Burlesque] classes.” (impromptu conversation, 2017). According to this audience member, our mutual friend’s physical transformation and new positive outlook was attributed to a newfound confidence and agency in herself, gained from attending Novel-Burlesque events and classes. As the social practice performance artist Susan Lacy said, “all art is therapy”, (1998) and offers an opportunity to gain clarity, understanding, and expression of self in relation to the world and others around you. Burlesque performer and academic Kaitlyn Regehr’s study and paper “The Rise of Recreational Burlesque” (2011) (see 1. Literature Review) has started that exploration, although the study itself raises some issues regarding the context in which it was conducted (a reality TV show). The study ended with all the participants describing a sense of self-empowerment and self-efficacy after immersing themselves in Contemporary Burlesque culture for six weeks, concluding in a performance. Regehr’s work on recreational Burlesque echoes the words of Lacy, as does the observation about a mutual friend’s self-exploration and visible increase in self-worth. On a personal level, since performing ‘Frida’ I have overcome my fear and denial regarding my MS to a point where, most of the time, I acknowledge and accept my body, and trust it to show me my limits. I now no longer actively hide my disability and have found it easier to discuss it with others.

In online forums (2016–2019) there had been occasional discussion regarding how to make recreational Burlesque workshops and courses more inclusive, and I had seen Lady Wildflower tailor moves (in routines) and offer alternatives for Classic set pieces for those with mobility issues. Nevertheless, it was only in 2018 – when I was asked by the HBBF’s producers (Lady Wildflower and Heidi Bang Tidy) to chair the ‘Live Panel Discussion: the Cultural Case for Diversity – the Burlesque Elephant in the Room’ – that my research began to explore this in more detail. The panel was made up of performers Sweetpea, Coco Deville, Rubyyy Jones, Heidi Bang Tidy (co-producer of HBBF), and Jo Verrent (senior producer for WeAreUnlimited). The

conversation and debate reinforced much of my thinking about the importance of representation, disability, and performance that had been sparked by Cheeks's performance. Unfortunately, Cheeks was unable to attend the panel discussion, but she sent a statement emphasising that to make Contemporary Burlesque truly inclusive for people with disabilities there needed to be a more nuanced way of teaching and understanding a person's capabilities. She explained that this requires one-to-one sessions or a co-teacher who has a disability and can therefore speak from experience (2018).



Figure 62. Live Panel Discussion: the Cultural Case for Diversity – the Burlesque Elephant in the Room. (Left to right) myself, Coco Deville, Rubyyy Jones, Sweetpea, Heidi Bang Tidy (co-producer of HBBF) and Jo Verrent (senior producer for WeAreUnlimited).

With this new self-definition and awareness, I changed my approach to rehearsals and routine development. In the past, I had rehearsed every possible costume malfunction and accident (such as falling, tripping, or getting stuck) that I could think of, as any diligent theatre professional would. Yet, I very rarely considered what would happen if my MS symptoms affected my ability to perform. My denial led me to ignore the possibility and assume either that I would just push through for the duration of the time onstage in the public eye, or that I would be unable to perform at all. I had not considered adapting the Burlesque script or my original routine structures for such an occurrence, except for having had the odd cursory thought about costume alterations to make clothing removal easier. The irony of this discrepancy did not escape me. When discussing the reasons behind my desire to

create this routine and visually explore my own MS through the story of 'Frida', both Lady Wildflower and Ruby Jones brought this point into focus. Still, it was not until I discovered Neo-Burlesque performer Cinnamon Cheeks that I actually started to envisage a way to acknowledge my disability onstage.

Since then, in rehearsals, I have considered alternatives for if I am unable to lift my left arm due to pain, or my left leg becomes momentarily paralysed/numb, or I go blind onstage. I have not devised many satisfactory solutions, other than to keep going and trust in my ability to adapt quickly onstage – to improvise. My ability to improvise derives from sixteen years of carnival and community theatre experience, thirteen years of clowning and drama school training, and various courses I have undertaken over the years. In addition, since undertaking this research I have partaken in several Contemporary Burlesque workshops and courses with performers on subjects such as how to respond to the audience, stage presence, and the use of comedy skills, and I have also learned whilst performing. The act of improvising onstage and responding to the audience is the dialogic gaze at work without the need for the Burlesque script, as demonstrated by Perle Noire (see 4. Beyond Awareness – the Dialogic Gaze), except that I have an extra element to respond to: my disability. Being open and willing to accept and respond to a situation that presents itself, I have to trust myself, my experience, and my training in that moment. Modifications to the Burlesque script can be rehearsed to allow for my disability: for example, in 'Frida' the use of the chair for support can easily be woven into the routine; however, this does not help with 'Cruella Wants it All'. I have always asked to be able to spend time on the stage, even if a full technical rehearsal is not possible, so that I can get physically acquainted with the space (count the number of steps for width and length of the stage, see where to position the chair for 'Frida', etc.). I wear soft-soled shoes so that I can feel the edge of the stage and/or steps. These are all measures I have used in the past when performing during an MS relapse that has affected my vision.

The therapeutic possibilities in the creativity of Novel-Burlesque not only allow for self-reflection and exploration, but also enable me to address the physical implications of MS and how I need to adapt. Thus, my own learning about and managing of my disability has progressed from denial to acceptance, which is

understood to be the ‘final’ stage of the Kubler-Ross ‘grief cycle’. The ‘final’ stage (acceptance) can be seen when an individual is able to explore options, put new plans in place and move on with this new knowledge and understanding in place (Kubler-Ross, 2009). My willingness to adapt and prepare alternative ways of performing that I had not considered earlier, is an enactment of my acceptance of my MS. I agree with Cheeks that the teaching of Contemporary Burlesque has still some way to go before becoming truly inclusive. The training needs to move past a mere awareness of differing abilities, and of the need to adapt certain moves to accommodate these differences, towards an emphasis on improvisation in performance. The most impactful performances and performers (regardless of ability) have been those that improvised, adapted to the changing circumstances around them – e.g., Perle Noire, and myself as Arabella Twist during *Tawny Kay Presents: Peel of Fortune* (October 2019), where I improvised a reverse striptease version of ‘Cruella Wants it All’ – and did not attempt to follow framework of the Burlesque script or tropes. This principle can be applied to disability as well: rather than focusing on what *cannot* be done, and what needs to be adapted, there needs to be a shift to focusing on what the possibilities are, and what *can* be done, seeing the opportunities rather than the limitations. Improvisation is a skill that not only allows these possibilities to be seen, accepted, and played with in the rehearsal room, but also builds up resilience and flexibility when performing onstage, allowing the performer to continue, whatever the situation. This skill would be invaluable for any performer, regardless of ability; however, for a performer such as myself with an unpredictable condition, this is my best option. The other way to work with these potential possibilities is to create a mental catalogue (and sometimes it helps to have a physical one too, depending on learning styles) of responses to different situations in rehearsals so that the performer is able to recall the response that best suits the situation as it arises onstage.

Something that has struck me is that when a participant reveals their identity and autobiographical story through Burlesque performance, as Cheeks’s performance illustrates, whether onstage or in the audience the person needs to have trust in themselves and an ability to adapt or improvise in a live situation.

Creating New and Inclusive Dialogues

I came to disability and performance as an academic area of study late on in my investigation, because for me it was a lived experience rather than an academic one. I had already encountered some discussion of disability within theatre literature around accessibility for audience members (Sedgman, 2018), and about Burlesque performers with disabilities in relation to the act of undressing and the visual arts (Brownie, 2017); however, I had not engaged with the academic topic of disability and performance as a whole.

Having identified a need for this, I now consider the book *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance*, edited by Sandahl and Auslander (2005), which is a collection of essays and case studies by different writers with varying experiences. I then focus on disability in respect of the audience within theatre literature (Sedgman, 2018), before turning to disability on the Burlesque stage (Brownie, 2017), and, finally, my own more recent experiences of disability and Burlesque as Arabella Twist during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the book's Introduction: "Disability Studies in Commotion with Performance Studies", Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander (2005) look at performance studies and disability studies as two different areas of study before explaining where and how the two disciplines converge to create disability performance studies. According to them, this area of academic research is relatively new due to its being overlooked rather than deliberately erased or ignored. From the very outset, Sandahl and Auslander acknowledge that for the disabled, particularly the visibly disabled, their ability to navigate everyday life is a form of performance: "not a theoretical abstraction, but a lived experience." (2005, p. 2). They point out that this notion of disability as performance is similar to that of performing gender (Butler, 2015) or of a "front" (Goffman, 1990), as disability is "not a static 'fact' of the body [and] is not widely acknowledged or theorized" (2005, p. 2). Sandahl and Auslander also briefly examine the construction of identity and performance amongst disabled people. They highlight that each of the disabled performers and writers in this anthology of essays aims to be an "active maker of meaning, rather than a passive specimen" (2005, p. 4). Rather than accepting society's oppressive narratives and stereotypes

these performers challenge society's assumptions, write their own narratives, and demand to be heard.

One such societal assumption is that if there is a disabled person onstage then the topic of the piece will inevitably be about disability (Sandahl & Auslander, 2005). I have highlighted Cinnamon Cheeks's performance 'Stroke Survivor', which is explicitly about her disability, to illustrate her use of autobiographical experience in offering her vulnerability and trust to the audience when using the dialogic gaze. However, she and other disabled performers (Little Peaches, Airelle Firecracker, Diva Hollywood) also perform pieces that are not about disability. The societal assumption, and therefore the audience's expectation, that disabled performers only produce creative works about disability, is at odds with how disabled performers conceive of and create their performances. This dichotomy is particularly touched upon in the chapters "Shifting Apollo's Frame: Challenging the Body Aesthetic in Theatre Dance" (Smith, 2005) and "Shifting Strengths: The Cyborg Theatre of Cathy Weis" (Parker-Starbuck, 2005), where the disability is a part both of the performer and the performance but is not the subject of the performance. Smith asserts that the art produced is expected to explore and be performed to a high quality, regardless of not meeting standardised "aesthetic heterogeneity" (Smith, 2005, p. 75). This mirrors Cheeks's call for more inclusivity and a re-evaluation of how Burlesque is taught and accessed. Every entry point and development of the arts and artists needs a shift in perspective to become more accessible and accepting if disabled performers and artists are to be experienced and critiqued as equals in creating art.

Sandahl and Auslander continue to explain how the two areas of research (disability studies and performance studies) with their differing epistemologies reacted, rejected, and responded to definitions and distinctions from other areas of research. Disability activists vehemently fight and struggle against two models of thinking which are used in medicine and the social sciences: the medical model, which posits disabled people as "unfortunate victims of pathologies" and patients with no agency; and the moral model, in which the person is seen as being responsible for their own disability (Sandahl & Auslander, 2005, p. 129). Interestingly, in their analysis they focus on two models that are now central to disability studies: the social construction model and the minority model.

The Social Construction Model

The social construction model posits that disability is a social construct that results from society's not being built for disabled people. It states that "disability is a disjuncture between the body and the environment" (2005, p. 8). This model is adopted, discussed, and further developed in several of the essays, including "Aesthetic Distance and the Fiction of Disability" by Jim Ferris (2005). Ferris expands the notion by looking at disabled performers who use aesthetic distance – the audience's awareness of the fiction performed onstage which is juxtaposed with the reality and personal story of everyday life for a disabled person – to expose society's reliance on the artifice known as disability. This viewing of 'disability' suggests that society uses the concept of disability with its negative connotations (the enforced fiction) to maintain the status quo, and the limiting factors for those with disabilities (the harsh reality) are in fact limiting to everyone. By understanding this and using aesthetic distance in performance, Ferris posits that disabled performers transform "the closed look of the stare [from the audience] into a more open look that is both receptive and creative" (2005, p. 56). It is this change in viewing and thinking about disability that the authors and performers in this book wish to see implemented, particularly in relation to the inhospitable physical and systematic construction of society.

By exploring aesthetic distance, the performers – the cast and creators of *Do You Sleep in That Thing?* at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale in 1992 – that Ferris discusses were able to demonstrate the commonalities and differences between them and their mostly non-disabled audience, thus overcoming any anxiety non-disabled people may have about people with disabilities (2005). For this to be accomplished successfully, the audience firstly needs to be aware of the fictionality of theatre, to feel comfortable and emotionally receptive to the action onstage. Once this is achieved, by playing with aesthetic distancing the performers can offer the audience new perspectives and ideas. Here Ferris's performers did this in several ways. Performer Bob flipped the societal narrative for his satire *The Biped Lecture*, a fictional lecture about a world built for disabled people where the non-disabled find it difficult to live; by highlighting his difference to the audience he created greater distance, enabling them to examine the structures of everyday disabled life (Ferris,

2005). In contrast, performer Cal's comical anecdotes from everyday life highlighted the commonalities between himself and the audience. Enlisting the audience to his perspective, Cal's humour and jokes "take some of the sting away from the audience" as he tells them of the difficulties and absurdities he daily has to deal with to be part of society (Ferris, 2005). Bob, performer of *The Biped Lecture*, is quoted by Ferris: "I don't want my physical difference to vanish. I just want the negative associations to." (2005, p. 66). By exploring aesthetic distance these performers were able to overturn disability stereotypes and create their own narratives, revealing the truth of their lives and creating fictions of their own that are not based on assumptions and negativity.

This manipulation of aesthetic distancing used to show the social construction of disability can also be used by other people experiencing similar discrimination and oppression from social constructs. This technique can be seen in contemporary Novel-Burlesque with its knowing use of illusion and fiction-spinning, from the host's introductions to the other-worldly luxury performed in the most unlikely of places, and to the juxtaposition of the personal and the political, revealing different perspectives. It is the latter element, in particular, that can be likened to the work of Ferris's performers, because Burlesque performers of the Neo-Burlesque style can be seen to use and play with aesthetic distancing from one routine to the next. For example, Rubyyy Jones's two routines 'Potty-mouth Princess' and 'Tellinnng' illustrate their use and exploration of aesthetic distancing to show difference and commonalities in both the different tones used and the topics performed (discussed in 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust). 'Potty-mouth Princess' deliberately distances Jones from both the men and the more conservative and traditional members in the audience with its aggressive and challenging tone and overtly political stance. However, it enlists the women in the audience by means of being a rallying cry around their commonalities. In contrast, their routine 'Tellinnng', in its use of a universal understanding of devotional love as a point of commonality with the audience, to then depict the hurt, trauma, and, in the worst cases, the physical harm and/or death when someone is abused by a partner, has the potential to distance audiences due to the brutal and violent subject matter and conclusion. The use of this performance technique by Ferris's performers (whose examples all directly addressed their audience) and Novel-Burlesque performers, feeds into the concept

of the dialogic gaze and how it is used and maintained by a performer to offer alternative narratives, perspectives, and understandings on humanity, and how to connect and live in the world.

The Minority Model

The second model is the minority model. This model extends beyond practical physical constructions, social assumptions, and perceptions, to encompass the disabled person's agency in "crafting new disability identity" and a new "distinct minority" community based on the "shared experiences of discrimination and by its vital subculture, including the arts" (Sandahl & Auslander 2005, p. 8). As Sandahl and Auslander state, the Deaf community (not the hearing impaired – deaf with a small 'd') are already an example of this, having their own history and culture that is separate from the non-disabled world with sign language being categorised as a foreign language rather than as an aid, which dispenses with all notions of being disabled. The minority model and the creation of community through a common experience of discrimination echo Butler's (2015) living with precarity, and actioning the changes they wish to be seen, and, likewise, Brown's (2006, 2010) shame resilience communities, who find creativity out of vulnerability. This model also connects with and supports my discussion of liminal spaces for new ritual and understanding (Lintott & Irvin, 2015; Wynter, 2000), the blurring of boundaries, and the creation of trickster spaces.

Finally, Sandahl and Auslander marry these perspectives from disability studies with those of performance studies through Goffman's concept of the "everyday performance" (1990) of identity. They do so by thinking about disability as a way of interacting and connecting – with "a world that is frequently inhospitable ... as something one *does* rather than something one *is*" (2005, p. 10) – rather than as a physical condition. Throughout *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance* (2005) this definition of disability is reaffirmed, developed, and debated in each author's essay in relation to the performance-related topic they address. I have also noticed the use of varying terminology to emphasise different aspects that are important for the writer or performer to be able to clarify and define their humanity, their commonalities, and differences. As mentioned in the literature review, it is important to consider the usage of words, their meanings, and who defines them. I

am going to address two terms that have been crucial in my current understanding of this research area: 'disability' and 'non-disabled', considering both in relation to people rather than as abstract concepts.

Disability Terminology

As previously mentioned, the word 'disability' holds a lot of societally constructed negative connotations and stereotypes that the disabled community would like to dismantle and rewrite. Ferris explains that the difference between limitations and disability is a crucial difference, and one that is often ignored when the two words are conflated. 'Impairment' refers to the person's functional limitations and the medical condition of their body, whilst "some scholars" use disability to define "the social implications of impairment": the stigma, the cultural representations of disability, the stereotypes, the history of institutionalisation, and the erasure from society's eyes (Ferris, 2005, pp. 66–67; Cheu, 2005). It is the intersection of these two words that creates the fiction around disability that the dominant society has created and promoted as a damaging fiction – a fiction that disabled performers wish to challenge, overturn, and rewrite.

One usage that struck me was that of "non-disabled" rather than 'able-bodied' or 'normal'. 'Non-disabled' is used throughout most of the essays in *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance* (2005); placing 'non' in front of 'disabled' normalises 'disabled'. As a result, this shifts the status quo from that which is perceived to be standard – erect "Apollo frame" able-bodied neuro-typical persons – to the many other variations of humanity (Smith, 2005 p. 73). However, Parker-Starbuck notes performer Cathy Weis's description of her struggles against the term 'disabled', as for her the term illustrates only loss, the losing of ability depicted by "dis/abled", preferring to reframe her progressive MS as a "shift in balance for [herself]" (2005, p. 95). Although Weis sees loss of ability as inherent to the process of growing up and growing old, she believes that as a human loses certain abilities with age, other opportunities and abilities are gained. This is later echoed in Cheu's essay "Performing Disability, Problematizing Cure" (2005): "Change is not loss; change is just change. I wanted people to understand that the 'dis' in disability is someone else's 'dis.'" (Cheu, 2005, p. 142). We see discussion and debate visually explored in Cinnamon Cheeks's routine 'Stroke Survivor' – the name of the routine

alone starts to overturn any sense of potential victimisation and asserts Cheeks's own agency regarding her experience.

Prevalent throughout the essays is this shifting of perspective towards a desire to be understood, for voices to be heard and experiences to be witnessed and acknowledged, providing the impetus for change to be enacted by the audience. Next, I focus on one essay in particular: "Dare to Stares, Disabled Women Performance Artists and the Dynamics of Staring" (Thomson, 2005), which overtly discusses the performer–audience relationship in relation to the gaze or "the stare" and vulnerability (Thomson, 2005).

The Stare

Thomson begins by explaining "the stare". When navigating the non-disabled world all visibly disabled people experience the stare as transgressive and intimate because it breaches all social codes of conduct between strangers. It is often an unwelcome exposure for the disabled person that breaches the anonymity with which the non-disabled take for granted the carrying out of simple everyday tasks. The stare is the dominant way of looking at disability in the public realm: the viewer desires to understand the difference between themselves and the person they are viewing, without being seen to stare; this is particularly so because the societal rhetoric is that disabled bodies are unusual anomalies that have their own place, usually away from the non-disabled, who comply with a standardised norm of physical being. This could be considered to be a Bakhtinian approach (see 1. Literature Review) to an element of humanity that cannot be removed therefore needs to be contained within its own space. The need to be similar and find commonalities with a fellow stranger, for fear of ostracisation, is the very thing that causes the desire to stare at the taboo, exposing the disabled person to medical-style probing scrutiny, in a figuring-out of what is different. This societal construction means that when the two worlds collide, usually a disabled person interacting with the non-disabled public space, there is a tension as one becomes spectator and the other becomes spectacle.

Thompson places "the stare" in the context of ocular studies and authors such as Foucault, Mulvey, and Berger. She argues that if Mulvey's gaze by a man objectifies

a woman and thus turns the woman into an object, then the probing, medical stare from a non-disabled person towards a disabled person would make them a patient or victim. There is a strong power dynamic that cannot be ignored. Both types of visual engagement give authority to the person viewing whilst the person subjected to this gaze/stare is reduced, victimised, and potentially rendered powerless and without agency. Interestingly, Thompson then suggests the reverse to also be true: “Gazers become men by looking at women, and starers become doctors by visually probing people with disabilities.” (2005, p. 32). It is at this point that Thompson introduces three disabled women who are performance artists: Cheryl Marie Wade, Mary Duffy, and Carrie Sandahl, whose work invites, challenges, and explores the stare. These performers overtly manipulate the audience’s stare that is directed towards them in order to violate cultural interactions, exposing oppressive narratives that are silenced due to the prohibiting nature of the stare. Each using a different art form, “staring unfolds in their work as a charged social exchange between active agents, not simply a form of exploitation or surveillance perpetrated by starers on victimized stares.” (Thompson, 2005, p. 32) Due to Western modes of engaging with disability⁴ and society’s need to categorise, these performance artists use the spaces and areas where they are overlooked to their advantage. They also utilise assumptions, such as that disabled people are neither sexual nor have sexuality, to create tension and discord between the audience’s assumptions and the artists’ lived experiences.

Wade and Duffy invite their audiences into what could be called spaces of ‘high art and culture’. Placing their bodies in the context of high art, they manipulate the stare by inviting the gaze of sideshow curiosity and juxtaposing it against the audience’s assumptions about revered high art and culture. Wade does this by casting herself as a monster at her own poetry reading. She positions herself as the monster visibly on display, confronting the audience, but is also the subject of her poem as she intimately describes and compares herself to “the pretty ivory lady” (2005, p. 35). As she speaks, the audience cannot help but stare, as she manipulates the stereotype of the monster, drawing attention to the differences. Wade disrupts the dominant narrative that surrounds her body, the narrative that turns non-disabled persons’

⁴ The dominant Western frames that objectify disability are: objects of charity, medical diagnosis, scientific evidence, and sideshow entertainment.

anxiety into fear. Wade's words weave between seduction and threat; as she sexualises her hands, her body, she becomes a sexual agent through the telling and performing, and in doing so:

She reclaims the stare from her audience and transforms it into the look of love, a self-love here that is not narcissism but rather the affirmation of her own body as whole and right. (Thompson, 2005, p. 36)

Wade literally rewrites the cultural narrative through her poetry reading, whereas Duffy opts for a visual approach, using the context of a museum. Posed as a classical nude, Venus de Milo, Duffy turns her body into an art object, shifting the audience's gaze from the sideshow gawk or medical scrutiny into a more complex viewing. Standing there as an icon of beauty, Duffy forces the audience to be confronted with notions of beauty as she is a living fleshy paradox looking back at them. "This sideshow Venus invokes at once the degraded and the exalted bodies, the hidden and the canonical images, of Western visual culture." (Thompson, 2005, p. 37). Duffy's added soliloquy gives her body agency as an art object and, literally, a voice. She begins to narrate her own experience – moving from "silent object of the stare to a speaking subject" she berates the starers for making her feel ashamed and lacking (Thompson, 2005, p. 37). "Rather, this is a radical tableau vivant, a living, in-your-face Venus ready to provocatively challenge dominant notions about how we look—in both senses of the phrase" (Thompson, 2005, p. 36). Duffy's defiant stance allows her to find and voice to the audience her own definition of what it is to be her, asserting her wholeness, beauty, and worth.

However, Sandahl takes a different approach: using theatre techniques such as costuming, props, and interactive street performance, Sandahl takes her performance to the streets. Wearing a white suit with lab coat, covered in red writing about her internal scars, medical information, and clinical diagnosis, she is neither doctor nor patient. "Sandahl's performance materialises the objectification of her body by medical discourse." (Thompson, 2005, p. 38). Her internal issues become external through the use of costume. Actively engaging with people who stare at her, she upturns social decorum by tackling head-on the discomfort people have around disability. Sandahl brings the personal, privatised, and stigmatised notions of disability out into the public space to shed light on the conversations that are hidden

away. Unlike the other two performers, Sandahl takes a risk by going to her audience in the street rather than inviting them into a space she can control. With no script or perceived structure she embraces the unexpected, the spontaneity, and the chaos that can happen when engaging with the public about a topic that is shrouded in layers of stigma, shame, fear, anxiety, frustration, and politeness.

“Don’t stare; don’t ask; don’t tell” breaks down, creating a transgressive space where conventional rules and relations are upset and subject to realignment.

This space that Sandahl’s performance opens up is neither inherently positive or negative, and once initiated, is no longer within her control, which produces a good deal of chaos, anxiety, and uncertainty. (Thompson, 2005, p. 39)

Excitingly and somewhat dangerously or precariously, like a trickster, Sandahl, in her performance, pushes the boundaries of the socially acceptable and blurs identities to create a dialogue with her audience, unlike Duffy and Wade whose performances and audiences remain very much within their control (Hyde, 1998). They create “one-way, one-woman” shows, where they flip the stare back onto the audience, reasserting their own created narrative of disability (Thompson, 2005, p. 3). With their three different approaches to tackling the stare – inviting it, challenging it, and going after it – these performers use the stare to their own ends to critique social and political issues. By forcing the audience to stare, the performers remove the desire to stare, therefore highlighting that it is the non-disabled – with their unruly behaviour – who are in fact the “social transgressors”, rather than the disabled (Thompson, 2005, p. 40). Similar to those Burlesque performers who actively seek and explore the ‘male gaze’, Duffy, Wade, and Sandahl return the gaze, or stare, to their audiences. However, from my understanding of the performances mentioned in this essay, only Sandahl seems to engage in an exchange or dialogue with her audience. All three of these performances would not look out of place if performed at a Novel-Burlesque event and would give an extra dynamic to the dialogic gaze, just as Cinnamon Cheeks does. In hindsight, I would say Cheeks does engage with ‘the stare’; however, because she is using Burlesque as her art form she almost automatically challenges notions of sexuality, beauty, and disability in response to the audience’s expectations of the art form. ‘Stroke Survivor’ is created in such a way, using Cheeks’s chronological autobiographical journey, that her performance is deemed to be unfrontational, and seeks for the audience not only to understand the

experience, but also to recognise her struggle, beauty, sexiness, and worth now, since the stroke; in this it is much like the self-determination and self-identifying of Duffy, Sandahl, and Wade.

There are other conversations to be had around making the invisible visible, particularly in relation to the essay written by Petra Kupperts: “Bodies, Hysteria, Pain: Staging the Invisible” (2005), which explores how to visually portray mental health without falling into the stereotyped behaviours of eye rolling and body twitching that became synonymous with mental health disorders, thanks to Jean Martin Charcot’s research in the 1870s. Although Sandahl walks with a stick, she illustrated the internal aspects of her medical condition by having them written on her white suit and lab coat; similarly, I performed Frida Kahlo as an illustration of the many layers under which disabled people may conceal their vulnerabilities. Novel-Burlesque has the potential to be a platform where performers can self-identify and discuss these issues, as there are very few platforms where such issues can be disclosed, discussed, and witnessed. This is an area I would certainly like to investigate in the future and perhaps create a Burlesque routine that explores my own experiences rather than using those of Kahlo.

Turning to Kirsty Sedgman, author of *The Reasonable Audience: Theatre Etiquette, Behaviour Policing, and the Live Performance Experience* (2018), I wish to look at the disabled audience member attending theatre. In the literature review I have already addressed the problematic ways in which the words “respectful” and “reasonable” close down discussion, and censor and “mark” the disabled body as “unruly” (Sedgman, 2018). In chapter 5 “On the Reasonable Audience” (2018) Sedgman looks at a range of theatre etiquette guides, all of which assume that the ‘universal everyman’ is neutral, impartial, objective, and most importantly “reasonable”. However, the definition of what constitutes “reasonable” is subjective. Quoting Jenny Slater, from the academic field of Critical Disabilities Studies, whose work reveals the ableist underpinning of society’s systems and construction, Sedgman points out that if you define ability as reasonable, then disability becomes unreasonable (2018). Consequently, people with disabilities are ostracised from public spaces, either ‘for the good of the whole community’ – due to the disabled person being seen as ‘too difficult’, ‘too lazy’, or ‘too embarrassing’ by those

supposed to be helping – or for the assumed good of the disabled person. Thereby, the marginalisation of those who cannot/will not conform becomes worryingly ‘reasonable’ and is propagated by the dominant culture (2018).

Some theatre institutions have begun to offer “relaxed performances” or “extra-live performances” which allow a space (temporarily) designed for people who are neuro-divergent, disabled people, older people (who may have dementia), and carers with children or babies, all groups who are seen as not ‘fitting in’. However, it is highly inappropriate to attempt to group together such a disparate set of people who all have such widely varying needs, just to segregate them from the uptight traditional silent audience (2018). Also, such measures potentially risk ghettoising audiences, as Novel-Burlesque audience member Kirsty warned of, rather than including them (see 5. Strategies for Practising Mutual Vulnerability and Trust), because the only audience being cared for, or privileged, remains the ‘traditional’ audience. Sedgman turns to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 to find a legal anchor, which stipulates “the need for contingent difference to be structurally accommodated, giving people with disabilities equal right of access to public spaces and events” (Sedgman, 2018, p. 101). However, institutional structures exploit and use the holes and ambiguities in the wording of this law and therefore do not need to change; in addition, accommodations are made within structures that are lacking or do not work because the institution was not originally built to accommodate all people. Consequently, some accommodations may be made to make the stage and backstage accessible because the law requires that disabled people should be able to work, but often the front of house and auditorium are ignored. Sedgman points out that this results from assumptions about who the ‘reasonable’ audience member is, and as a result these accommodations can be considered to be neither reasonable nor necessary. Therefore, the ‘unruly’ disabled must fit in with the institution’s scheduling and physical space, and be manhandled (often by the non-disabled, judging what is deemed to be reasonable) to access this public space and enjoy theatre. Often these reasonable accommodations are woefully insufficient by disability standards, but should more adjustments be necessary the disabled person is again deemed to be unruly and unreasonable, thus such definitions help to maintain the status quo (2018). Sedgman explains that rather than making the institutions more inclusive by promoting alternative ways of behaving and creating situations, the actions taken in

some theatre institutions uphold and further reinforce the strict and ‘reasonable’ code of conduct. Sedgman highlights three areas of tension: 1/ what is defined as ‘reasonable’ cannot be agreed on; 2/ the circumstances of an individual displaying ‘unruly’ behaviour cannot be deduced (the sound of a sweet wrapper crinkle may be perceived as rude but may be necessary for a diabetic); and 3/ the question of the intent of the ‘unruly’ person: is it voluntary or involuntary disruption? Both will be met with anger, regardless of the occurrence (2018). The chapter continues to look at other markers of ‘unruliness’, including race, economic circumstance, and age; when placed together with those with disabilities, these ‘unruly’ audiences may be in the majority. Therefore, by showing how what is ‘reasonable’ can be defined differently depending on who does the defining and how and where the boundaries are drawn, Sedgman asks why we cannot privilege the ‘unruly’ audience experience for everyone and perhaps have traditional silent performances for those who specifically desire that experience. If relaxed performances were the norm the involuntarily ‘unreasonable’ and ‘unruly’ would not have to justify themselves. Tightening of the rules results in the disappearance of diversity in the audience, as many are made to feel unwelcome. It could be argued that this explains why I have experienced more diverse audiences when attending Novel-Burlesque performances than when attending traditional theatre: Novel-Burlesque audiences are encouraged to make noise, to be unruly, and to participate as part of their role as audience. However, it should be noted that despite the comparatively relaxed atmosphere at Novel-Burlesque events, the fringe venues of bars, clubs, and small theatres, are often still not physically accessible to all disabled people.

To date, the only academic account of disability in Neo-Burlesque (Brownie uses the term Neo-Burlesque to describe what in this thesis I am calling Contemporary Burlesque) that I have found is by Barbara Brownie in *Acts of Undressing: Politics, Eroticism, and Discarding Clothing* (2017). The section is called “Exposing Disability” (2017) within the chapter “Narrative Tease: Neo-Burlesque and Storytelling through Striptease” (2017), in which Brownie focuses her attention on a series of produced events called *Criptease*, at London’s South Bank Centre (2010–2012). Brownie’s assessment of the phenomenon of disability performers in Neo-Burlesque is that it is an art form that prides itself on inclusivity (2017); that welcomes the gaze (2017); that cherishes the imperfections in everyone (2017); and that in revealing the

imperfections and self-love of the performers gives others permission to do the same (2017). Many acts touch on the performers' own anxieties, which forces the audience to reassess their relationships, both with others and with their own bodies. "Eroticism is contained within the style and gesture, more than the qualities of the body that perform it" (2017, p. 41), and therefore, Brownie asserts, can be performed by anyone who wishes to.

I want to focus on one performer in particular that Brownie writes about: blind performer Amelia Cavallo. Cavallo performs "spoken word Burlesque" (2017, p. 39), in which she audio described her actions, giving "erotic value" to pauses in order to create anticipation in the "verbal tease" (2017, p. 39). Later, Cavallo invited the audience to participate in the narration – and consequently the consensual objectification – of her body, to then conclude her act with a staged error that leaves her stumbling blindly onstage to find a mirror that she holds to the audience, asking: "I wonder ... Look in my mirror ... what do I look like? Do I look normal? ... What do I look like to you?" (Brownie, 2017, p. 41). Both Cavallo and Cheeks force the audience to re-evaluate their perceptions of sexiness, and of their own and others' bodies, by using and highlighting their vulnerability due to disability in their performances. Both performers transform what could be considered to be their limitations into opportunities to explore more than what the Burlesque script has to offer. They challenge the audience directly and create a whole set of themes and scripts for contemporary Novel-Burlesque. During the time frame of this investigation, disabled performers have been becoming more visible and are beginning to play with and create new themes and tropes: for example, the different uses of mobility aids onstage, such as Little Peaches's use of her wheelchair (2019) and Piggy Rox with her crutches (2020), or Lola Chocolat's incorporation of British Sign Language into a routine (2019); conversations around how to make contemporary Novel-Burlesque more accessible are also beginning to gain traction. This area offers the opportunity for further development and exploration through practice-as-research post-doctoral study.

Interestingly, at the point of writing (August 2020), following the Covid-19 lockdown in the UK there has been a rise in accessible online Burlesque classes and shows for people with disabilities. For example, Little Peaches produced two digital

DisabiliTease shows which were broadcast over YouTube (May 2020) and on Vimeo (November 2020), with the option to buy the recording, featuring performers from around the world with a variety of disabilities performing comfortably in their own environments. My pre-recorded film routine 'Be Prepared' was aired as part of the second show in November 2020 and later at the Everyman theatre in Liverpool (December 2020) as part of a cabaret night that included Little Peaches and *DisabiliTease*. Little Peaches was ranked at 45 in the 21st Century Burlesque's The Burlesque Top 50 for 2020 (21st Century Burlesque (h), 2020), showing that performers with disabilities are breaking through and becoming more prevalent in all forms of Burlesque. Rubyyy Jones started a 'Seated Queerlesque' class, where the participants learn one routine each month. The class runs at various times (for different time zones around the world) with a recording that can be bought as well, making access to the class easy. Jones focuses attention on the performative ability of face, arms, and torso, thereby offering the nuanced, thoughtful teaching of Burlesque that Cheeks wished to see more of (2018). The Burlesque script and ethos is adapting and evolving as it has done throughout history. As it stands, these shifts seem to be in a positive direction, allowing for increased inclusivity in Novel-Burlesque, with opportunities to discover one's own potential, and to have an accessible platform on which to express it.

Conclusion

As a direct result of my practice-as-research, I discovered that trust was also a unique aspect of the performer–audience relationship.

There are clearly several layers of trust that can be created within Novel-Burlesque, which together form a performer–audience relationship beyond that of pure entertainment engagement. In simple terms, the audience trusts the performer to take them on a journey, or a transition from one state to another, through the performance. The performer trusts the audience to be willing and open, and to accept this journey. However, the journey can have added poignancy when the performer reveals their personal story or extra vulnerability. It was through doing this with the routine 'Frida' that I realised trust was an overlooked element of the

performer–audience relationship. The trust that I experienced as a performer is complex because it encompassed: 1/ the framing of the performance in the moment; 2/ the strong community backing; 3/ the knowledge of Burlesque performers; and 4/ improvisational strategies developed in the rehearsal room and through performance experiences as part of my practice-as-research. Debuting ‘Frida’ enabled me to discover that the combination of these four elements led to the audience’s reception (to my performing ‘Frida’) being more than one of attentiveness and respect. The exchange with the audience felt different: more intense and intimate than I had experienced when performing ‘Cruella Wants it All’. The audience’s curiosity, brought about by the lack of the Burlesque script, meant they had to trust me as the performer to see the routine to fruition. As the performer, I felt an added layer of vulnerability as the connection with my own disability in the routine became exposed, and I trusted the audience to witness and engage with the routine. The unknown was the hook, producing the desire to know that led to a reveal as the routine progressed; both myself and the audience were placed in a vulnerable position, trusting each other to work through the journey of the unexpected together.

When Cinnamon Cheeks exposed her very real and personal experiences of disability, she merged her autobiographical story with the fantastical creativity of Novel-Burlesque and thus trusted the audience to witness and learn from the uncomfortable experience. As an audience member, I felt privileged and honoured to have seen and heard her story. Through her presence onstage and use of the Burlesque script, her representation of disabled bodies shifted the thinking of the audience regarding disability, sexiness, and whose the voices are that we should hear more of. She embodied, redefined, and reinforced the statement ‘Burlesque is for everybody’ that is so often used in Burlesque publicity but without much interrogation for what such inclusivity actually means and looks like when enacted. For me (and other audience members I talked to), seeing Cheeks onstage performing ‘Stroke Survivor’ transformed not only my way of thinking in general terms about disability, sexiness, and contemporary Novel-Burlesque, but also how I viewed and engaged with my own disability (MS). As a performer, I began to address the relationship between my MS and my performances, and the issue of how to adapt my Burlesque routines to accommodate for MS symptoms occurring. Far from

being an empty soundbite, 'representation' onstage really does matter for both the performer and the audience watching.

Burlesque in relation to disability and performance studies requires more research. The concept of 'the stare' and the different modes of viewing disability in relation to the dialogic gaze is another area that is worth exploring, in order to fully understand the vulnerability and trust within the performer–audience relationship, as well as the impact disability may have on the performer–audience relationship in Novel-Burlesque. It would also be interesting to see how these findings regarding Burlesque and disability align with current thinking about performer–audience relationships in disability performance studies.

Whilst Contemporary Burlesque has a long way to go in becoming as inclusive of all and accepting as it professes (particularly with regard to Popular Burlesque), Novel-Burlesque, in contrast, attempts to bring about, and sometimes achieves, a change in perceptions and narratives that are hurtful and damaging to others and oneself. In order for this transformative experience to take place the performer–audience relationship needs to be one of authentic mutual vulnerability, creating a safe space through the dialogic gaze for the enactment of trust.

Conclusion

This thesis (and examined practice-as-research performance, 8 December 2019 – see Appendix 1) builds on and contributes to work in the field of audience and performer relationships within Contemporary Burlesque and theatre. Although a number of studies (Brownie, 2017; Carr, 2013; Dodds, 2013; Montgomery, 2013; Nally, 2009; Sally, 2009) have examined the performer–audience relationship within Contemporary Burlesque, there has not been a strong focus on analysing both performer and audience perspectives, the creation and development of this relationship, and how it impacts on the individual as well as the wider community. As such, this study provides substantial insights regarding these aspects, in addition to looking at this relationship in terms of vulnerability, voyeurism, and trust.

This research differs from previous studies by undertaking practice-as-research methodologies as well as interview, literary, and theoretical research practices. For this reason, it was necessary for my PhD examiners (external examiner, Professor Roberta Mock, Plymouth University; and internal examiner, Dr Hayley Bradley, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Sheffield Hallam University) to attend a live event where I performed as Arabella Twist as part of my practice-as-research (8 December 2019 – see Appendix 5 for invite and information sheet). The performance reflections from this Novel-Burlesque event are interwoven throughout the thesis to support my previous performance findings. These reflections included that the Novel-Burlesque event attended by my examiners demonstrated the effects of and challenges to the dialogic gaze within the performer–audience relationship. The dialogic gaze between the performer and audience involves a fragile process that uses mutual vulnerability and trust to create, maintain, and develop the performer–audience relationship and that enriches the experience of all involved. In addition, the examined practice-as-research performance not only showed how all participants (performer and audience alike) are crucial in the relationship’s maintenance, but also highlighted the importance of the compere’s framing of the performer and cultivating of audience expectations. Consequently, it can be seen that everyone is interdependent in the building of the supportive environment and community around a Novel-Burlesque event.

The environment of an interdependent and supportive community echoes the values and systems used by the radical 'British alternative theatre' movement of the 1960s–80s, charted by Kershaw and McGrath, in which theatre was “both an art form and a platform” (Goodman, 2002, p.1; Kershaw, 1992; McGrath, 1990). Contemporary Burlesque, and specifically Novel-Burlesque, can act both as an art form to entertain and as a platform for alternative and political voices and perspectives. As I have discovered, there is a convergence within Novel-Burlesque of different types of politics: 1/ the informal politics of everyday life (Donovan, 1997; Hanisch, 1969; Man Ling Lee, 2007); 2/ the politics of the systems in place when producing a Burlesque event (Bennett, 2003; Daniels, 2002; Fox 2002; Goodman, 2002; Kershaw, 1992; McGrath 1990; Sedgman, 2018); and 3/ the politics performed by the individual as subject and object during the event – these can include power, sexual, identity, and cultural politics, depending on the individual in question (Buszek, 2006; Kershaw, 1992; McGrath 1990; Montgomery, 2013; Nally, 2009; Sally, 2009; Willson, 2008). Together these create the politics of Contemporary Burlesque. Whilst I touch on all three aspects, my focus is on the first and third forms of politics, which are interconnected. Both informal politics and the performed politics of subject and object during an event are involved in the power dynamics that create vulnerability, trust, and new expression between people in a live environment; the politics that are involved in producing the event – the casting, venue hire, accessibility, ticket pricing, marketing, etc. – whilst dictating the circumstances for the live event, are, however, not involved so much in the power dynamics.

At the beginning of this investigation, I ascertained which type of Burlesque would be focused upon: Novel-Burlesque, which was the original, innovative and unique Contemporary Burlesque of the 1990s, before Popular Burlesque separated, became commercialised, and narrowed in its performance delivery. Next, through a combination of the research methods used, I identified the 'dialogic gaze' as a term to describe the relationship between the performer and audience in Novel-Burlesque. The dialogic gaze can be established quickly through framing by the compere and the use of the visual and aural cues of the Burlesque Script. It can also be achieved through the attention of the gaze and the respect of both parties in a choreographed

performance, but is more intensely felt and more necessary during an improvised performance. As an oscillating energy exchange between the performer and audience, the power and agency of the viewer and the viewed is never removed from either side. The boundaries of 'viewer' and 'viewed' are already blurred due to the nature of Novel-Burlesque events. When curated, maintained, and developed, the dialogic-gaze relationship can be enriched through mutual consensual vulnerability and trust from both the performer and the audience.

The research hinged on my taking risks and becoming vulnerable in my research practice, but what I had not expected was that I would become vulnerable in academic contexts (with regard to the ethics procedure) and personal contexts (in terms of my personal relationships with others, as their perceptions of me changed). This research highlighted the limitations and rigidity within the academic institution around the understanding and implementation of appropriate ethics to creative disciplines. Through this research, it can be claimed that by being present at performances of Novel-Burlesque, and by developing my own performance of Novel-Burlesque, as both content and methodology, a strategy was developed to critique and challenge institutional intransigence and puritanism. The research challenged the established disciplines and became a form of social and academic transformation. This research was, therefore, a "leverage point" and a place "to intervene in the system" (Meadows, 1999). Consequently, both the material and the method of this research became a recommendation towards learning and institutional change. Once the issues of rigidity regarding research methods and ethics were acknowledged and accepted, my research became a lot easier to conduct and manage. Going forward, I would advise academic institutions to examine postgraduate research and the ethical regulations required on a case-by-case basis, with the student and supervisory team leading the discussion; such an approach would support the researcher wherever their discoveries lead them, instead of attempting to force every research proposal into an inflexible model that may be inappropriate for that investigation.

Unfortunately, due to the insistence on inappropriate ethical practices being imposed on this research, I was, and still am, placed in an awkward situation where my Novel-Burlesque persona, Arabella Twist, cannot easily be divorced from my everyday-life

identity, Claudia Jazz Haley. This has impacted upon my ability to apply for work, and will continue to do so, because employers' own biases against Contemporary Burlesque will be a factor when I am considered for positions such as freelancer (youth theatre director or schools theatre workshop facilitator), or for corporate, governmental, or civil service positions. This is one of the main reasons Contemporary Burlesque performers remain anonymous: to deliberately separate their performance persona from their everyday work. Some performers have gone to court over having been unfairly dismissed from their workplace due to their employer discovering their Burlesque persona (interview, Dazzler, 2016). I had originally proposed to undertake the observational audience-perspective elements of my research in a similar way to that of a theatre critic, because the work is no different. However, due to the ethical requirements placed on me, my choice to remain anonymous was removed. Consequently, issues around theatrical nudity and the ethics of researching it became the source of debate for my performative conference paper (2016) at the Out of Practice Conference, University of Birmingham – “Attempting to Put the Showgirl Back in her Box”. These issues were later re-visited in my conference paper “The Show Woman Looks Back: Bird Watching Goes Both Ways” for Provoking Discourse, Postgraduate Research Conference, Manchester Metropolitan University (2018).

When undertaking such methodologies, which result in the researcher becoming their own research ‘subject’, a researcher should also take into consideration how this process will impact on their personal relationships. It was, possibly, naïve of me to think that all my family and friends would support my research and desire to perform Burlesque. I am thankful to write that all except one close friend either supported me or navigated our relationship in such a way that there was no impact. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, Helen enacted “secondary objectification” (Clare, 2013), using various debate tactics and reasoning, including ‘slut shaming’ and using my disability to undermine my agency in the eyes of others, and making it clear that she felt she could not continue our friendship. By issuing an ultimatum – either our friendship or my research – Helen demonstrated internalised misogyny and patriarchal notions of women’s rights and agency in relation to sex, sexuality, and nakedness, as well as ableism. As a result, I enacted Brené Brown’s notion of shame resilience (2006) by being critically aware of the context and connecting with

a community – the Novel-Burlesque community – who have equally experienced such stigma. Through my investigation, not only did I become the very thing I was researching, I also used the research to help come to terms with this experience of what felt like betrayal. This aspect of my research was an unforeseen element that led me to further understand the vulnerability and trust within the Novel-Burlesque community beyond the relationship in the performance moment. The intersection of my personal relationships and research became a further learning process and point of discovery. Future researchers need to consider how their research will impact their lives, not only in terms of the work they are undertaking, but also in respect of how it will change them as people, and therefore affect their personal relationships with others.

Vulnerability and voyeurism were two main themes that emerged from the literature review and wider reading. There is a general understanding that when enacting voyeurism, the power dynamic in the relationship between viewer (voyeur) and viewed is weighted towards the viewer, thereby placing the viewed person in a vulnerable position as they did not consent to being viewed (Ashforth & Kreimer, 1999; Blithe & Wolfe, 2016; Brown, 2006; Brownie, 2017; Clare, 2013; Dennis, 2008; Mulvey 1975; Wahab, 2002). The viewer gains satisfaction (usually sexual) from this experience, together with a sense of power that derives from seeing that which should not be seen (Collins Dictionary of Medicine, 2004, 2005; Dorland's Medical Dictionary for Health Consumers, 2007; Farlex Partner Medical Dictionary, 2012; Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health, 2003; Mosby's Medical Dictionary, 2009). A few authors and performers were found to offer an alternative to the notion of the passive, powerful voyeur, suggesting that there is also scope for an active voyeur who participates in the action (Jones, 2017; Leipe-Levison, 2002; Ranciere, 2011). This interesting idea of an active voyeur is an area that warrants further investigation, which could involve many different types of sexual entertainment (including Burlesque and strip clubs) to fully understand the relative nuances, intentions, and differences, particularly in relation to the performer–audience relationship and the dialogic gaze.

This investigation has shown that within Novel-Burlesque the vulnerability of the viewed person, the performer, is not caused by a power grab made by the viewer,

the audience. The vulnerability is in fact an offering, a gift to the audience from the performer. The vulnerability of the performer is not snatched, or grabbed, illicit, or shameful, and therefore this is a more complex viewing of intimacy. Most of the audience are not watching with the sole intent of being sexually aroused: they watch to be entertained, to find new perspectives, to experience their own vulnerabilities in a relatively safe environment away from everyday society. The audience, the viewer, is placed in a vulnerable position through watching, witnessing, and being open to the performer's offerings onstage, and through meeting and returning the performer's gaze, in a turning of the tables on the voyeur.

During my investigation it became increasingly apparent that within Novel-Burlesque my research needed to focus more upon vulnerability than on voyeurism. Novel-Burlesque is constructed in such a way as to disrupt and prevent voyeurism from occurring without the consent of the person being watched. However, this is sometimes not the case in Popular Burlesque due to the extremity of the illusion and fantasy as well as the narrowing of body types and narratives performed, which enables objectification, and therefore voyeurism, to occur. The Popular Burlesque narrative is narrow and two-dimensional, lacking any meaning beyond the appearance of the performance, which employs patriarchal (misogynistic, retro-sexual) and capitalist (sanitising, commodifying) tropes. Reduced to pure escapism, without satire or self-awareness, Popular Burlesque elicits the voyeuristic qualities of risk, taboo, and the viewing of what is considered by society as the 'intimate, private' action of undressing. Coupled with Contemporary Burlesque's ethos of 'empowerment' this reduction of Popular Burlesque leads to the mistaken attribution of the 'empowerment' of performing Novel-Burlesque to the removal of clothes and exposing of the nude female body. Due to a lack of diversity onstage, and by being neither challenging nor provoking, Popular Burlesque can be read as upholding retro-nostalgic misogynistic gender values, particularly in its promotion of societal ideals of femininity, sexuality, and beauty standards.

Producers, particularly those of Popular Burlesque (who assume their audiences do not want anything too diverse, provocative, or challenging of society's norms), make choices that have led to performers altering their creativity to gain a greater number of commercial bookings (interview, Dazzler, 2016). This inadvertent censorship,

based on a producer's assumptions, leads to performers such as Rubyyy Jones being refused bookings because they are considered too political and thought-provoking as well as being proudly physically challenging to society's norms and notions of beauty (interview, Jones, 2017). The call for greater performer diversity in mainstream Popular Burlesque has been growing stronger each year as this investigation progressed, because this sanitised and censored entertainment promotes a narrow societal view of what is and is not sexy, dictates ideas about the types of sex that 'sell', and defines what is morally acceptable. Such ideas are further upheld by society's equating nudity (partial or full), particularly women's nudity, directly with the act of sex. This alignment is clearly problematic as it leads to other assumptions, such as adult entertainment and sexual performance being seen as morally dubious or even being ostracised, despite being legal and consensual.

Novel-Burlesque is constructed in such a way that whilst it can provide an immersive fantasy of decadence and luxury, it also disrupts the audience's ability to comfortably remain in such a fantasy. The voyeuristic gaze is constantly interrupted and confronted by the compere who introduces the etiquette for the evening, chastises wrong-doers, educates the Novel-Burlesque 'virgins', and navigates the audience through the evening of performers. By constantly addressing the collective, the compere creates a space where "othering" and objectification are difficult (Ahmed, 2010). In Novel-Burlesque there is no voyeuristic othering or objectification because the interaction between performer and audience is one created through equal respect and consent. Novel-Burlesque intends to be the convergence of mutual consent. Combined with the performer's dialogic gaze that confronts and includes the audience, any attempt to distance themselves from the performer by the audience is constantly thwarted. The immersive element allows for connection and involvement, but it also allows the barriers between the performer and audience to dissolve, and therefore the audience cannot, without consequence, easily enjoy the entertainment. They are met with performers who can entice and seduce but also challenge and retort. Due to the oscillating dialogic gaze all participants are seen as both objects and subjects (Linott & Irving, 2005; Sally, 2009) and therefore the power shifts back and forth without leaving either participant. There is a frisson of risk, and of the taboo and danger that come with a live event, especially with a performer and an audience who are willing to improvise in the moment.

This 'edge' that Novel-Burlesque is performed upon allows an artist to offer routines that explore alternative narratives, critiquing society's norms. Created predominantly by and for women, Novel-Burlesque challenges theatre and society, as well as concepts of gender performance, vulnerability, and voyeurism. As an art form that has the characteristic traits of the archetype (Hyde, 1998), Burlesque both celebrates and ridicules individuals, society, and itself. In its minority and women-centred focus, Novel-Burlesque is a radical space that decolonises elitist art practice by encouraging hobbyists and professionals to share the same spaces. The Novel-Burlesque environment thus created is a trickster space, and I propose that it is a space for new ritual and new discoveries, not only for the individual but also for the collective. Novel-Burlesque offers the framing and holding of space for playful exploration and confronting societal norms, and therefore also offers the potential for the creation of new rituals, as well as a communally safe environment for the sharing of personal creativity, mistakes, and vulnerabilities. Due to the respectful mutual vulnerability and dialogic gaze, there is a sense of trust formed by a community at an event, which has the potential to extend beyond the event. Novel-Burlesque provides an opportunity and a platform for the presentation of such paradoxes and questions, without making the attempt to give definite answers or resolution. Much as with Socratic questions, the performer offers a line of questioning, and together with the audience explores it as a dialogue. By creating a space in which to exercise and experience vulnerabilities 'safely', participants are able to cultivate strength, understanding, adaptability, flexibility, and sensitivity towards themselves, others, situations, society, and danger. It is a radical dialogical space of trust in which the participants can explore social change.

However, when this liberty is abused by either party, forcing the other into a negatively vulnerable state without consent, shame and/or trauma can develop around the experience. Despite the many disrupting factors of Novel-Burlesque, misconceptions (perpetuated by Popular Burlesque, secondary objectification, the continued use of stereotypes), a persona slip, or an audience member determined to be a voyeur, can lead to abuse occurring. Equally, the abuse can be perpetuated by the performer or compere forcing themselves onto an unwilling audience to create a

scapegoat or comical gag. This enactment of abuse is unacceptable and was rarely seen during this investigation.

Whilst Novel-Burlesque routines can often challenge societal issues, certain content and material within performers' routines can also be considered disrespectful and harmful. Novel-Burlesque is still far from perfect in respect not only of diverse representation onstage but also of cultural appropriation. Debate within Novel-Burlesque has moved on from being about whether the art form is feminist, to whether it is representational of its inclusionary goals, and to questioning who has the right to tell which narratives. Novel-Burlesque uses shorthand visual symbols to communicate quickly to the audience; routines which propagate harmful stereotypes of oppressed cultures and use their cultural artefacts as entertainment without respect are widely condemned, yet still take place. This is where my performance-led practice-based research with the creation of the routine 'Frida' walks on the edge of acceptability within Burlesque, as a homage to the life and works of disability icon Frida Kahlo. As a global icon, Kahlo's Mexican cultural heritage is undeniable, yet she is a champion for various diverse causes, including disability. Consequently, another area of research that deserves further exploration is the concept of proximal identification. Where icons are multi-faceted (as Novel-Burlesque is), their impact and reach are beyond one identifier and may include many differing groups of people who identify with and revere different aspects of the one icon.

The main focus of this thesis is the creation and development of the performer–audience relationship within a performance. I propose that whilst the artist performs Buszek's "awareishness", (1999) this is an opening that allows for the dialogic gaze to happen with the audience. The dialogic gaze is an oscillating feedback loop first initiated by the performer with the audience. It is frequently established by performers through the use of the Burlesque Script and Lady Wildflower's formula: STRIP (Suggest, Tease, Reveal/Remove, Interact, Present) (workshop, Lady Wildflower, 2016) – a known shorthand between the performer and audience that builds a quick rapport, as I discovered through my performance-led practice-as-research. The dialogic gaze is more complex than a "spatio-temporal exchange" as described by Dodds (2013), because its foundations are based in mutual vulnerability and the maintenance of trust for both performer and audience. During

an event and performance, all participants display a willingness and engagement to go on the creative journey that places them in a vulnerable position. There is a sense of trust that both performer and audience are going to experience vulnerability together, during the performance, in the potentially transformative or educational process of the routine. The performer trusts the audience to be open to their creative offering and journey, whilst the audience trusts the performer to lead them on a journey. This 'agreement' may or may not be explicit, depending upon the style and genre the performer is illustrating. Performer Perle Noire was able to move between a vernacular performance with immediate kinetic and aural feedback one moment and a more serious, sensitive virtuoso tone that requires overt vulnerability and trust the next. By comparison, Rubyyy Jones's 'Potty-mouth Princess' routine thrived on the kinetic and aural feedback it provoked. With its aggressive delivery, this routine places the audience in a vulnerable position that conceals the underlying vulnerability and trust that is created and maintained through the dialogic gaze. Contrastingly, Cinnamon Cheeks's 'Stroke Survivor' and Rubyyy Jones's 'Tellinng' are more serious and autobiographical in tone and highlight the vulnerability and need for trust in the performer–audience relationship during these routines. The performer is a conduit through which the audience can experience alternative and potentially risky behaviour or embodiments that they would not enact or experience themselves. The audience are there to witness, to participate, and to explore the notion of 'self', as collective expression. From this place of consensual risk, both performer and audience are open to the other, trusting to be treated with respect and to have their agency witnessed. The ability to collectively explore, play, provoke, and challenge is formed on the basis of this collective vulnerability and trust, which emerges from the relationship created and maintained through the performer–audience 'dialogic gaze'. This relationship of reliance and dependence creates a shared experience of trust that is maintained throughout the evening, becoming more intimate, revealing, and trusting along the way. Everyone shares in the experience, which goes beyond an understanding and enjoyment of the entertainment as an exchange, towards an experience of mutual collaboration, revealing the interdependency and trust needed for everyone to exist together.

In the attempt to accurately understand the role of vulnerability in the dialogic gaze between performer and audience, I encountered transformative experiences. More

specifically, when watching Millie Dollar and Cinnamon Cheeks as an audience member, my perception of Novel-Burlesque and disability changed. After seeing Millie Dollar, I began to consider the possibility of incorporating multiple sclerosis (MS) into my Burlesque persona rather than creating a 'perfect', fantastical, healthy version of myself. This idea and the need to further explore vulnerability as research led to my creation, as a performer, of the routine 'Frida'. However, it was my watching Cinnamon Cheeks and performing 'Frida' that led to my acceptance of MS as part of my life and future. By using the creative frame of Novel-Burlesque and its safe environment, I exposed autobiographical realities and vulnerability that illuminated the therapeutic transformative possibilities of self-discovery and affirmation. This not only supported the work of Regehr (2011) but also furthered it, by exploring different parameters (the context and material used) as well as suggesting areas for further research with regard to Burlesque and therapy. Representation onstage matters, for both performer and audience. Through this whole process, and the performance of 'Frida', I also discovered that trust, from a position of vulnerability, was a crucial factor in the maintenance of the dialogic gaze.

My aim was to find a way to articulate and understand the experience of the performer–audience relationship during performance. Through my research, I have discovered that the relationship extends much further than just the space/time of performance: it extends not only physically to include the rehearsal room, online forums, networking, and events; but also through time, to encompass the recognising and honouring of history in the present and of constant evolution for the future. This creates a living art form of participants (performers and audience) who can learn and develop, and therefore improve and further educate themselves and each other. The interconnectedness of the performers (old and new) and the audience, beyond the performance space, creates the potential for a transformative effect in a wider context. Certainly a schism exists between Novel-Burlesque and Popular Burlesque, and there are cliques within the Burlesque community and issues regarding accessibility and diversity to be resolved. However, whilst Novel-Burlesque is far from perfect, as a platform for change it is a self-determining community that evolves and develops. Novel-Burlesque acknowledges the popularised version of the art form as a gateway for some of its audiences and performers. However, it demands more than pure escapism from its entertainment, audiences, performers,

and society: Novel-Burlesque questions many diverse elements, revealing possibilities, bearing witness, and accepting and giving respect. It attempts to enact the society and changes it wishes to see, thus creating a platform through which marginalised voices can be heard.

It is important to acknowledge Contemporary Burlesque, in particular highlighting and investigating the nuances of Novel-Burlesque, as a progression and development of fringe theatre practice. Historically, fringe theatre practices have too often been either overlooked, ignored, or simply missing from the literature, and are then either lost or reliant on other forms of documentation, such as oral histories (Banks & Swift, 1987). This is particularly the case if the topic is taboo in nature, as adult entertainment is sometimes perceived to be. There needs to be greater understanding and acknowledgement of adult entertainment and those performance forms that are associated with it, as part of the spectrum of all entertainment and theatre practices. Particularly because women – and minority groups – dominate the art form of Contemporary Burlesque, it is important to prevent erasure of such radical performance spaces, which challenge society's status quo through exploration, performance, identity, and politics. Contemporary Burlesque, in particular Novel-Burlesque, provides liberating criticality for potential social transformation (Freire, 1996).

There has always been a need for radical spaces that allow alternative thinking and propositions, and voices that have been marginalised by societal norms; however, such world views are often overlooked and/or ignored in historical literature (Banks & Swift, 1987; Kershaw, 1992; McGrath 1990). These spaces become even more important when current global political, economic, and environmental climates are in turmoil. In such a context, people turn to different pursuits to try to find positive change, to take control of their personal experiences, and to find ways to process the external impacts on their lives, transforming them from helplessness to control (e.g., the boom of cabaret in 1930s Europe, before WW2). In the aftermath of the Trump Administration, the Brexit referendum, the declaration of a Climate Change Emergency – by thirty countries at the time of writing (Climate Emergency Declaration, n.d.) – the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements, as well as the global Covid-19 pandemic, to name a few examples of upheaval and unrest, the

need for 'trickster spaces' and thinking, for shared experiences and the building of trusting relationships in order to overcome division and violence is ever more urgent.

On this note, I believe this research to be significant because it connects with a number of diverse communities and disciplines; it is therefore important that it reaches as many readers as possible in academia, the Novel-Burlesque community, and society at large. This research will be of interest to participants of Novel-Burlesque (audiences and performers) who wish to understand the nuances of the art form beyond the 'them and us, audience and performer' structure of some traditional theatre, and the mechanics of creating Novel-Burlesque performance. Participants of Novel-Burlesque, particularly performers, tend to be aware of the literature and research around the art form, staying up to date on the current theories and practices to further their own practice. I intend to post the abstract, with a view to sharing it with interested parties, on free publishing sites such as Academia.com, and to offer my research to other more specific forums I have found useful during my research (the Burlesque Book Club and Burlesque Research Network, both on Facebook). I propose to deliver papers based on my research at events such as Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival (HBBF), and at Burly Con, which is an annual arts-education conference held in America, and is currently online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I aim to create a Novel-Burlesque routine based upon some of the findings of this investigation in order to open up conversations around my research outcomes, similarly to the way that my routine 'Frida' encourages conversations around disabilities, representation, and accessibility.

Academically, this research would be of interest to people within theatre and the arts (visual and performative), as well as to those who wish to analyse and investigate fringe theatre, alternative performer–audience relationships, industry structures, and society's relationship with the arts and adult entertainment. Other disciplines, such as psychology and gender studies, will potentially be interested in the discussions surrounding consent, agency, and 'the gaze', as well as vulnerability, trust, and voyeurism. Researchers of disability and performance as a discipline may also be interested in this research, partly because although my disability was not the focus of my investigation it was an integral element of the research, and also because the discipline is fairly new, thus not a lot has been written on disability performance in

Burlesque. It will also interest those who wish to investigate activism potential within the arts, particularly those who are finding different ways to engage and connect with others. This research focuses on Contemporary Burlesque's alternative outlook and sets of values that differ from societal norms, in which we witness the prioritising and valuing of trust and hope instead of isolation and individualism.

This investigation found that the performer–audience relationship was more than a commercial exchange, but was a dialogue based on consent, mutual vulnerability, and trust (the dialogic gaze); there remains more research to be done to better understand this phenomenon. There is value in the idea of trust as a gift, generated through Novel-Burlesque, and its potential to infiltrate other art forms and societal spheres. An exploration of how and where trust is developed and used in other art forms and in other forms of adult entertainment would be an area for further development. I am particularly interested in the crossover between Contemporary Burlesque and stripping, as a few performers who spoke to me perform both occupations and noted a caring and therapeutic aspect to stripping (from performer to client) that I had not considered.

The challenge presented by the conflict between my desire to research and the requirements placed on me by academic protocol, under the 'one ethics code for all disciplines', has been problematic throughout this research. There is definitely scope for further investigation surrounding this issue, and a need for developing appropriate communication, engagement, and support between academic institutions and their practice-as-research researchers within the arts. In particular, support for those who engage in topics that may be considered risqué or taboo by society, and therefore may place the researcher in vulnerable situations, should be considered.

Another area I would be interested in exploring further is the adaptation of the Burlesque script and of the training methods for Novel-Burlesque so that they can become truly accessible to people with a more diverse range of disabilities, both visible and invisible. Particularly in the wake of the Covid-19 lockdown, online shows have revealed many possibilities and opportunities that were once unavailable due to physical limitations. There is also a potential to further explore Burlesque, the

dialogic gaze, and how disability may have an impact on the performer–audience relationship through the lens of disability and performance studies.

Regarding the aspect of representation onstage, there is an important area for further research in diversity and education using the positive values of Contemporary Burlesque beyond the ‘Adults Only’ performance space; in particular, this could take into consideration body positivity conversations with younger audiences and the subject of their relationships with their own bodies as they grow up, as well as their transition to adulthood and the way that bodies change with age and/or motherhood.

The idea of ‘proximal identification’ is an area that, whilst not intrinsically linked to Novel-Burlesque, was uncovered through the practice of creating and performing a Burlesque routine. It requires further, careful theoretical investigation and research. Although proximal identification is only indirectly linked to Novel-Burlesque, it could certainly be explored through the art form, with Novel-Burlesque being used as a crucible in which alternative narratives are held, and thus the notion of Novel-Burlesque as a trickster space and living art form could also be further explored.

The potential of Contemporary Burlesque in terms of activism and the enactment of social change was also discovered during this research and warrants more exploration and post-doctoral investigation, specifically into whether contemporary Novel-Burlesque has the potential to effect wider social change beyond the performance context, both for the individual and for the collective in wider society. A study into the activist potential of Burlesque, using this investigation as a foundation, would complement the research into the politicised therapeutic nature of participating in “recreational Burlesque” (Regehr, 2011). It would not only further our understanding of Burlesque’s impact beyond the temporal nature of an event, but also develop research into the art form’s therapeutic possibilities, therefore reinforcing the framing of Contemporary Burlesque beyond pure escapist entertainment to include Novel-Burlesque’s practices of constructive exploration, therapeutic self-realisation, and the critiquing of society.

I hope that as a result of my doing this practice-as-research, those who challenge the status quo receive wider recognition both for the creative work and explorations they perform in Burlesque, and for the impact this work has on others.

Glossary:

The language of Burlesque is constantly evolving and changing but below I have listed, and defined terminology, used in this thesis.

Archetype - According to Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung an archetype is a universal persona with certain attributes that are acknowledged and derived from the collective unconscious (Jung, 1990). There can be any number of archetypes as history, culture and personal context mould production of these universal representations. In literature and the arts, the repetition of certain motifs and characters with certain attributes is called a literary archetype. There are approximately 12 archetypes: The Innocent, Everyman, Hero, Outlaw, Explorer, Creator, Ruler, Magician, Lover/Seducer, Caregiver, Jester/Trickster, and Sage. Each archetype has its strengths and its own weaknesses – for example the Lover or Seducer, which can often be seen in Burlesque, whose goal could be said to be in control. Using their beauty, charm and is amoral as strengths they attain this goal; however, they lack loyalty, integrity and morality which can be their undoing. I created the routine “Cruella Wants It All” based on this archetype.

Bambi - Stage hand, backstage assistant or front of house assistant or steward. Can also be called a Stage Kitten, or Knicker Picker (backstage only).

Boylesque - Male identifying Burlesque performers.

Bump and Grind - A classic form of Burlesque dance, used predominately with big band swing music, where the performer uses hips and pelvis. To bump is to aggressively thrust the hip forward, back or to the side, usually performed to percussion. To grind is to rotate the hips and pelvis in a figure of ‘8’, performed when the brass instruments play. Seductively performed these movements heavily illustrate and mimic the act of sex.

See Classic Burlesque.

Burlesque - Is a genre of entertainment within Theatre. To theatrically lampoon or satirise; developed to include the contemporary performance of a

‘striptease’, the removal of clothes and revealing of skin, (Oxford English Dictionary 1995). The performer must be self-aware (aware of the audience and the context they are performing) and reveal an element of themselves (not necessarily skin) to the audience with the direct gaze.

The art form focus is upon the theatrics of the process rather than the nakedness of the performer and in this respect, differs from stripping per se. In this process of removing clothes there is an artistry of mixing overt sexuality, dance, comedy, and circus skill as well as other elements. Within Contemporary Burlesque there are many styles and thus many categories are created and formed. Below is a diagram to visually explain the main terms and how they relate to each other and used in this thesis (Figure 62).

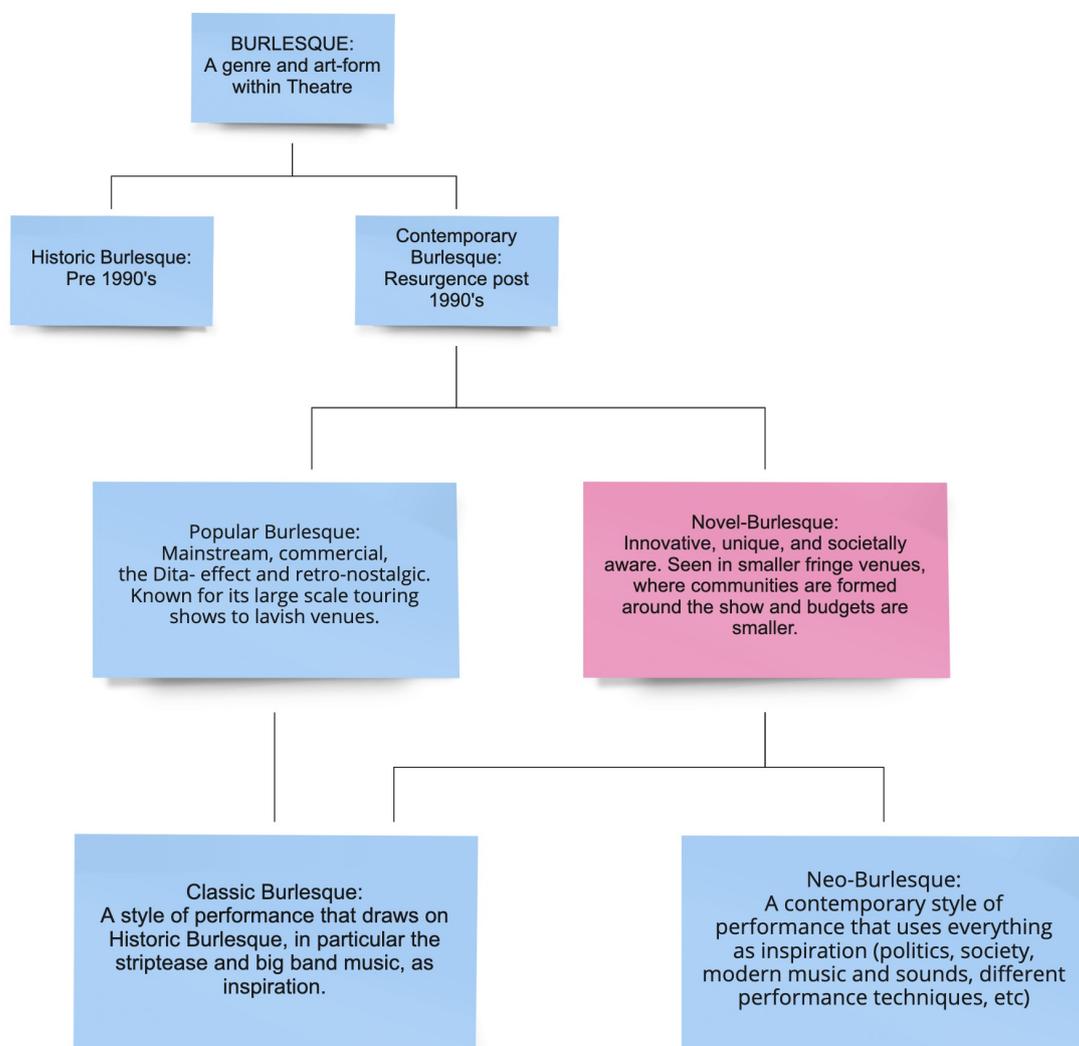


Figure 63. The Figure 1. diagram of the definitions of Burlesque used in this thesis in the Glossary.

The terms used in the diagram are in alphabetical order and defined further:

Classic Burlesque - The term 'Classic Burlesque' refers to historic Burlesque of the 40's and 50's and the contemporary style of performance that overtly refers to this time, of retro-nostalgia. Classic Burlesque in contemporary performance uses more dance techniques of America's 40's to 50's golden age of overt femininity, including 'peel and parade' and 'bump and grind' with big band backing tracks.

Contemporary Burlesque – In this thesis Contemporary Burlesque refers to the resurgence of Burlesque from the 1990's. In everyday conversation this can also be called Neo-Burlesque (which is also the name of a style of Burlesque performance). The art form draws on traditional and contemporary theatre techniques and influences, cabaret, circus acts, clowning, sideshow and even puppetry. Performers need to be skilled in other areas of Burlesque that contribute to that moment on stage such as producing, costuming, sound editing, social media, and marketing.

Historic Burlesque – Pre 1990's, for a brief history of Burlesque please see Introduction: A Brief History of Burlesque and Appendix 12: Brief History Timeline of Burlesque.

Neo-Burlesque - In this thesis I use the term 'Neo-Burlesque' to identify the style of performance and not the contemporary revival of the art form. Neo-Burlesque is more contemporary in its approach, delivery and experimentation with music. Combining storytelling, comedy, circus skills, gender fluidity, as well as but not necessarily dance and 'sexiness' this style is open and explicit in its intentions to explore other issues and skills together with sexual pleasure and femininity in the process of the striptease.

Novel-Burlesque – A term created for this thesis. Often seen in fringe venues such as small theatres, bars, and clubs. It has a strong DIY aesthetic, with contemporary influences (see Neo-Burlesque) and often contains overt politically charged content as well as fantasy glitz and glamour (see Classic Burlesque). Novel-Burlesque is dynamic, emergent and nascent. It champions many diverse identities and, therefore diverse material performed on stage. It is constantly evolving and responding to the world around and the issues and experiences encountered.

Popular Burlesque – An off-shoot from the original 1990s resurgence of Contemporary Burlesque, Popular Burlesque was championed by Dita Von Teese. It focused on decadence, opulence, large scale spectacle with a heavy retro-nostalgic, retro-sexual aesthetic (therefore favouring Classic Burlesque performance style) and fantasy that can be seen in large scale theatres. It also has a very narrow performer representation due to the Dita-effect that promotes white, slender, feminine aesthetic with very little diversity or deviation from the fantastical illusion. Sanitised, commercialised and marketable the glitz and glamour of Popular Burlesque is often the first contact audience members have with Burlesque as a theatre genre. As a consequence, it can also fall into reinforcing harmful misogynistic gender stereotyping.

Burlesque script - A term created to describe a series of performed visual cues by the performer that the audience respond to accordingly, not too dissimilar to Pantomime's call and response. Lady Wildflower uses S.T.R.I.P. to explain the actions of a routine: suggest, tease, reveal/remove, interact, and present. However, the Burlesque script extends beyond S.T.R.I.P. when using the dialogic gaze to an awareness and exchange.

Burly Mama/Sis/Bro (Burly family) - There is a sense of family amongst the terminology used when referring to training and seeking advice from other performers. For example, teacher or mentor can be referred to as a 'mother' or 'burly mama' (sometimes regardless of gender) and therefore their students are 'siblings'. This aligns the performer with a certain style of performance or particular skill set that can be recognised in performance.

This terminology extends beyond the relatively close knit 'family', as teachers often encourage their students to seek out other performers and skills to learn. There is an acknowledgment that the performers' community, both nationally and internationally, is interconnected and related. This terminology is used amongst performers affectionately.

Cheesecake - Light-hearted, pin up girl Burlesque performance. Usually influenced by British Music Hall humour of innuendos, the Carry-On films, and saucy

sea-side postcards. American slang for images of natural beauties or girl next door during the 1940's to 1960's who were scantily clad or suggested nudity and sexual inference often in domestic settings.

Also see 'pin-up'.

Classic Burlesque - *See Burlesque.*

Compere - The performer who guides the audience throughout the evening entertainment, introducing the other performers' routines. They are usually the only performer who speaks directly to the audience and therefore holds a lot of responsibility in the framing of the audience's expectations. There are, also, other names for this role including: The Host; MC or emcee; Femcee (a term used for a female MC); Master/Mistress of Ceremonies; Ring Master; Guide; Chair.

Consent - To give consent is to give permission for something to happen or an agreement for something or to do something. *See Voyeurism.*

Contemporary Burlesque – *See Burlesque.*

Cripping up - Is when an able-bodied actor performs on stage as a disabled character and performs or mimics a physical manifestation of the specific disability they do not have, like a limp, or using a wheelchair.

Dialogic Gaze – “Dialogic Gaze” is a term created for this thesis to describe the exchange between the performer and audience, which is more than transfer of one directional communication, but a positive feedback loop, where a dialogue or frisson is established through the gaze. I would argue it is unique to Burlesque as other forms of theatre and performance rely heavily upon language to communicate, whilst Burlesque relies upon visual cues and a mutual awareness. As yet, unpublished, this definition has been made public in this context during my various presentations of the conference paper “Attempting to put the Showgirl back in her box”, 2016.

Dick pic - Slang term for a photograph of a man's penis, usually taken by himself and then sent by phone to another person. Can also be called 'unsolicited dick

pic', this is when the other person is often an unsuspecting woman whom he desires (and seeks validation from) but the feelings are not reciprocated. If the person receiving the dick pic reciprocates the senders' feelings, then it can be called 'sexting'. In the context of this thesis, I am referring to unsolicited dick pics that Burlesque performers often receive on social media.

Dita-effect - A term created to describe the impact Dita Von Teese has had on Contemporary Burlesque with the rise of her celebrity fame in the 1990's. The popularity of Dita and her Classic Burlesque style of performance with glitz, glamour and fantasy led to the narrowing of diversity on Burlesque stages. Promoting retro-nostalgic, retro-sexual themes performed by white, slender vintage inspired women as escapism and illusion.

Also see Popular Burlesque, Burlesque, Contemporary Burlesque, Classic Burlesque.

Drag - To exaggeratedly perform a gender, to be overtly and archetypically male or female. Usually seen as cross-dressing, Drag Queens are most predominately known and seen as male gendered performers performing the female gender. Drag Queens entertain audiences as compares (MCs), comedians as well as singing or lip-syncing. However, the reverse can be performed too, female gendered performers performing a male gender. Within Burlesque, Drag Kings also perform stripteases. Performers, Jo Weldon and Dr Lynn Sally, also use the term 'drag' when referring to performing an exaggerated gender even if that gender is the same as the one the performer daily identifies with.

Also see Gender Fluidity, Genderplay, Neo-Burlesque, Novel-Burlesque, Contemporary Burlesque.

G-string - (Costume) Similar to V-string and T-back, the G-string is a string of elastic around the hips or waist connecting fabric front and back 'V' panels. With a V-string the back panel is purely the outside string in a 'V' outline. The T-back has a simple 'T' string at the back without any fabric panels. A C-String is a covering that does not have elastic 'string' around the hips and is held in place by the 'C' which is a relatively solid (usually wire) material, placed between the legs.

See Merkin.

Gender fluidity – The term gender fluidity refers to one’s gender identity variability over time. As personal preference, the person may identify as male, female, non-binary or other forms of identity or combination. This may change depending upon the circumstances and situations.

See Drag and Genderplay.

Genderplay – According to ‘Urban dictionary’ this term is the act of dressing up in the clothes of the opposite sex or roleplaying another gender or taking up an archetype known to be of the other gender. They state that interest in this character or gender ceases after orgasm or climax. However, in the context of my research I focus on the use of gender play as a form of drag performance not private sexual encounters.

See Drag and Gender fluidity.

Historic Burlesque – *See Burlesque.*

Isis-wings - (Prop/Costume) A cape that is attached at the neck, like a collar or choker necklace. The closing edges of the cape have poles attached to allow the wearer to flap the cape as though they are wings. They can be used as a costume or prop. Examples of these: Raven Noir uses black feathered isis-wings in her ‘The Raven’ routine and Vicky Butterfly uses L.E.D. isis-wings in her Blade Runner inspired routine.

Lip-slip - Jargon for when a performer accidentally shows more of their genitals to the audience than intended.

See Safety Knickers.

Merkin - (Costume) Or known as a pubic wig, a merkin is an artificial covering, sometimes made of hair or rhinestones, for the pubic area of the performer.

See G-string.

Multiple Sclerosis or MS - “Multiple sclerosis (MS), is a demyelinating disease in which the insulating covers of nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord are damaged. This damage disrupts the ability of parts of the nervous system to transmit

signals, resulting in a range of signs and symptoms, including physical, mental, and sometimes psychiatric problems. Specific symptoms can include double vision, blindness in one eye, muscle weakness and trouble with sensation or coordination. MS takes several forms, with new symptoms either occurring in isolated attacks (relapsing forms) or building up over time (progressive forms). Between attacks, symptoms may disappear completely; however, permanent neurological problems often remain, especially as the disease advances.”

More information can be found at <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/multiple-sclerosis/> , <https://www.ms-uk.org/aboutms> and <https://www.mssociety.org.uk/about-ms/what-is-ms> .

Neo-Burlesque - See *Burlesque*.

Nerdlesque – Burlesque performances that engage with ‘nerd’ subculture within Neo-Burlesque. These can range from science fiction to fantasy references from different mediums such as literature, tv, computer games. For example, performer Titselina Bumsquash performs a routine where she is one of the Ghostbusters from the 1984 film; whilst Lady Wildflower’s ‘Aqua Marina” routine is based on the character Marina from the 1960’s TV show Stingray.

“Nerdlesque is as true to the original creative objective of burlesque as you can get: it merges the classic satirical roots of burlesque with the more recent neo-burlesque movement, by parodying current pop culture, geek fandoms and common nerd archetypes.” Persephone Phoenix (2015) *Nerdlesque: When Burlesque Gets Nerdy*.

Accessed July 2016 <http://comicbook.com/2015/04/18/what-is-nerdlesque/>

Also see Burlesque, Neo-Burlesque, Novel-Burlesque and Contemporary Burlesque.

Nipple tassels/pasties - (Costume) Nipple pasties (nipple covers) were born out of rebellion and necessity. According to performer Jo Weldon the topless showgirls of the 20’s were being arrested for baring their breasts naked in public and as a result the nipple pastie was created. To avoid the authorities the women would elaborately decorate their pasties to make it obvious that their nipples were covered. Further requirements in the 1950’s were made by the authorities and they demanded that the pasties should be visible to the audience in the back row, so the performers attached

tassels, it was only an additional bonus that the women realised they could make the tassels twirl. (Weldon 2010)

Novel-Burlesque - *See Burlesque.*

Peel and Parade - A form of classic burlesque performance, also known as the 'strip and strut' where the performer walks elegantly across the stage showing their beautifully made costume and striptease.

Also see Classic Burlesque.

Pin-up - Often related to 'cheesecake' where images of women during the 1940's to 1960's were scantily clad, or suggested nudity, and sexual inference on postcards and calendars that could be literally pinned up in the masculine workplace. Also connected to the idea of 'calendar girls'.

See Cheesecake,

Politics - Within this thesis I am referring to 'politics' as "*informal politics*" or everyday politics rather than the "*formal politics*" of constitutional governments and state (Painter and Jeffrey, 2009). These everyday politics are the alliances formed and mutual understanding created to progress personal and general goals sought through the activity of living within society, how power and influence is practiced in everyday life.

Popular Burlesque – *See Burlesque.*

Proximal Identification - A term created for this thesis to describe an individual or group of unified people who identify with an aspect of a cultural icon but not their entirety.

Queerlesque – Where Burlesque performances play and explore the whole spectrum of gender and performativity, not conforming to heterosexual and heteronormative ideals, it also includes Drag Queens and Kings.

"Queerlesque is the space where burlesque and cabaret-style performance art meet the wild and vibrant Queer community. Queerlesque shows are fabulous spectacles

of awesomeness created by, for and about the queer community, and aim to provide a safe and supportive stage for performers of all gender identities, sexual orientations, expressions, and styles.” Home Page, The Academy of Queerlesque. Accessed June 2016. <https://theacademyofqueerlesque.com/> Another good resource: Lilith Grey (2013) Queerlesque, WTF? <http://pincurlmag.com/queerlesque-wtf>
Also see Burlesque, Neo-Burlesque, Novel-Burlesque, Contemporary Burlesque, Drag.

Safety Knickers - (Costume) Safety knickers are worn under the costume knickers, regardless of size, to prevent the audience from seeing too much should the costume knickers not cover the genitals adequately.
See Lip-slip.

Secondary Objectification – The objectification of the external entity (society or individual) looking and judging upon an activity based on a misinformed assumption that is perpetuated through media representation. This misinformed assumption based on a generalised idea of ignorance is instilled in the psychosocial consciousness of the populace to become a part of the moral belief system by which we live. (Clare, 2015)

Showgirl - Another term used for a Burlesque performer, often attributed to Classic Burlesque, chorus lines and troupes. These performers can sing and dance in variety shows, musicals, as well as Burlesque.
See Classic Burlesque, Popular Burlesque.

Stereotype - Unlike archetype, these are profiles/persona based on observing “fronts” performed by groups of individuals with a commonality (Goffman, 1959). These observations can, and often do, lead to assumptions, generalisations, and misinformation. As widely held beliefs and expectations because of simplification, stereotypes are usually offensive and exaggerated caricatures of that group of individuals.

Stripper - Performers who remove clothes as adult entertainment with the intent to create sexual arousal in the audience and therefore requires a sexual entertainment license. Also, another term used for a Burlesque Performer used affectionately by some performers who acknowledge that they do in fact remove clothes on stage, just like strippers, and the shared history of both professions.

Trickster space - A term created for this thesis, in reference to the works of Hyde (1999) and Wynter (2000), to describe a space cultivated and produced to explore alternative narratives to the societal norm, uncover voices, challenge the status quo and create new ritual.

Theatre Act 1843 - Victorian entertainment is split into Legitimate Theatre (written plays subject to scrutiny of the Lord Chamberlain and venues) and Illegitimate Theatre (requires licence to perform dance, music and variety sketches) by The Theatre Act 1843. (Evans, 2001, p.56-57; Farson, 1972; Gillies, 1999, p.24). Legitimate theatre was consequently seen as high culture and Illegitimate theatre was considered low culture.

Voyeurism - To be a voyeur, according to the Oxford Dictionary, is to be “1. A person who obtains sexual gratification from observing others’ sexual actions or organs. 2. A powerless or passive spectator... [French, from voir ‘see’]” (1995). Voyeurism seems simple, the act of watching another person perform a perceived intimate activity with the intention of gaining sexual pleasure or thrill. I will venture further to add it is the objectification of the other person rather than the maintenance of a relationship. I would, also dispute the idea that this person is “powerless or passive”, as while they may not be active in the situation, depending upon consent of the other person, they are not completely powerless or without control. *Also see secondary voyeurism and dialogic gaze.*

Vulnerability - Vulnerability is arguably a complex concept. As a word, it stems from the “*Latin vulnerare ‘to wound’ from vulnuseris ‘wound’*” (1995). It is defined as that which can be wounded or harmed, therefore, exposed to damage by an implement. Suggestions given are “*by a weapon, criticism, etc*” (1995). I would argue, to develop this definition for my thesis, considering Judith Butler’s discussion on

“precarity” and Brené Brown (Butler, 2015; Brown, 2006 and 2010). I do so, in the form of a published scripted manifesto, as practice-as-research, called Manifesto for Vulnerability (Birmingham Journal of Literature and Language, 2017). In summary, to be vulnerable, is to accept the fragility and dangerous nature of living with others. Within this notion there are several elements: it is acknowledging dependency upon other factors; to not be in control, but also, not deliberately out of control; to accept the consequences of one’s own actions and be held accountable; to acknowledge with openness, emotions and self; as well as the need to seek a liveable existence.

Bibliography

4 Skills. 4Talent (Director). (2008, Feb 21). *Male boylesque dancing* [Video/DVD]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QMahvwb00Xc>

7 video results for Perle Noire burlesque. <https://vimeo.com/search?q=perle+noire+burlesque>

21st Century Burlesque Magazine (a) (2013, Feb 7). *Race and burlesque: The curious case of the performer of colour*. <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/race-and-burlesque-the-curious-case-of-the-performer-of-colour/>

21st Century Burlesque Magazine (b) (2014, March 3). *Slipper room owner James Habacker comments on rush Aaron Hicks 'blackface' incident*. <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/slipper-room-james-habacker-rush-aaron-hicks-blackface-incident/>

21st Century Burlesque Magazine (c) (2015, May 28). *Burlesque match game, BHoF edition: Perle noire*. <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/burlesque-match-game-bhof-edition-perle-noire/>

21st Century Burlesque Magazine (d) (2016, June 3). *Anger and upset after rape joke at BHoF party. (burlesque hall of fame weekend 2016)*. <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/rape-joke-dusty-limits-burlesque-hall-of-fame-party-sublime-boudoir/>

21st Century Burlesque Magazine (e) (2016, June 5) *A statement from Armitage Shanks regarding 'rape joke' made at BHoF showcase (burlesque hall of fame weekend 2016)*. <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/statement-armitage-shanks-rape-joke-burlesque-hall-of-fame-weekend/>

21st Century Burlesque Magazine (f) (2017, March 10). *Burlesque festival cast quit over blackface dispute*. <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/toulouse-burlesque-festival-blackface-racist-cast-walkout/>

21st Century Burlesque Magazine (g) (2017, March 16) *Toulouse blackface walkout: European performers respond*. <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/toulouse-burlesque-festival-blackface-european-performers-statement/>

21st Century Burlesque Magazine (h) (2021). *The burlesque top 50 2020*. <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/burlesque-top-50-2020/?fbclid=IwAR1d6ID94WKHuivxaJbfBdjvEo2hhHlyLWuoKpNb8TEPUjoW8At73kl0ByY>

Adams, K. H., & Keene, M. L. (2012). *Women of the American circus, 1880–1940*. McFarland & Company, Inc.

Adler, L., & White, M. (Producers), & Sharman, J. (Director). (1975). *The rocky horror picture show*. [Video/DVD] USA; UK: 20th Century Fox.

Ahmed, S. (2002). This other and other others. *Null*, 31(4), 558–572. doi:10.1080/03085140022000020689

Ahmed, S. (2006). *Queer phenomenology*. Duke University Press.

Ahmed, S. (2017, November 16). *Sara Ahmed and everyday feminism* [Conference paper.] Manchester Metropolitan University.

Albornoz, F., Bradley, J. & Sonderegger, S. (2021). Brexit and hate crime: Why was the rise more pronounced in areas that voted remain? *LSE*. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/brexit-and-hate-crime/>

All that Glitters Burlesque Academy. *Havana Hurricane presents: How to become a brand and own it!* <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/1558215>

Allen, N. (2008, Mar 3). Porn baron Paul Raymond, 'king of soho' dies. *The Telegraph*. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1580560/Porn-baron-Paul-Raymond-King-of-Soho-dies.html>

Allen, R. C. (1991). *Horrible prettiness: Burlesque and American culture*. University of North Carolina Press. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/002463443>

Amnesty International. (2019, June 11). *Abortion laws in the US – 10 things you need to know* . <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/abortion-laws-in-the-us-10-things-you-need-to-know/>

Angel, K. (2014). *Unmastered: A book on desire, most difficult to tell*. Penguin.

Another Gaze. (2018, August 15). *Suddenly, a woman spectator: An interview with Laura Mulvey*. <https://www.anothergaze.com/suddenly-woman-spectator-conversation-interview-feminism-laura-mulvey/>

Antin, S. (Director). (2010). *Burlesque* [Film]. De Line Pictures.

Appelbaum, L. (2018, June 5). *Frida Kahlo: Role model for artists, people with disabilities and bisexual women*. Respectability.org. <https://www.respectability.org/2018/06/frida-kahlo-lgbt-pride-month/>

Arbuthnot, J. (n.d.) *The history of John Bull* <http://www.public-library.uk/ebooks/51/97.pdf>

Ardolino, E. (Director). (1993). *Gypsy* [Film]. New Line Cinema.

Arts Council. (2016). Arts council funding -Gfta_Awards_February_16

Guttmacher Institute. (2022, June 1). *State laws and policies: An overview of abortion laws*. <https://www.guttmacher.org/state-policy/explore/overview-abortion-laws>

Asheeke, T. (2018). 'Lost opportunities': The African National Congress of South Africa (ANC-SA)'s evolving relationship with the black consciousness movement (BCM) in exile, 1970–1979. *Null*, 70(3), 519–541. doi:10.1080/02582473.2018.1483962

Ashforth, B. E., & Kreiner, G. E. (1999). "How can you do it?": Dirty work and the challenge of constructing a positive identity. *The Academy of Management Review*, 24(3), 413–434. doi:10.2307/259134

Assael, B. (2006). Art or indecency? Tableaux Vivants on the London stage and the failure of late Victorian moral reform. *The Journal of British Studies*, 45(4), 744–758. doi:10.1086/505956

Avison, P. (2015). 7 amazing body positive burlesque performers. https://www.bustle.com/articles/128381-7-body-positive-burlesque-performers-who-will-inspire-you-to-love-yourself?utm_source=FBOnsite&utm_medium=Facebook&utm_campaign=1

B, B. (Producer), & B, B. (Director). (2013). *Exposed: Beyond burlesque*. [Video/DVD] USA: Matchbox Films.

Baker, J. (2013, July 2,). Hebden Royd town council ban burlesque festival. <https://jamesbaker.mycouncillor.org.uk/2013/07/02/hebden-royd-town-council-ban-burlesque-festival/>

Baker, S., & Doorne-Huiskes, J. (1999). *Women and public policy : The shifting boundaries between the public and private spheres*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Bakewell, L. (1993). Frida Kahlo: A contemporary feminist reading. *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies*, 13(3), 165-189. doi:10.2307/3346753

Bakhtin, M. M. (. (1975/1984). *Rabelais and his world*. Indiana University Press:

Bakhtin, M. M. (., Emerson, C., & Booth, W. C. (1929/1999). *Problems of Dostoevsky's poetics*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Bakhtin, M. M. (., & Holquist, M. (1994). *The dialogic imagination : Four essays by M. M. Bakhtin*. University of Texas Press.

Ballou, H. (2013b). Pretty funny: Manifesting a normatively sexy female comic body. *Comedy Studies*, 4(2), 179-186. doi:10.1386/cost.4.2.179_1

Banks, M., & Swift, A. (1987). *The joke's on us : Women in comedy from music hall to the present day*. Pandora.

- Barnett, L. (2010, Dec 13.). Burlesque is stripping for posh people. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/theatreblog/2010/dec/13/burlesque-stripping-posh-empowering>
- Bates, L. (2015). *Everyday sexism*. London: Simon & Schuster.
- BBC (a) (2007, June 9). *Naked riders promote pedal power*.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/6736969.stm>
- BBC (b) (2009, May 12). *Profiles: Peter Stringfellow* .
http://www.bbc.co.uk/southyorkshire/content/articles/2008/06/19/peter_stringfellow_feature.shtml
- BBC (c) (2011, May 12). *Exeter taking part in world naked bike ride*.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-devon-13380981>
- BBC (d) (2011, June 6). *Portsmouth opposition to naked cycle ride*.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-13668953>
- BBC (e) (2013, July 10). *Hebden Bridge burlesque show banned at picture house*.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-23255096>
- BBC (f) (2014, June 12). *Naked bike ride set to go ahead in Clacton despite objections*.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-essex-27805119>
- BBC (g) (2019, June 14). *What's going on in the fight over US abortion rights?*
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-47940659>
- BBC (h) (2019, June 20). *Brexit 'major influence' in racism and hate crime rise*.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-48692863>
- BBC (i) (2020, Jan 30). *Cardiff sex-filming ruling 'clarifies' voyeurism law*.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-51307676>
- Beatriz, c., Morris, M., Mulvey, L., White, P., Bloomer, J., Spigel, L., . . . Wigley, M. (1992). *Sexuality and space*. New Jersey: Princeton Architectural Press.
- Belle, L. (2015). Archives for posts with tag: Hebden bridge.
<https://libertybelleburlesque.wordpress.com/tag/hebden-bridge/>
- Bennett, S. (2003). *Theatre audiences : A theory of production and reception* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.
- Berger, J. (1991). *About looking*. Vintage International.
- Best gender bending performer category. (2016). <http://burlesque-awards.burlesquebiblemag.com/category/best-gender-bending-performer>
- Beuys, J., & Kuoni, C. (1990). *Energy plan for the western man : Joseph Beuys in America : Writings and interviews with the artist*. Four Walls Eight Windows.

- Bjørnholt, M., & Farstad, G. R. (2012). 'Am I rambling?' on the advantages of interviewing couples together. *Qualitative Research : QR*, 14(1), 3-19. doi:10.1177/1468794112459671
- Blaize, I. (Producer), & Grist, A. (Director). (2010). *Immodesty Blaize presents burlesque undressed*. [Video/DVD] UK: Nightfall Films.
- Blaize, Immodesty (2016, Aug 20) Q&A with *Immodesty Blaize*. Seminar. Sexhibition, Manchester
- Blessing, J. (2013). The art(ifice) of striping: Gypsy Rose Lee and the masquerade of nudity. In L. Rado (Ed.), *Modernism, gender, and culture: A cultural studies approach* (pp. 47-65). London: Routledge.
- Blithe, S. J., & Wolfe, A. W. (2017). Work–life management in legal prostitution: Stigma and lockdown in Nevada’s brothels. *Human Relations*, 70(6), 725-750. doi:10.1177/0018726716674262
- Boal, A. (2008). *Theatre of the oppressed*. London: Pluto Press.
- Borzage, F. (Director). (1943, Nov 22,).[Gypsy Rose Lee strip routine . Video/DVD] YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4m9kd_nD1mA
- Booth, R. (2019, May 20,). Racism rising since Brexit vote, nationwide study reveals. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/may/20/racism-on-the-rise-since-brexit-vote-nationwide-study-reveals>
- Boxx, J. (2016). What my use of a wheelchair “Means” as miss Disa-burly-tease. <https://pincurlmag.com/spotlight/what-my-use-of-a-wheelchair-means-as-miss-disa-burly-tease/>
- Tuci, P. (Producer), & . (2003, Mar 27,). *BOYLESQUE! Paolo Tuci live at barrio's theatre*. [Video/DVD] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GK8d0hg-058>
- Brook, P. (2008). *The empty space*. London: Penguin.
- Brooke, S. (2012). 'Slumming' in swinging London?: Class, gender and the post-war city in Nell Dunn's up the junction(1963). *Cultural and Social History*, 9(3), 429-449. doi:10.2752/147800412X13270753069000
- Ted talks (Producer), & Brown, B. (Director). (2010). *The power of vulnerability*. [Video/DVD]
- Brown, B. (2006). Shame resilience theory: A grounded theory study on women and shame. *Families in Society*, 87(1), 43-52. doi:10.1606/1044-3894.3483
- Brownie, B. (2017). *Acts of undressing: Politics, eroticism, and discarded clothing*. London: Bloomsbury.

Buchanan, M. [Author] BBC. (2020, Sept 4). *Voyeur sentenced after woman's five-year campaign*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-54027088>

Bullock, P. (2016, Oct 8,). Transcript: Donald Trump's taped comments about women video. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/08/us/donald-trump-tape-transcript.html>

Burlesque Hall of Fame. (a). *Legends challenge*. <https://bhofweekend.com/support/legends-challenge/>

Burlesque Hall of Fame. (b). *Burlesque hall of fame weekend*. <https://bhofweekend.com/>

Burlesque Hall of Fame. (2018). *Meet living legends of burlesque at the burlesque hall of fame*. <https://www.burlesquehall.com/meet-living-legends-of-burlesque-at-the-burlesque-hall-of-fame/>

Burlesque Hall of Fame. (2019). *New exhibition explores the feminist side of burlesque*. <https://www.burlesquehall.com/new-exhibition-explores-the-feminist-side-of-burlesque/>

Burlesque Hall of Fame. *Burlesque hall of fame: About*. <https://www.burlesquehall.com/about/>

Burlesque Idol, U. K. (Producer), & Cheeks, C. (Director). (2019). *Featured act: Cinnamon cheeks*. [Video/DVD] London: <https://burdy.co/featured-act/cinnamon-cheeks/>

Buszek, M. E. (2006). *Pin-up grrrls : Feminism, sexuality, popular culture*. Durham, N.C. ;: Duke University Press.

Buszek, M. (1999). Representing "awarishness": Burlesque, feminist transgression, and the 19th-century pin-up. *Tdr* (1988-), 43(4), 141-162. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1146802>

Butler, J. (2006). *Gender trouble feminism and the subversion of identity* (2nd ed.. ed.). New York ; London: New York ; London : Routledge.

Butler, J. (2015). *Notes toward a performative theory of assembly*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Canasta, N. Video. <https://www.nastycanasta.com/listen>

Candy, L. (2006). *Practice based research: A guide : CCS report*. Sydney: University of Technology.

Carlson, Marvin. (2014) 'What is theatre?' in *Theatre: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: OUP Oxford

Carr, A. (2013). *How do I look? viewing, embodiment, performance, showgirls, and art practice*

Carr, F. (2016). "My routines aren't sexy, they're kind of bonkers": An interview with burlesque performer aurora galore. <https://exepose.com/2016/06/11/my-routines-arent-sexy-theyre-kind-of-bonkers-an-interview-with-burlesque-performer-aurora-galore/>

Carr, J., Clifton-Sprigg, J., James, J., & Vujić, S. (2020). Love thy neighbour? brexit and hate crime. *Institute for Labour Economics*, <http://ftp.iza.org/dp13902.pdf>

Carr, M. (2008). *The velvet hammer burlesque*. Berlin: Die Gestalten Verlag.

Carr-Gomm, P. (2010). *A brief history of nakedness*. London: Reaktion.

Chang, H. (2008). *Autoethnography as method*. Walnut Creek, Calif: Left Coast.

Chavarria, S. (2018). I found my passion after becoming disabled, and I thank Frida Kahlo for teaching me the beauty of second chances. <https://www.yahoo.com/lifestyle/found-passion-becoming-disabled-thank-173713311.html>

Cheeks, C. (2017). *Life less ordinary: Burlesque has given back to me the life my stroke took away*. https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/anna-higgs/burlesque-stroke-life_b_18293586.html

Cheeks, C. (2018a). *My alter ego miss Cinnamon Cheeks. A sad story told through burlesque x*. <https://justanotherstroke.wordpress.com/2018/01/02/my-alter-ego-miss-cinnamon-cheeks-a-sad-story-told-through-burlesque-x/>

Cheeks, C. (2018b). *Show time 27th January*. <https://justanotherstroke.wordpress.com/2018/01/28/show-time-27th-january/>

Cheeks, C. (2018c). *Speaking out about body confidence and disability as a stroke survivor*. <https://disabilityhorizons.com/2018/03/speaking-out-about-body-confidence-and-disability-as-a-stroke-survivor/>

Cheeks, C. (2018d). *Watch "uplifting stroke survivor story told through burlesque cinnamon cheeks" on YouTube*. <https://justanotherstroke.wordpress.com/2018/01/07/watch-sad-stroke-survivor-story-told-through-burlesque-cinnamon-cheeks-on-youtube/>

Churchill, L. (2018, June 3,). Why people are unlikely to get arrested for nudity at Bristol's world naked bike ride 2018. *Bristol Post* <https://www.bristolpost.co.uk/news/bristol-news/people-arrested-naked-bike-ride-90009>

TEDx (Producer), & Clare, S. (Director). (2015). *TEDxCoventGardenWomen: The ethical stripper*. [Video/DVD] Covent Garden:

Clark, C. (2015). Burlesque, bodies and breaking boundaries in south Africa. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/burlesque-bodies-and-brea_b_8687240?guccounter=1

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology: Qualitative Positive Psychology*. Edited by Kate Hefferon and Arabella Ashfield, 12(3), 297-298. doi:10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613

Classen, C. (1997). Foundations for an anthropology of the senses. *International Social Science Journal*, 49(3), 401-412.

Clements, J. (2004). Organic inquiry: Toward research in partnership with spirit. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 36(1), 26-49.

Climate emergency declarations in 1,781 jurisdictions and local governments cover 820 million citizens. (2020). <https://climateemergencydeclaration.org/climate-emergency-declarations-cover-15-million-citizens/>

Cobley, M. (2006, May 7,). Sussex police back pedal over Brighton's first world naked bike ride. *The Brighton Magazine* https://magazine.brighton.co.uk/Home/Editorial/Sussex%20Police%20Back%20Pedal%20Over%20Brighton's%20First%20World%20Naked%20Bike%20Ride/39_111_2037

Coe, C. (2003, Aug). Lady Godiva: The naked truth. *Harvard Magazine*, <https://harvardmagazine.com/2003/07/lady-godiva-the-naked-tr.html>

Coleridge, S. T. (2000). *Biographia literaria*. London: ElecBook.

Collins dictionary of medicine (2005). [https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/voyeurism:](https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/voyeurism)

Concise Oxford English dictionary (1995). (9th ed.). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Conklin, M. G. (2009). *Conversation what to say and how to say it Project Gutenberg*.

Croydon, H. (2009, May 1,). Burlesque: Performance art - or stripping? *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/may/01/burlesque-performance-art-stripping>

Damase, J. (1970). *Les folies du music-hall: A history of the music hall in Paris from 1914 to the present day*. London: Spring Books.

Daunton, N. (2015). Disabled icons: Painter Frida Kahlo and pushing boundaries. <https://disabilityhorizons.com/2015/12/disabled-icons-painter-frida-kahlo-and-pushing-boundaries/>

Davies, H. (2015). *Neo-Victorian freakery*. London: Palgrave Macmillan. doi:10.1057/9781137402561
<http://www.palgraveconnect.com/doi/10.1057/9781137402561>

De Vos, L., Papalexiou, E., Shearing, D., McEvoy, W., Van den Dries, L., Bannon, F., . . . Rodosthenous, G. (2015). In Rodosthenous G. (Ed.), *Theatre as voyeurism: The pleasure of watching*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dennis, J. P. (2008). Women are victims, men make choices: The invisibility of men and boys in the global sex trade. *Gender Issues*, 25(1), 11-25. doi:10.1007/s12147-008-9051-y

Dieleman, H. (2017). Arts-based education for an enchanting, embodied and transdisciplinary sustainability. *Artizein: Arts and Teaching Journal*, 2(2), 1-16. https://www.academia.edu/34671140/Arts_based_education_for_an_enchanting_embodied_and_transdisciplinary_sustainability

Dietz, M. G. (1987). Context is all: Feminism and theories of citizenship. *Daedalus*, 116(4), 1-24. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20025121>

Discussion forum: Burlesque festival. (2013, June 29,). <http://www.hebdenbridge.co.uk/forum/2013/066.html>

Dita Von Teese, P. (Producer), & . (). *Dita Von Teese - art of the teese Australia 2018 promo*. [Video/DVD] Australia: YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGu7eK9tuRs>

Dodds, S. (2013). Embodied transformations in neo-burlesque striptease. *Dance Research Journal*, 45(3), 75-90. doi:10.1017/S0149767713000016

Doherty, S. (2013). The history of burlesque dancing. <https://burlexe.com/burlesque/burlesque-history/the-history-of-burlesque-dancing/>

Doherty, S. (2016). Goodtime Mama JoJo burlesque history. <https://burlexe.com/archive/goodtime-mama-jojo-burlesque-history/>

Dohm, D., Factor, D. & Garrett, P. (1991). A dialogue: A proposal. <https://infed.org/mobi/dialogue-a-proposal/#6>

Donoghue, D. (2008). *Lady Godiva: A literary history of the legend*. USA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Donovan, J. (1997). *Radically speaking: Feminism reclaimed; all the rage; reasserting radical lesbian feminism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Dotterer, R., Bowers, S., Augustine, J., Bowers, S. R., Fuchs, C. J., Green, J. M., . . .

Levine-Keating, H. (1992). *Sexuality, the female gaze, and the arts : Women, the arts, and society*. Associated U.P.

Durbach, N. (2009). *Spectacle of deformity : Freak shows and modern British culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. doi:10.1525/9780520944893

Dudziak, M. L. (1994). Josephine Baker, racial protest, and the cold war. *The Journal of American History* (Bloomington, Ind.), 81(2), 543-570. doi:10.2307/2081171

Dynamo, D. Dottie dynamo: About. <https://dottiedynamo.com/>

Edwards, R., & Holland, J. (2013). *What is qualitative interviewing?* Bloomsbury Academic.

Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Brochner, A. (2011). *Autoethnography: An overview*. <https://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589/3095>: Forum: Qualitative Social Research.

Epstein, D. R., & Von Teese, D. (2007). Suicide girls interview w/Daniel Robert Epstein: Dita Von Teese author of the art of the teese. <https://web.archive.org/web/20170323020244/http://tribes.tribe.net/ditavonteese/thread/43c6a563-9800-4960-aae2-712e76956a9e>

Equity. (2015). Variety, circus & entertainers committee 2015-2017 . <http://www.equity.org.uk/committees/variety-circus-entertainers-committee-2015-2017/>

Erlingsson, B. (Director). (2015). *The show of shows: 100 years of vaudeville*. [Video/DVD] Great Britain, Iceland: Saga Film.

Evans, G. (2001). *Cultural planning : An urban renaissance? / graeme evans*. London: Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780203459744

Fargo, E. (2008). *The fantasy of real women: New burlesque and the female spectator*

Farlex partner medical dictionary (2012). . <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/voyeurism>:

Farson, D. (1972). *Marie Lloyd and music hall*. London: Tom Stacey Ltd.

Ferguson, A. (1984). Sex war: The debate between radical and libertarian feminists. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 10(1), 106-112. doi:10.1086/494117

Cirque Rouge (Producer), & Fischietto, J. (Director). (2012, Aug 23,). *Janet fischietto - the indian @ cirque rouge no.13*. [Video/DVD]

Fishchietto, J. Janet fischietto: American cutie.
<https://www.janetfishchietto.com/native-american-cutie>

Folies Bergere: Home. <https://www.foliesbergere.com/uk>

Feuer, C. (Producer), & Fosse, B. (Director). (1972). *Cabaret* . [Video/DVD] ABC Pictures.

Foucault, M. (1979). *Discipline and punishment: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan Trans.). New York: Vintage Books A Division of Random House, Inc.
<https://zulfahmed.files.wordpress.com/2013/12/disciplineandpunish.pdf>

Fox, J. (2002). *Eyes on stalks*. London: Methuen.

Frank, P. (2015). Living burlesque legends on why they love the art of the tease.
https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/former-burlesque-legends-on-why-they-love-the-art-of-the-tease_n_55bbab8ee4b0d4f33a02a49c?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAMBb6AU5FemuRXiCJB0DLFxSVGMMIhULzj7Dhojob7XPhYT94AoD9SdLlbG-ZUL1xillo3t9cs9IGig3a1lhTKIlz7Nc2YXpmnrgRTIE5VBwVAOS7rMpRn84kciqrQWEQAs_JWtekBqHmpbn2GI7puiymwhfjtLfr5gvcJLwNhpZ

Fraser, M. BBC (2015a). *Seriously... Mat Fraser meets the burlesque legends*.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3R3JZty17gQ4BfDXRYSx9T2/mat-fraser-meets-the-burlesque-legends>

Fraser, M. (2015b). BBC Radio 4. *Burlesque legends*.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06ptddh>: BBC Radio 4.

Heyman, N., & Hoskins, B. (Producers), & Frears, S. (Director). (2006). *Mrs Henderson presents*. [Video/DVD] UK: Pathe Distribution.

Freeman, J., & Taylor, H. (2009). *Blood, sweat & theory*. Libri Publishing: Faringdon, England].

Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* . England: Penguin.

French, S. (2013). Viewing" the burlesque hour": The pleasures of the masochistic gaze. *Australasian Drama Studies*, , 6-146.

Frequently asked questions (FAQ). <https://www.burlesquehall.com/about/frequently-asked-questions-faq/>

Freshwater, H. (2009). *Theatre and audience*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

References

Freud, S., Strachey, J., & Richards, A. (1977). *On sexuality : Three essays on the theory of sexuality, and other works*. Penguin.

Frida Kahlo: Making herself up (2018). In Wilcox, Claire & Henestrosa, Circe (Ed.), . London: V&A Publishing.

Fuentes, C., & Lowe, S. M. (2005). *The diary of Frida Kahlo : An intimate self-portrait*. Abrams.

Funny or Die (Producer), & Funny or Die (Director). (2015, Dec 7,). *Dita von teese shows you how to look impossibly sexy while performing even the least-sexy tasks*. [Video/DVD]. Facebook.
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10153722404788851>

Gale encyclopaedia of medicine (2008). . <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/voyeurism>:

Galea, K. (2017, May 26,). The life and politics of Frida Kahlo. *The Socialist*, <https://thesocialist.org.au/life-politics-frida-kahlo/>

Gänzl, K. (2002). *Lydia Thompson, queen of burlesque* . Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Garber, M. (2017, Jan 21,). The inauguration, and the counter-inauguration. *The Atlantic Culture* <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/01/the-inauguration-and-the-counter-inauguration/514055/>

Gareth, S. J. (1974). Working-class culture and working-class politics in London, 1870-1900; notes on the remaking of a working class. *Journal of Social History*, 7(4), 460-508. doi:10.1353/jsh/7.4.460

Garnder, L. (2005, Aug 18,). Everything goes. *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2005/aug/18/edinburghfestival2005.edinburghfestival2>

GESTURING TOWARDS DECOLONIAL FUTURES. The haruko accord. <https://decolonialfutures.net/portfolio/the-haruko-accord/>

Gillett, F. (2017, May 9,). BBC the one show: Theresa may and husband Philip spark outcry with 'sexist' comments over 'boy jobs and girl jobs'. *Evening Standard* <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/bbc-the-one-show-theresa-may-and-husband-philip-spark-outcry-with-sexist-comments-over-boy-jobs-and-a3534876.html>

Gillies, M. (1999). *Marie Lloyd: The one and only*. London: Victor Gollancz.

Giordano, J., O'Reilly, M., Taylor, H., & Dogra, N. (2007). Confidentiality and autonomy: the challenge(s) of offering research participants a choice of disclosing

their identity. *Qualitative health research*, 17(2), 264–275.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732306297884>

Glenn, S. A. (2000). *Female spectacle: The theatrical roots of modern feminism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Glenza, J. (2020, Jan 21,). Will 2020 be the year abortion is banned in the US? *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/20/us-abortion-rights-ban-2020>

Goffman, E. (1990). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. London: Penguin.

Goodley, D. (2017). *Disability studies : An interdisciplinary introduction* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Goodman, L., & De Gay, J. (2000). *The routledge reader in politics and performance*. London : Routledge. doi:10.4324/9780203141571

Gov.UK. (2015). Guidance: Entertainment licensing. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/entertainment-licensing-changes-under-the-live-music-act#do-i-need-a-licence-to-put-on-a-play-or-a-performance-of-dance>

Grant, M. G. (2014). *Playing the whore: The work of sex work*. New York ; London: Verso.

Greer, G. (2007). *The whole woman*. London: Black Swan.

Greer, M. (2012, April 27,). Fiction suit. *Sequart Organization*, <http://sequart.org/magazine/10642/fiction-suit/>

Hanisch, C. (2000). The personal is political. In B. A. Crow (Ed.), *Radical feminism: A documentary reader* (pp. 113-116). New York: New York University Press.

Hanisch, C. (2006). The personal is political. <http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html>

Hann, R. (2018). Practice matters: Arguments for a ‘Second wave’ of practice research. http://m.rachelhann.com/practiceresearch_blog.html

Haraway, D. (1988). Situated knowledges: The science question in feminism and the privilege of partial perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575-599. doi:10.2307/3178066

Harris, G. (1999). *Staging femininities: Performance and performativity* . Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Harris, I. (2015, Aug 11,). Burlesque dancers are strippers, pure and simple. let's stop pretending otherwise. *The Independent*

<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/burlesque-dancers-are-strippers-pure-and-simple-let-s-stop-pretending-otherwise-10448341.html>

Hartley, F. (n.d.) *The ladies' book of etiquette, and manual of politeness A complete hand book for the use of the lady in polite society*. Project Gutenberg.

Hayden, D. (1995). *The power of place: Urban landscapes as urban history* MIT Press.

Heath, T. Tony heath art: About. <https://tonyheathart.wordpress.com/about/>

Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival. (2016a). #HBBF2016 A-Z:

G is for GLORY PEARL. Facebook.

<https://www.facebook.com/HebdenBridgeBurlesqueFestival/photos/pcb.810482369063342/810480215730224/>

Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival (2018). *Live Panel Discussion: the Cultural Case for Diversity – the Burlesque Elephant in the Room* [Conference panel] Hebden Bridge.

Wildflower, L., & Bang Tidy, H. (Producers), & Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival (Director). (2016b, Sept 27,). *Hebden Bridge burlesque festival 2016 - A look behind the scenes*. [Video/DVD] YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BnBzDLI7wI>

Heim, C. (2016). *Audience as performer: The changing role of theatre audiences in the twenty-first century*. London, New York: Routledge; Taylor & Francis Group.

Henry, E. S. (2014). Cultural responsibility in burlesque. <http://feministsonar.com/2014/03/cultural-responsibility-in-burlesque/>

Henshall, M. (2013). Why are women attracted to burlesque?

burlesque performer Dita Von Teese draws a mostly female audience to her shows .

<https://clclt.com/charlotte/why-are-women-attracted-to-burlesque/Content?oid=3233049>

Hess, J., & BBC News. (2014, Feb 12). New burlesque: Is it empowering or demeaning to women? <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-25782781>

Hiatt, B. (2011, Aug 22,). Grant Morrison: Psychedelic superhero. *The Rolling Stones*, <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/grant-morrison-psychedelic-superhero-244265/>

Home Office. (2010). Sexual entertainment venues: Guidance for England and Wales. <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100408140149/http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/crimereduction057a.pdf>

Hosie, R. (2017). Why upskirting needs to be made a criminal offence. *The Independent*, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/upskirting-criminal-offence-why-specific-charge-voyeurism-videos-photos-cps-sex-predators-a7885691.html>

Howes, D. (2006). Charting the sensorial revolution. *The Senses and Society*, 1(1), 113-128. doi:10.2752/174589206778055673

Hurricane, H. Havana Hurricane: Acts. <https://www.havanahurricane.co.uk/#!/acts/czpl>

Huxley, D., & James, D. (2013). Women used to be funny: Music hall and the threat of cinema, 1911-49. *Early Popular Visual Culture: Music Hall to Movies*, 11(3), 191-204. doi:10.1080/17460654.2013.818759

Hyde, L. (1983). *The gift: Imagination and the erotic life of property*. Edinburgh; New York; Melborne: Canongate Canons.

Hyde, L. (1999). *Trickster makes this world*. New York: North Point Press.

Hyman, T., & Malbert, R. (2000). *Carnavalesque National Touring Exhibitions*. ITV (Producer), & ITV (Director). (2019, Jan 22,). *Good morning Britain: Can strippers also be feminists?* [Video/DVD] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PKaU7vFXN20>: ITV.

Jacolbe, J. (2019). Frida Kahlo's forgotten politics. <https://daily.jstor.org/frida-kahlos-forgotten-politics/>

Jasper, M. (2013). *Beginning reflective practice*. Andover: Cengage Learning.

Jeez Loueez "upset, conflicted and angry" after New Orleans burlesque festival. (2015).

Johnson, B. ". (2010). Clown history: Early female clowns. <https://www.charliethejugglingclown.com/women.htm>

Johnson, K. (2016). "The lord chamberlain regrets...". <https://blogs.bl.uk/english-and-drama/2016/10/the-lord-chamberlain-regrets-.html>

Jones, E. (2018). Frida Kahlo and pendular disability identity: A textual examination of el diario de Frida Kahlo. *Disability and the Global South*, 5(1), pp. 1234-1251. <https://disabilityglobalsouth.files.wordpress.com/2018/02/dgs-05-01-03.pdf>

Jones, R. (a). Ask me anything: Rubyyy jones. <https://burdy.co/feature-teacher/rubyyy-jones-2/>

Jones, R. (b). Rubyyy Jones: Act portfolio. <https://rubyyyjones.wixsite.com/rubyyy/portfolio>

Jones, R. (c). Rubyyy Jones: Biography. <https://rubyyyjones.wixsite.com/rubyyy/biographyyy>

X "Potty-mouth Princess". Jones, R. (Director). (2015a, Nov 15,).[Video/DVD] Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/145780219>

- X "TELLINNG" at cabaret roulette: *Nightmare*. Jones, R. (Director). (2015b, April 17,).[Video/DVD] Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/125227747>
- Jones, T. (2014, March 4). *Backlash blues*. 21st Burlesque Century Magazine <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/backlash-blues-tangerine-jones-blackface-rush-aaron-hicks-racist-burlesque/>
- Jules-Rosette, B. (2007). *Josephine Baker in art and life: The icon and the image*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Jung, C. G. (. (1978). *Man and his symbols* Aldus.
- Jung, C. G. (. (1990). *The archetypes and the collective unconscious* (2nd ed.) New York: Princeton University Press.
- Kahlo, F. (1940). *Self-portrait with cropped hair* . New York: MoMA. <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/78333#:~:text=Kahlo%20painted%20Self%20Portrait%20with,Mexican%20Muralist%20painter%20Diego%20Rivera.>
- Kahlo, F. (1944). *The broken column* . Mexico City: Museo Dolores Olmedo. <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-broken-column/EgGMbMFBQrAe3Q?hl=en-GB&ms=%7B%22x%22%3A0.5%2C%22y%22%3A0.5%2C%22z%22%3A8.941611686096454%2C%22size%22%3A%7B%22width%22%3A3.1839930723036436%2C%22height%22%3A1.2375000000000012%7D%7D>
- Karbo, K. (2019). In praise of difficult women: The inconvenient spectacle of Frida Kahlo. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/2019/01/excerpt-frida-kahlo-artist-praise-difficult-women/>
- Kavanagh, D. (2004). Ocularcentrism and its others: A framework for metatheoretical analysis. *Organization Studies*, 25(3), 445-464. doi:10.1177/0170840604040672
- Keller, J., Mendes, K., & Ringrose, J. (2018). Speaking 'unspeakable things': Documenting digital feminist responses to rape culture. *Journal of Gender Studies: Rape Culture, Lad Culture and Everyday Sexism: Researching, Conceptualizing and Politicizing New Mediations of Gender and Sexual Violence*, 27(1), 22-36. doi:10.1080/09589236.2016.1211511
- Kershaw, B. (1992). *The politics of performance: Radical theatre as cultural intervention*. London: Routledge.
- Kershaw, B., & Nicholson, H. (2011). *Research methods in theatre and performance*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. doi:10.3366/j.ctt1g0b2vz

- Ko, R. (2015). History of burlesque: Ancient Greece. <https://bluestockingmagazine.com/2015/04/14/history-of-burlesque-ancient-greece/>
- Ko, R. (2016a). History of burlesque: The leg mania artiste. <https://bluestockingmagazine.com/2016/08/17/history-of-burlesque-the-leg-mania-artiste/>
- Ko, R. (2016b). History of burlesque: The skirt dancer. <https://bluestockingmagazine.com/2016/08/11/history-of-burlesque-the-skirt-dancer/>
- Ko, R. (2016c). Meet the performer: Rusty Von Chrome, performing at 'A new royal family' this Saturday. <https://bluestockingmagazine.com/2016/02/16/meet-the-performer-rusty-von-chrome-performing-at-a-new-royal-family-this-saturday/>
- Ko, R. (2018). Ambition is critical. <https://bluestockingmagazine.com/2018/03/04/ambition-is-critical/>
- Kohler, W. (2020, July 8,). Gay history: – Bisexual Mexican artist Frida Kahlo born (July 6, 1907 – July 13, 1954). <http://www.back2stonewall.com/2020/07/gay-lgbt-history-bisexual-mexican-artist-frida-kahlo-born.html>
- Kübler-Ross, E. (2009). *On death and dying : What the dying have to teach doctors, nurses, clergy and their own families* (40th ed.). London: Routledge.
- Lacan, J. (1975). In Millere J. (Ed.), *The seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book 1: Freud's papers on technique 1953–1954* (J. Forrester Trans.). New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Lacy, S. (1995). *Mapping the terrain : New genre public art* Bay Press.
- Ladak, S. J. (2019). Hate crimes are rising in the UK - thanks to Brexit and an exclusive education system I view. <https://www.euronews.com/2019/09/20/hate-crimes-are-rising-in-the-uk-thanks-to-brexit-and-an-exclusive-education-system-view>
- Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1990). *Metaphors we live by* (8. print. ed.). Chicago u.a: Univ. of Chicago Pr.
- LaRouge, F. V. (a). *Burlesque arrests: Georgia sothern*. <https://pincurlmag.com/uncategorized/burlesque-arrests-georgia-sothern/>
- LaRouge, F. V. (b). *Burlesque arrests: Las vegas, blaze starr & evelyn west*. <https://pincurlmag.com/uncategorized/burlesque-arrests-las-vegas-blaze-starr-evelyn-west/>
- LaRouge, F. V. (c). *Burlesque arrests: Lili st cyr*. <https://pincurlmag.com/uncategorized/burlesque-arrests-lili-st-cyr/>

- LaRouge, F. V. (d). *Burlesque arrests: Mae west & sally rand*.
<https://pincurlmag.com/uncategorized/burlesque-arrests-mae-west-sally-rand/>
- LaRouge, F. V. (e). *Burlesque arrests: Mata hari*.
<https://pincurlmag.com/uncategorized/burlesque-arrests-mata-hari/>
- LaRouge, F. V. (f). *Burlesque arrests: Texas guinan*.
<https://pincurlmag.com/uncategorized/burlesque-arrests-texas-guinan/>
- LaRouge, F. V. (g). *Burlesque arrests: The fellas*.
<https://pincurlmag.com/uncategorized/burlesque-arrests-the-fellas/>
- LaRouge, F. V. (h). *Search results for: Burlesque arrests*.
<https://pincurlmag.com/?s=burlesque+arrests>
- Lauren Redniss. (2006). *Century girl: 100 years in the life of Doris Eaton travis, last living star of the ziegfeld*. New York: Regan, HarperCollins.
- Leblanc, L. (2008). *Pretty in punk : Girls' gender resistance in a boys' subculture*. New Brunswick, N.J. ;: Rutgers University Press.
- Lee Simmons, D. (2015, Sept 16,). N.O. burlesque performers of color: 'Race is always an issue. always. with a capital 'A.'". *The Times-Picayune*
https://www.nola.com/entertainment_life/arts/article_31430f7d-a69a-5eb0-bc06-c99469f85f52.html
- Lee, G. R. (1999). *Gypsy: Memoirs of America's most celebrated*. USA: North Atlantic Books.
- Lee, T. M. L. (2007). Rethinking the personal and the political: Feminist activism and civic engagement. *Hypatia*, 22(4), 163-179.
- Legislation.gov.uk. (2003a). Section 67, voyeurism: Sexual offences act 2003 .
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/section/67>
- Legislation.gov.uk. (2003b). Section 68, voyeurism: Interpretation: Sexual offences act 2003 .
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/section/68>
- Legislation.gov.uk. (2003c). Sexual offences act 2003 .
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/42/contents>
- Levick, C. (2013). *Shakespeare and the harlots of the Victorian stage*. [Conference Paper] Theatre Research in Progress Seminar, The University of Sheffield.
- Levick, C. (2019). *Jonathan M Hess, Deborah and her sisters: How one nineteenth-century melodrama and a host of celebrated actresses put Judaism on the world stage*. London, England: SAGE Publications. doi:10.1177/1748372719828557

- Levy, A. (2005). *Female chauvinist pigs : Women and the rise of raunch culture*. New York ;: Free Press.
- Liepe-Levinson, K. (2001). *Strip show : Performances of gender and desire*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Limits, D. (2016, June 4). *An official statement from dusty limits addressing the BHoF 'rape joke' incident. (burlesque hall of fame weekend 2016)*. 21st Century Burlesque Magazine. <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/statement-dusty-limits-rape-joke-burlesque-hall-of-fame-weekend-2016/>
- Ling Wong, J. (a). Art perfecting itself. *Green Spirit Magazine*, 17(1) <https://www.greenspirit.org.uk/gs-magazine/Art%20Perfecting%20Itself.pdf>
- Ling Wong, J. (b). Judy Ling Wong: Painter poet and environmental activist. <http://www.judylingwong.co.uk/>
- Lintott, S., & Irvin, S. (2016). Sex objects and sexy subjects: A feminist reclamation of sexiness. In S. Irvin (Ed.), *Body aesthetics* (). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, M., Luhrmann, B., & Baron, F. (Producers), & Luhrmann, B. (Director). (2001). *Moulin rouge!* [Video/DVD] USA; Australia: 20th Century Fox.
- Lynskey, D. (2014, July 30,). This means war: Why the fashion headdress must be stopped. *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2014/jul/30/why-the-fashion-headdress-must-be-stopped>
- Manis, S. (2012). Research methods in theatre and performance (review). *Theatre Topics*, 22(2), 196-197. doi:10.1353/tt.2012.0026
- Marshal, P. (2006). World naked bike ride - London.
- Martini, D. (2016, July 10). Q&A with *Dirty Martini*. Seminar, Manchester 235 casino.
- Martini, D. (2016, July 10). *The Ultimate Guide to Knocking them Dead*. Workshop Seminar, Manchester 235 casino.
- Marx, K. (1884). *Critique of Hegel's philosophy of right* <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/>
- McElroy, W. (1995). *Xxx: A woman's right to pornography*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- McFadden, R. D. (2008, Dec 11,). Bettie Page, queen of pinups, dies at 85 . *The New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/12/arts/12page.html>
- McGrath, John. *The Bone Won't Break: on Theatre and Hope in Hard Times*. London: Methuen, 1990.

McGraw-hill concise dictionary of modern medicine (2002). <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/voyeurism>:

McKechnie, S. (1931). *Popular entertainments through the ages*. London: Pernel and Sons.

Meadows, D. (1999). *Leverage points: Places to intervene in the system*. Hartland, VT: The Sustainability Institute.

Merriam-Webster. Conduit. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conduit>

Millar, J., & HBBF. (2016). Hebden bridge burlesque festival: Albums: HBBF 2016 gala. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/HebdenBridgeBurlesqueFestival/photos/?tab=album&album_id=856773454434233&ref=page_internal

Miller-Keane encyclopaedia and dictionary of medicine, nursing, and allied health (2003). (7th ed.). <https://medical-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/voyeurism>: Saunders, an imprint of Elsevier, Inc.

Montgomery, M. Y. (2013). *A burlesque*

Moon, J. A. (2004). *A handbook of reflective and experiential learning theory and practice*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Moran, C. (2012). *How to be a woman*. London: Ebury.

Mort, F. (2007). Striptease: The erotic female body and live sexual entertainment in mid-twentieth-century London. *Social History*, 32(1), 27-53. doi:10.1080/03071020601081256

Miss Burlesque Comp (Producer) (2014, Dec 1,). *Mr boylesque Australia winner charlie D barkle*. [Video/DVD] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e2poFA4HZaw>

Mulhul, Luke (Producer) BBC Radio 4 (2015, Dec 30). *Late night woman's hour: Naked for new year* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06snvwt>

Mullone, L. (2013, July 13,). Burlesque is not as bad as stripping. it's far worse. *The Spectator* <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/burlesque-is-not-as-bad-as-stripping-it-s-far-worse>

Multiple sclerosis. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiple_sclerosis

Mulvey, L. (1989). *Visual and other pleasures*. Bloomington u.a: Indiana Univ. Pr.

Muray, N. (1939). *Frida on bench* (3 of 16). New York: <https://nickolasmuray.com/frida-kahlo>

Murphy, M. (2011). Burlesque: They tell me it's just for fun...Except I'm not having any. <https://www.feministcurrent.com/2011/02/04/burlesque-they-tell-me-its-just-for-fun-except-im-not-having-any/>

Nally, C. (2009). Grrrly hurly burly: Neo-burlesque and the performance of gender. *Textual Practice*, 23(4), 621-643. doi:10.1080/09502360903000554

Nally, C., & Smith, A. (2013). *Naked exhibitionism : Gendered performance and public exposure*. London: I.B. Tauris.

Nathan, J. (2010, April 14,). Censorship in theatre. The Telegraph <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/theatre-features/7572604/Censorship-in-the-theatre.html>

Nelson, R. (2013). *Practice as research in the arts : Principles, protocols, pedagogies, resistances*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nicolescu, B., & Ertas, A. (2008). *Transdisciplinary theory and practice*. USA: The ATLAS.

https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/36468289/Transdisciplinary_Theory_Practice-2013.pdf?1422763024=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DFrom_Transdisciplinary_Theory_to_Transdi.pdf&Expires=1601656138&Signature=IFrFCjHWA4eK7KHSRyG9~ND94a4d~KaSwtOib0MBcfDJelYA8YF2M2jyORamfv-cBNRCvWp6AfNvKVazlZRM9~6y87xhcV9kM3NM~QB42B819GHxM4T6j46RdT0ASGeKHn6~U5BmG3YC-yACFo0VGeu4EByrba164xd7EyBYCJIFjuRXRhJ2BZImUI4Q5rWfE46Uyv3q0oNxlqMth~uXibWLuZyclUs8g9p7iAl~vRp4xRs7FxB01hJBVYs4RT3kdunP1mOY1OJHN6gu5u0gNV-FWfzOxx3yvOuSp5FQoXE2fB062ys1EAlv-QbdDw1BF~SyViBz4F4n6RyYACbRYA__&Key-Pair-Id=APKAJLOHF5GGSLRBV4ZA

Nicolescu, B. (2002). *Manifesto of transdisciplinarity* Suny Press.

Nipples, Freida nipples: Bio. <https://www.freidanipples.com/bio>

Noir, r. Raven noir burlesque. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/raven.noir.burlesque/?fref=ts>

Noire, P. Perle noire. <https://blackburlesquequeen.com/>

Perle, N. (Producer), & Noire, P. (Director). (2014, July 17,). *Perle Noire presents... peacock fantasy*. [Video/DVD] Helsinki Burlesque Festival: YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbJV0b82G_c

Noire, P. (Producer), & Noire, P. (Director). (2015, Jan 2,). *Perle Noire the mahogany queen of burlesque*. [Video/DVD] New York Burlesque Festival: YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0EXGpF4Nj8>

Noire, Perle (2019, Jan 20). Q&A with Perle Noire. [Web workshop] <https://www.crowdcast.io/e/myfg3epi/register>

O'Claire, V. (). Burlesque stripped down. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/burlesquestrippeddown/>

Odendahl-James, J. (2011). Brecht bytes 4#: Everyday theatre. <https://sites.duke.edu/dukeinlaramie/2011/03/22/brecht-bytes-4/>

Orwell, G. (1994). *Nineteen eighty-four* Guild Publishing by arrangement with Secker & Warburg.

Otto, B. (2007). *Fools are everywhere: The court jesters around the world*. Chicago: The University of Chicago.

Overview: Multiple sclerosis. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/multiple-sclerosis/>

Painter, J., Jeffrey, A. S., & Painter, J. (2009). *Political geography an introduction to space and power* (2nd ed.). Los Angeles, Calif.] : SAGE.

Pankl, L. (2018). Frida Kahlo as feminist geographer. *Gender, Place and Culture : A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 26(1), 149-152. doi:10.1080/0966369x.2018.1484703

Parker, D., & Parker, J. (1975). *The natural history of the chorus girl* David and Charles.

Peacock, L. (2009). *Serious play: Modern clown performance* . Bristol, UK: Intellect Books.

Pearl, G. Miss glory pearl. <http://www.missglorypearl.co.uk/>

Pearl, S. (2012). 'It's complicated'- more on cultural appropriation. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/notes/shanghai-pearl/its-complicated-more-on-cultural-appropriation/380708325309457>

Pepitone, J. (2015, Oct 16,). What it's really like to be a burlesque dancer. *Cosmopolitan*, <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/career/a47758/burlesque-dancer-career-perle-noire/>

Burlesque Hall of Fame (Producer), & Noire, Perle (2015, Jan 17,). Perle Noire - 2014 icons & all-stars showcase. [Video/DVD] Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/117030831>

Perle Noire, the mahogany queen. (2016, Autumn). *Burlesque Bible*, pp. 9-13. <https://www.burlesquebiblemag.com/products/autumn-2016-issue-16?variant=31380354948#>

Philip, M. N. (2017, June 22-24). *Gasp! unspeakable acts: The tongues of M. NourbeSe Philip*. [Conference paper.] Birkbeck University of London.

Photos: Perle Noire wins 1st runner up in burlesque hall of fame reigning queen contest. (2015). <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/photos-perle-noire-1st-runner-up-burlesque-hall-of-fame-reigning-queen/>

Portnoy, S. (2014, June 9). *Where do we grow from here? discussing cultural appropriation*. 21st Century Burlesque Magazine. <https://pincurlmag.com/uncategorized/where-do-we-grow-from-here/>

Portnoy, S. (2015). Cultural appropriation: Short and not sweet. <https://pincurlmag.com/uncategorized/cultural-appropriation-short-and-not-sweet/>

Potts, L. & BBC News (2015, Feb 7). Fair is fair: How show-women were given a chance to thrive. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-31000464>

Potty-mouthed princesses drop F-bombs for feminism by FCKH8.com. . ([Video/DVD] YouTube.com: FCKH8.com. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqHYzYn3WZw>

Price, J. (2016, Sept 18). *Perle Noire: A beautiful imperfection*. 21st Century Burlesque Magazine <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/perle-noire-house-of-noire-interview/>

Quinn, B. (2019, Oct 15,). Hate crimes double in five years in England and Wales. *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2019/oct/15/hate-crimes-double-england-wales>

Rancière, J. (2009). *The emancipated spectator*. London: Verso.

Rancière, J. (2011). *The emancipated spectator*. London: Verso.

Reeve, S. (2013). *Body and performance*. Axminster: Triarchy.

Regehr, K. (2011). The rise of recreational burlesque: Bumping and grinding towards empowerment. *Sexuality & Culture*, 16(2), 134-157. doi:10.1007/s12119-011-9113-2

Revealed, E. (2012, Jan 16). *Burlesque performer vs. stripper*. 21st Century Burlesque. <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/burlesque-performer-vs-stripper/>

Richens, F. (2016). Arts council funding a “stamp of approval” for burlesque. <https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/arts-council-funding-stamp-approval-burlesque>

Rose, J. (2005). *Sexuality in the field of vision*. Oxfordshire: Verso.

Routledge, G. Routledge's manual of etiquette Project Gutenberg.

Rowlatt, B., & Gills, D. & BBC Radio 4 (2016, Feb 24). *Return to the moulin rouge*.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p03kkkpt>

Rowlett, B. & BBC News (2016, Feb 25). *Inside the topless sisterhood*.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-35654337>

Burlesque Hall of Fame (Producer), & . (2013, Dec 22,). *Russell Bruner - 2013 movers, shakers & innovators showcase*. [Video/DVD] YouTube.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pe-T1VQ_V3s

Sally, L. D. L. About dr. lucky, phd . <https://doctorofburlesque.com/>

Sally, L. D. L. (2009). "It is the ugly that is so beautiful": Performing the monster/beauty continuum in American neoburlesque. *The Journal of American Drama and Theatre*, 21(3), 5-23.

Sally, L. D. L. (2014a, Jan 27). *A phenomenological analysis of the state of burlesque, by dr. lucky*. 21st Century Burlesque Magazine <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/a-phenomenological-analysis-of-the-state-of-burlesque-dr-lucky/>

Sally, L. D. L. (2014b, June 20). *What to expect at a typical burlesque show*. 21st Century Burlesque Magazine. <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/what-to-expect-at-a-typical-burlesque-show/>

Sally, L. D. L. (2017). Performing the burlesque body: The explicit female body as palimpsest. In A. Ainsworth, O. Double & L. (. S. Peacock (Eds.), *Popular performance* (pp. 161-177). London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Sampson, K. (1998, May 6,). I work for ... Gerard Simi. *The Independent*
<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/i-work-for-gerard-simi-1161272.html>

Sandahl, C., & Auslander, P. (2005). *Bodies in commotion : Disability & performance*. Ann Arbor, Mich: University of Michigan Press. doi:10.3998/mpub.92455

Saunders, B., Kitzinger, J., & Kitzinger, C. (2015). Anonymising interview data: challenges and compromise in practice. *Qualitative research : QR*, 15(5), 616–632.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794114550439>

Savva, A. (2017, June 16). Cambridgeshire Live: Why don't cyclists at Cambridge's naked bike ride get arrested for nudity? *Cambridge News* <https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/cambridge-news/cyclists-unlikely-arrested-nudity-weekends-13192772>

Schechner, R. (1985). *Between theater and anthropology*. University of Pennsylvania Press.

- Schechner, R. (1995). *The future of ritual : Writings on culture and performance*. Routledge.
- Schechner, R. (1988, 2004). *Performance theory*. London: Routledge.
- Schechner, R., & Brady, S. (2013). *Performance studies : An introduction*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Schon, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. London, New York: Routledge Classic.
- Scott, E. (2017, Mar 4,). What soho looked like in the midst of its sexual revolution. *Metro* <https://metro.co.uk/2017/03/04/what-soho-looked-like-in-the-midst-of-its-sexual-revolution-6487534/?ito=cbsshare>
- Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Search: Burlesque. <https://www.pulpinternational.com/pulp/keyword/burlesque.html>
- Sedgman, K. (2018). *The reasonable audience theatre etiquette, behaviour policing, and the live performance experience*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Segal, L. (2015). *Straight sex : Rethinking the politics of pleasure*. London: Verso.
- Sherman, E. (2018, June 14,). What I learned from dressing like a boy growing up. *Teen Vogue*, <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/girl-dressing-like-a-boy-lessons>
- Shevtsova, M. (2014). *Stanislavsky to Grotowski: Actor to performer/door*.30(4), 333-340. doi:10.1017/S0266464X14000670
- Shteir, R., & Miller, M. C. (2009). *Gypsy : The art of the tease*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. doi:10.12987/9780300142457
- Siebler, K. (2014). What's so feminist about garters and bustiers? neo-burlesque as post-feminist sexual liberation. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 24(5), 561-573. doi:10.1080/09589236.2013.861345
- Sin, B. (2017). Dear Florence Boue. <http://www.bellasinle.com/news/dear-florence-boue>
- Sinner, S. (2017). Dear Toulouse burlesque festival producers and Fafa Bulleuse. <https://thecocoabutterclub.com/blackfacing/>
- Sinner, S., & Deville, C. (2016, June 13). *Blackface in burlesque. again*. 21st Century Burlesque Magazine <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/blackface-burlesque-again-poc-racism/>
- Smith, D. E. (1988). *The everyday world as problematic : A feminist sociology* Open University P.

Snatchdragon, L. Ask me anything: Lilly Snatchdragon. <https://burdy.co/ask-me-anything/lilly-snatchdragon/>

Sonny Watson's Street Swing. (n.d.). (*The Hoose-Gow!*) *Burlesque dancers arrested !!!* https://www.streetswing.com/histburl/1burlesque_strippers_arrested1.htm

Stanislavsky, K., & Hapgood, E. R. (2013). *An actor prepares*. London: Bloomsbury.

Still, K. (2017, Feb 4,). I am the scholar caught in trump inauguration crowd controversy. *Time Higher Education* <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/blog/i-am-scholar-caught-trump-inauguration-crowd-controversy>

Stop hate UK response – release of police hate crime figures – post Brexit vote, July to September 2016. (2017). <https://www.stophateuk.org/tag/brexit/>

Stuart, A. (1996). *Showgirls*. London: Jonathan Cape Ltd.

Sutherland, R. (2018). “We never clothed”: Implications of the windmill theatre SEV licence revocation. <https://www.keystonelaw.co.uk/keynotes/we-never-clothed-implications-of-windmill-theatre-sev-licence-revocation>

Tague, N. R. (2005). *The quality toolbox*. USA: ASQ Quality Press.

Taormino, T., Parrenas Shimizu, C., Penley, C., & Miller-Young, M. (2013). *The feminist porn book: The politics of producing pleasure*. New York: the Feminist Press.

Taylor, L. (2008a, Feb 11). *Craftwork and skill* BBC News Radio 4: Thinking Allowed. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b008w1p7>

Taylor, L. (2008b). *Urban nightlife - the burlesque* BBC News Radio 4: Thinking Allowed. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b008tp87>

Thames News (Producer), & Thames News (Director). (2015, Mar 12,). *AiNIVERSARIES : Raymond's revue bar*. [Video/DVD] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hII5FOSCFfg>:

The Newsroom. (2013, Aug 1st,). Picture house burlesque ban overturned. *Hebden Bridge Times* <https://www.hebdenbridgetimes.co.uk/news/picture-house-burlesque-ban-overturned-2688240>

This is Cabaret. (2016, June 3). *Compère Dusty Limits in Las Vegas rape joke furore*. <http://www.thisiscabaret.com/compere-dusty-limits-in-burlesque-hall-of-fame-rape-joke-furore/>

Thompson, A. (2021). *Blackface*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

TikTok, L., & Baptiste, S. (2017). *The slipper room NYC*. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1906275549595108&set=gm.1038053159630641&type=3&theater&ifg=12017>

Tomkins, C. (1997). *Duchamp*. London: Chatto & Windus.

Tootill, M., & Leigh, K. (2020). *Tittle tassels episode 1*. <https://fb.watch/2cMPRrHNqH/>

Trueman, M. (2013, Apr 18,). Raymond revue strip club to become London's latest fringe theatre? *The Guardian* <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2013/apr/18/raymond-revue-bar-fringe-theatre>

Truman, K. Tag archives: Paul Raymond. <http://journal.london/tag/paul-raymond/>

Truman, K. (2015). Raymond revuebar. <http://journal.london/2016/10/10/raymond-revuebar/>

Twist, A. Arabella twist: About. <https://twistedtaleofarabella.com/about/>

Uwujaren, J. (2013). The difference between cultural exchange and cultural appropriation. <https://everydayfeminism.com/2013/09/cultural-exchange-and-cultural-appropriation/>

V&A: Theatre collections. <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O157547/theatre-costume-cobb-ronald/>

Varela, F., Thompson, E., & Rosch, E. (1991). *The embodied mind: Cognitive science and human experience* MIT Press.

Viola Vixen, L. (2018). *Cultural appropriation in burlesque: What is harmful, and why?* 21st Century Burlesque Magazine. <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/cultural-appropriation-burlesque-what-harmful-why/>

Violet, B. (2013). Allow the picture house to be a venue for Hebden bridge burlesque festival. <https://www.change.org/p/hebden-royd-town-council-allow-the-picture-house-to-be-a-venue-for-hebden-bridge-burlesque-festival>

Von Bon Bon, V. Velma Von Bon Bon. <http://www.velmavonbonbon.com/>

Von Chrome, R., & Blue, T. (2015). 3 minutes with.... Rusty Von Chrome. <https://welcometothehouseoftrixieblue.wordpress.com/2015/04/22/3-minutes-with-rusty-von-chrome/>

Von Teese, D. (2005). *Burlesque and the art of teese: Fetish and the art of teese*. China: HarperCollins Publishers.

Von Teese, D. (2015). *Your beauty mark: The ultimate guide to eccentric glamour*. Italy: HarperCollins Publishers.

Von Vixen, M. (2017a). Brief history of burlesque . <https://minavonvixen.com/2017/01/29/a-brief-history-of-burlesque-by-mina-von-vixen/>

Von Vixen, M. (2017b). Lydia Thompson .
<https://minavonvixen.com/2017/07/23/lydia-thompson/>

Vowel, C. (2012). An open letter to non-natives in headdresses.
<https://apihtawikosisan.com/hall-of-shame/an-open-letter-to-non-natives-in-headdresses/>

Wahab, S. (2002). "For their own good?": Sex work, social control and social workers, a historical perspective. *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 29(4)
<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol29/iss4/4>

Wallace, Tim and Parlapiano, Alicia. (2017, Jan 22,). Crowd scientists say women's march in Washington had 3 times as many people as trump's inauguration. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/01/22/us/politics/womens-march-trump-crowd-estimates.html>

Walsh, J. (2014, April 23). *Showgirl problems: Producing pedigree burlesque in Hebden bridge*. 21st Century Burlesque Magazine.
<https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/showgirl-problems-hebden-bridge-burlesque-festival/>

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

Watts, J. (2019, April 23,). The Greta Thunberg effect: At last, MPs focus on climate change. *The Guardian*
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/apr/23/greta-thunberg>

Weldon, J. (2010). *The burlesque handbook* (1st ed. ed.). New York: It! Books.

Weldon, J. (2016, July 6). *Perle Noire builds her house*. 21st Century Burlesque
<https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/perle-noire-burlesque-house-of-noire/>

Welsford, E. (1935). *The fool: His social and literary history*. London: Faber and Faber.

Westwood, V. (2008). *Active resistance to propaganda manifesto*. Westwood, Vivienne.

What names are allowed on Facebook? . Facebook.
https://www.facebook.com/help/112146705538576?helpref=faq_content

Whittle, M. (2013). Heidi Bang Tidy – interview.
<https://theculturevulture.co.uk/all/heidi-bang-tidy-interview/>

WHEN THE FIRE GOES OUT: L.A. burlesque dancer sentenced to cool off in jail. (2018). <https://www.pulpinternational.com/pulp/entry/Photos-of-burlesque-dancer-Betty-Rowland-going-to-jail.html>

Wilde, I. (2014a). In conversation with Havana Hurricane. .
<https://ivywilde.net/2014/04/07/in-conversation-with-havana-hurricane/>

Wilde, I. (2014b, March 4). *Ivy Wilde: Facebook and burlesque – is it bad for business?* 21st Century Burlesque Magazine. <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/facebook-and-burlesque-bad-for-business-ivy-wilde/>

Wilde, I. (2016, April 25). *Torquay tease: The rise of kinky & quirky (uk burlesque)*. 21st Century Burlesque Magazine. <https://21stcenturyburlesque.com/kinky-and-quirky-burlesque-devon-torquay-mark-bell-sarah-bell/>

Wildflower, L. Lady Wildflower: Home. <https://www.ladywildflower.com/>

Willeford, W. (1969). *The fool and his sceptre: A study in clowns and jesters and their audiences*. USA: Northwester University Press.

Willetts, J. (2018). *The theatre of Bertolt Brecht*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Willetts, P. (2010, Sept 1,). Why Paul Raymond the porn king of soho was a hero. *The Telegraph* <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/7973964/Why-Paul-Raymond-the-porn-king-of-Soho-was-a-hero.html>

Williams, R. (1976). *Key words: A vocabulary of culture and society*. Scotland: Croom Helm.

Willson, & Jacki. (2007). *The happy stripper*. GB: I.B. Tauris.
[https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/\[SITE_ID\]/detail.action?docID=677150](https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/[SITE_ID]/detail.action?docID=677150)

The windmill international: About. <https://www.windmillinternational.com/about/>

Wolf, Z. B. (2017). Comparing trump's inauguration crowd to the women's march. <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/21/politics/womens-march-donald-trump-inauguration-sizes/index.html>

Wollman, E. (2014). Busted for her beauty: Hair's female characters. *American Music Review*, 43(2)
<http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/academics/centers/hitchcock/publications/amr/v4-3-2/wollman.php#note1>

World Health Organisation. (2020). WHO coronavirus disease (COVID-19) dashboard.
https://covid19.who.int/?gclid=EAlalQobChMIyp_w2ISC7AIVTM3tCh14Ggc3EAAYA SAAEgIgbvD_BwE

World naked bike ride: Homepage. <http://worldnakedbikeride.org/>

World naked bike ride: Press quotes. (2006).
<http://www.worldnakedbikeride.org/uk/press/quotes/index.html>

Wynter, S. (2000). Beyond Miranda's meanings: Un/silencing the "Demonic ground" of Caliban's woman. In J. James, & T. D. Sharpley-Whiting (Eds.), *The black feminist reader* (pp. 109-131). Oxford: Backwell Publishers Ltd.

Zemeckis, L. (2016). Boy! oh boy-lesque! https://www.huffpost.com/entry/boy-oh-boy-lesque_b_57629f2ee4b02081542fcb5d

Appendices

Appendix 1: Examiners Invite

This whole event demonstrated the effects of and challenges to the dialogic gaze as the performer-audience relationship. It highlighted the fragility of further creating and maintaining mutual vulnerability and trust that can be developed as part of this relationship, and thereby enriching all involved. It also showed how all participants (performer and audience alike) are crucial in the relationships' maintenance; but also, the importance of the compere's framing of the performer and cultivating of audience expectations. Consequently, everyone is co-dependant in the building of the Burlesque supportive environment and community around an event.

Examination Performance, Cherie Bebe's Burlesque Revue at Matt&Phreds, Manchester, 8th December 2019.

Cruella wants it all:

https://youtu.be/TdS4RYV9B_w

Frida:

https://youtu.be/3bOV9_ZQhik

Below is the invitation given to my examiners Professor Roberta Mock (external examiner, Plymouth University) and Dr Hayley Bradley (internal examiner, Sheffield Hallam University) as performance context before they saw my performance as Arabella Twist, 8th December 2019.

Claudia Jazz Haley

The Politics of Neo-Burlesque: an inquiry into the performer-audience relationship

Arabella Twist

8.00 PM 8th December 2019

Cherie Bebe's Burlesque Revue

Matt and Phreds, 64 Tibb Street, Manchester M4 1LW

<https://mattandphreds.com/gigs/cherie-bebes-burlesque-revue-d3343-7dh9h>

You are invited to experience my two performance-based, practice-as-research Burlesque routines. The two, distinctly different, routines will be performed as Arabella Twist, the Burlesque persona specially created for the PhD investigation. This performance is integral to the thesis, as a whole.

Each routine was created to explore different aspects of Burlesque and the performer-audience relationship. "***Cruella wants it all***" is a routine that uses the traditional Burlesque tropes, in a contemporary context, to explore perfectionism and desire. This routine is seen as the investigation base line to critique and challenge the form or Burlesque script. The "***Frida***" routine examines the iconic life of Frida Kahlo, referencing her paintings, images and disability, to illustrate her resilience and hope. This routine was created to explore my own invisible disability (Multiple Sclerosis – see Glossary) and generate a conversation about disability and vulnerability with the audience. Each routine uses the Burlesque form as a theatrical critique of society, thereby establishing the politics of Burlesque.

The venue is Cherie Bebe's Burlesque Revue, which is a show produced at Matt and Phreds Jazz Club, in Manchester's Northern Quarter. It features in the text of my thesis as a setting for research into the audience-researcher and performer-researcher perspectives. As the research is primarily situated in North West England, it was necessary to find a venue in this region for examination purposes.

Cherie Bebe's Burlesque Revue has been produced for six years, as a once monthly, Sunday evening show at Matt and Phreds, consequently, the show has a regular following of audience members. Compared with commercial, popularised Burlesque shows, these events have a more intimate atmosphere.

Normally, this event would be billed as the Christmas show and all the routines would be themed accordingly, but on this occasion Cherie Bebe tailored the production, to allow Arabella Twist to perform her PhD research routines.

The time of year will affect the composition of the audience, as Christmas Work Parties often attend such events as a special occasion. These parties are a mix of people who are new to Burlesque (Burlesque virgins), and/or people who are not there for the show and prefer to socialise. These audience members may be similar to those who attend Burlesque shows for Stag or Hen Parties. Any disruption from these audience members will, therefore, be managed by the compare (Jonathan Mayors), and the regular audience members, to educate them before the venue's staff step in as they would with a Stag or Hen Party.

The title of this PhD thesis is "***The Politics of Neo-Burlesque: an inquiry into the performer-audience relationship***". Throughout the research, I discovered and used particular factors and techniques that aid and maintain the performer-audience relationship during a performance. These include the Burlesque script, which is a series of visual cues, given by the performer, for the audience to follow and respond to. All the participants (audience and performer) understand that the performer has full agency - the awareness of being watched, being able to see and being able to respond to the audience. With this understanding the dialogic gaze, which is a progression from this script, is an exchange of energy. This energy, then feeds back into the Burlesque script. As the audience respond louder to the cues, the performer in turn, enjoys their performance, offering more of themselves to the audience, and so the audience enjoys the performance even more. This oral/aural relationship is, however, not always necessary for the energy exchange phenomenon to be generated. This is a reciprocal, iterative relationship that is maintained throughout the performance.

This investigation specifically focuses on live entertainment, and the performance-based practice-as-research methods have been created from and for live situations. It is, therefore, necessary for you, the examiners, to attend a live show. As a consequence, you will experience this event in the correct context and environment. In doing so, you will become aware of other factors within my research: the audience – by being present among them, you can both experience the performer-audience relationship and also observe the audience as the Burlesque community. This essential, primary experience would not be possible, if you simply watched videos of the performance or read a description in the thesis text. This approach is intrinsic to the methodology that informs the thesis as a whole

By Claudia Jazz Haley

Appendix 2: Conference Papers and Supporting Creative Works

Below is a list of all the non-Burlesque activities that have contributed to the investigation and to this thesis.

LECTURING

- 2019 *Attempting to put the Showgirl back in her Box: Theatrical nudity and ethics* (performance paper), MA Performance Practice, Sheffield Hallam University
- 2018 Ensemble Module, 1st year BA Stage and Screen, Sheffield Hallam University
- 2017 Devising Module, 2nd year BA Stage and Screen, Sheffield Hallam University
- 2017 Practice-as-Research and Burlesque lecture, 2nd year BA Performance, Rotherham North Nottingham College

PUBLICATIONS

- 2017 *Manifesto for Vulnerability*, Birmingham Literature and Language Journal, 2016, Vol 8, 60-74.

CONFERENCES – PRESENTATIONS AND PANEL CHAIRING

- 2018 *A Brief History of Burlesque*. Thameside Retired Teachers, Stalybridge Civic Hall.
- 2018 Chair of 'Burlesque and Diversity' panel. Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival
- 2018 *The Show Woman looks back: Bird Watching goes Both Ways*. Provoking Discourse, Postgraduate conference, Manchester Metropolitan University.
- 2017 *A Brief History of Burlesque*. Young at Heart over 50's group, Broadoak Community Centre.
- 2017 *Who am I? The Burlesque Flip Book and Dolls*. Theatre and Performance Research Association Annual Conference, University of Salford.
- 2017 Chair of 'Bodies: Dislocating Mind from Material' panel. Break Up, Postgraduate conference, Sheffield Hallam University
- 2017 *It's Not Me, it's You: Burlesque and Society* (paper). Break Up, Postgraduate conference, Sheffield Hallam University
- 2017 *Encountering Vulnerability – Embodied Research and Moving Past the Ethics Debate* (paper). Film, Television, Theatre and Performance Research Seminar series, Sheffield Hallam University

- 2017 *Manifesto for Vulnerability* (script reading). Terra Incognita, Sheffield Postgraduate Network
- 2016 *Attempting to put the Showgirl back in her Box: Theatrical nudity and ethics* (performance paper). Out of Practice, University of Birmingham AND Terra Incognita, Sheffield Postgraduate Network Can be accessed here: <https://youtu.be/7MOEoQupgwI>
- 2016 *Attempting to put the Showgirl back in her Box: Theatrical nudity and ethics* (paper). Academia and Affect, Sheffield University AND Method Conference, Sheffield Hallam.

Appendix 3: Interview Participants Profiles

Below is a little information on each person interviewed. During the interviews and contact afterwards (2016-2020) the participants had the opportunity to describe themselves should they wish. Some wrote their own descriptions, others alluded to their backgrounds in the interviews and gave consent for that information to be used.

Interview Profiles - Audiences

Freida Nipples – Interviewed a few months before her debut performance, she was a Bambi (stagehand) at the point of interviewing. She asked to be referred as her stage name Freida Nipples. Her performer biography:

Freida Nipples is a bumpin', grindin' sensation. Since debuting at Lady Wildflower's acclaimed Frou Frou Club in 2016 she has taken her saucy style of burlesque across The UK & Europe where she won Best Newcomer (less than 6 months after her first performance) at The Berlin Burlesque Week 2017 Shimmy Shakedown. Wooing crowds as far as Australia where she was an International Performer in The Australian Burlesque Festival 2018 performing in Sydney & Melbourne Freida is best known for her effortless signature looks & moves which seductively blend inspiration from vintage pin-up Queens and modern muses alike. Freida Nipples' aim is to connect you to your own innate power and show you how to use glamour & sass to harness it! (Nipples, n.d.)

Gill, Nikki and Ellava Bodie – These three women were interviewed together, and this description is from their interview. Nikki and Ellava Bodie (requested to have her performer name used) had both undertaken Burlesque classes and were about to perform a double act however never got the chance. They described themselves in the older age bracket and were keen to see more older performers on stage. Gill described herself in the interview as “a big girl”. They attended Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival 2016 as a treat and distraction from recent sad events.

Bambi 1 and Bambi 2 – Both Bambis, interviewed together, and this description is from their interview. Both nomadic audience members, they travel to see good line-ups and producers. Bambi 1 had performed on stage after working behind the scenes as a Bambi or Kitten (stagehand) and taking classes.

These six individuals were interviewed at Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival (HBBF) 2016.

Cat and Kirsty– In interview they mention they are husband and wife, local to and regulars at The Frou Frou Club and Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival. Both loyal to Lady Wildflower as a producer and also, due to health issues and circumstances, can't venture far for Burlesque (interview). Cat describes himself as:

My primary identity is, always will be, Magician.

Then: 56, cis male and trans-supporting, queer, poly, caucasian, working class by birth but middle class by chance, hyperreal Taoist by religion, politically cynical but anarcho-left leaning Antifa. Kentish Man, Londoner, Yorkshireman (I recite the oath every Yorkshire Day!) and Hooklander.

(Personal communications, 2021)

Kirsty describes herself as:

I primarily identify as an artist, but I am also a white cis woman who is chronically ill and disabled. I identify as both kinky and queer: I came out as bisexual in my mid 20's and although pansexual would be an equally accurate descriptor but I am stubbornly attached to the word 'bisexual' since it's what I first came out as.

I am in my 50's, so I'm Gen X and fairly typical of that cohort. I lean left-wing and loathe the Tories with a passion formed by growing up under Thatcher. I have been a feminist since my teens and in the past, I've been involved in both feminist and queer activism.

I come from a middle-class Scottish background and am acutely aware of the privilege and responsibility that gives me, not least because I am only a generation or two away from very smart working-class people who had a strong belief in using education to pull yourself and your family up. In terms of liking burlesque, it's probably important to know that I'm the black sheep of my family - the one who doesn't quite follow the rules. Although lord knows, there are also plenty of mouthy, independent, somewhat risqué women in my large extended family, so it doesn't completely come from nowhere!

(Personal communications, 2021)

Ash – in his own words:

I was born and raised in a working-class mining town in Wales in the 1970s. After school and college, I joined the Army, did an apprenticeship and saw a bit of the World, including some active service.

I have two grown up children (both girls) but sadly, that marriage ended in divorce. I'm now with Mandy who has four grown up children of her own, three girls and a boy. I'm middle aged, middle classed and politically central!

Once the kids had set off on their own lives, we started to enjoy our increased social time together. Burlesque is such an incredible, varied source of World Class adult entertainment, which I believe we'd both craved and Hebden Bridge offered a wonderful local supply of some of the best performers in the World! (Personal communications, 2020)

Tony – nomadic audience member, I heard it joked backstage that if Tony isn't in the audience, then it's not worth being on the billing. Tony is a burlesque photographer and artist who is embedded in the community, and he told me in interview that he travels to see his friends perform. Since 2016, when interviewed, Tony now defines themselves as non-binary and uses the pronouns they and them. In Tony's own words:

My name is Tony Heath. I was brought up in a working-class family, had a pretty transient up bringing for most of my early years being moved from home to home in Leeds, occasionally living with family to try to settle in school but eventually settled in South Leeds.

Attended public schools where I tended to excel academically when left to my own devices and struggled when not - later realised I am autistic.

I grew up around social clubs and the likes and often saw many 'turns' in the late 80s to early 90s so had some experience on live entertainment although remember very little of the content.

Found live music in my teens and compulsively saw every major band on my wishlist before finding burlesque 12 years ago.

As is my way I fell into it heavily, it began informing my own art and I often gifted performers artwork. I got into photographing shows first from a fan view and later from a more professional standpoint it becoming a second job for me. I have travelled the world in the last 12 years seeing shows all over the UK, Berlin, NYC and Vegas including Miss Exotic World / The Burlesque Hall of Fame Weekender.

In the past few years, I have also realised certain issues over the years since my childhood have been from my gender dysphoria and undiagnosed autism and have come to realise, I am non-binary, queer and autistic. I believe burlesque played a part in these realisations, giving me the language to express who I am.

(Personal communications, 2021)

These four participants asked to take more time over their interviews after being approached at HBBF 2016 and consequently their input is more extensive than others.

Interview Profiles - Performers

Oriana – Interviewed with Wonderful Ginger and Dottie Dynamo, Oriana had been performing for less than a year but had already performed alongside the renowned Immodesty Blaize. Oriana performed her Classic routine at The Legends in The Making show at HBBF2016 and described in interview her reasons for performing were:

I wanted to do [a Classic Burlesque routine] because a lot of old women and bigger people don't do the full-on sexy stuff and didn't want to hide behind anything else. I felt like there was a real need for me to just get out there and do it and know quite a few people find me quite inspiring for what I do, friends who are [also] mums and have got kids.

Oriana has since also debuted and continued perform, alongside Burlesque, her Drag King persona: Danny Air Guitar Champion of the World.

Wonderful Ginger– Italian Classic Burlesque performer who performed at The Legends in The Making, HBBF2016. Being Italian, Ginger is very much a follower of retro-nostalgia glamour, Dita Von Teese, and Classic Burlesque as she explains during the interview that there are very few opportunities to perform Neo-Burlesque as she has to “think of the audience, I think of the market, and what they will love because if not it doesn't work.” (2016) Ginger's aim, at the time, was to build up her reputation as a Classic Burlesque performer to then perform a Neo-Burlesque routine that would push the boundaries of the Italian audience. Whilst still performing, her focus has led her to teach social media marketing strategies.

Dottie Dynamo – Feisty bump and grinder, Dynamo travelled from New York, USA to perform at the International Showcase HBBF 2016. With retro stylings, Dynamo is also

a Stripper and fitness instructor as well as Burlesque performer. Dynamo's performer biography:

Based out of New York City, International Burlesque performer, Dottie Dynamo has been tearing up stages since 2011. Better known as "The Lovable Bundle of Tits n' Trouble", Dottie puts her own special stamp on scintillating performances as she lights up the stage and sets fire to your heart with her brand of slow-burning bump, grind and tease.

An alumna of the New York School of Burlesque, Dottie has also produced shows such as Bare Necessitease, Shaken & Stirred and her newest show Risque. She is a member of The Bang Bang Boom Girls (previously The Razzmatazz Revue) New York City's premiere burlesque troupe. She can be seen performing at New York City venues such as Hotel Chantelle, Nurse Bettie, The Slipper Room and Parkside Lounge just to name a few. Dottie has also had the honor of performing Internationally in Canada and Amsterdam as well as across the United States. Most recently Dottie won the title of Most Classic at the 2015 Aburlyq! Burlesque and Sideshow Spectacular. She was also the winner of the Judges Choice Award at the First Annual Arizona Burlesque Festival in 2014.

Dottie is also a womxn's movepowerment coach at Fit Showgrll. Helping womxn harness self-confidence, sexuality, and body acceptance through movement & empowerment coaching. (Dynamo, n.d.)

Miss Glory Pearl – Neo-Burlesque performer whose routines are political and intellectual with a lot of comedy. She is a frequent performer of Naked Ladies Reading and performs on the comedy circuit as The Naked Stand Up (2014). Her biography reads:

Miss Glory Pearl is a burlesque maverick. She began performing professionally in 2008, won a Best UK Newcomers award at the 2009 London Burlesque Festival and has since appeared at burlesque festivals and prestigious venues across the globe, including Paris, Milan, Stockholm, Brussels, Melbourne, San Francisco and Las Vegas. She creates genre-defying acts that blend traditional British burlesque, pole dance, aerial circus, clowning and character work with humour, sparkle, and a healthy dose of British self-deprecation. A regular feature of the UK cabaret scene, Miss Pearl is an accomplished compere, stand-up comedian, character comedian, and burlesque and cabaret artist. She

produces the London chapter of Naked Girls Reading and in 2014 wrote and produced her first one-woman stand-up comedy show, *The Naked Stand Up*, which garnered critical acclaim at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and has since appeared at the Mimetic Festival, Brighton Fringe Festival, Guildford Fringe Festival, Lambco Fringe, and the iconic Royal Vauxhall Tavern in London, selling out numerous times and gaining her a London Cabaret Award nomination in 2015.

Glory recently appeared on *Late Night Woman's Hour*, discussing nudity and her work, and is never short of an opinion, describing herself as a full-time feminist, something she believes is entirely compatible with taking your clothes off for a living. (Pearl, n.d.)

These interviews were conducted at Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival (HBBF) 2016.

Bobbie Dazzler– Neo-Burlesque performer and producer. Dazzler produces Burlesque shows in Keighley, Yorkshire, in a snooker hall and hopes to change people's opinions about the art form by introducing them to all types of Burlesque and Cabaret (interviewed in 2016). For Dazzler Burlesque is a family affair with her sister as her show's compere, with her mum assisting and making costumes, and her 92-year-old grandma in the audience. In interview Dazzler described her intention as a producer:

It's not what they think it's going to be, it's not scary, it's not lap dancing. It's performance art, and it's fun, and it's funny. And I want people to see that, and I want people to understand that, and I want people to love it as much as I do.

Velma Von Bon Bon– Neo-Burlesque performer and host, interviewed in 2016. Von Bon comes from a circus background and often has an element of skill or trick to her routines, for example, stripping while skipping on a unicycle to YMCA by The Village People (seen 2017-2019). Her website biography states:

Velma Von Bon is a Veritable Tour de Force in Neo-burlesque hilarity! Voted in the top 50 burlesque performers in the flippin' world 2015 and 2016 and top 10 UK Burlesque Performers for the past three years running by readers of 21st Century Burlesque Magazine. An English rose plucked from a pop culture nonsense garden, Velma's unique take on burlesque fuses comedy and glamour in what she likes to call

"Glomedy" (please humour her, it makes her feel like a scientist, very silly we know but she does look good in a white coat). Endearingly silly and daintily sexual, Velma has been setting stages alight (not literally) since 2009. She has ridden her oversized flamingo and peddled her monkey organ quite literally all over the UK. Recently she has spread her fantastical delights across to Europe, performing in Switzerland and at the International Stockholm Burlesque Festival. Velma's acts are as unique as her sweet self and guarantee to raise a smile, several in fact, perhaps even the odd belly laugh. Who said sexy can't be funny at the same time? (seriously, who said that, we'll rough 'em up burly style) Sexy. Funny. All That. (Von Bon Bon, n.d.)

Rusty Von Chrome– Neo-Burlesque performer and Drag King, famous for their self-described "bad male stripper" (in interview, 2016) routines using traditional male stereotypes such as Policeman or Sailor along with the archetype of the seducer. Their signature routine is Henry VIII on the prowl for a new wife. They have since retired from the stage for a while. Their performer biography for the Burlesque Bible 1st Annual Burlesque Awards (which they won Best Gender Bending category) reads:

Rusty Von Chrome is the king of the codpiece and an award-winning performer from Manchester, Rusty has been lighting up the Burlesque scene for a few years bringing characters such as the arresting American Cop, sailor and of course, Henry VIII. (Burlesque Bible 1st Annual Burlesque Awards, 2016)

Rubyyy Jones– Neo-Burlesque performer and host, plus-size performer and advocate for LGBT+ rights (interviewed 2017). Jones is discussed in detail in the chapter 5. Strategies for Practising Vulnerability and Trust. Their website performer biography reads:

"Since her debut, this 'glittering force of nature' has burst on to the scene, sharing her special mix of electric and evocative performance magic, while working hard to hone her unique performance voice and to *Save Rubyyy Jones*.

Dubbed the 'Queen of Queerlesque' and ranked in the Top 20 UK Burlesque Performers by 21st Century Burlesque Magazine in 2014/15/16, Rubyyy is a powerhouse striptease artist, an electric, naked activist and an international performer on neo/queerlesque and queer performance stages.

A few years into her showgirl life, Rubyyy has had the pleasure of performing at some of the UK's top events and stages, having branched out into the art of the MC. A fierce and fabulous clown on the microphone, Rubyyy has wielded and whipped audiences into shape across the UK. Known for her wicked humour, over-the-top glamour and electric energy, she has hosted everything from weddings to family circus events, Burlesque festivals to large club stages. Rubyyy is an actor, in theatre and film, and a director and choreographer of theatre, cabaret and performance art. A founding member of the Arcola Theatre's Queer Collective, the only LGBTQ+ collective attached to a major UK Theatre.” (Jones, n.d.)

These four interviews were conducted at various locations for the performer's convenience and therefore longer and more extensive.

Appendix 4: Information Sheet for Impromptu Conversations

Below is the information sheet I would give to audience members at events should they strike up a conversation with me to make them aware of my research and reasons for attending the event:

Hello, This information sheet is designed to make you aware of what I am doing and why I am here.

RESEARCH: The Politics of Voyeurism: 'freakishness' and female-gendered live performance

I'm Claudia Jazz Haley and I am a PhD student at Sheffield Hallam University researching the audience and performer relationship within Burlesque.

I am looking at four main areas:

Audience-Performer relationship in Burlesque

Politics of watching in a Burlesque context

Gender representations, perception and reception

Revealing of skills or nudity in performance

I wish to experience this event from my personal perspective, but should you wish to talk to me about my research (or anything) I am very happy to chat and answer questions. If you are interested in contributing to my research, my contact details are below. If you have any concerns I am happy to talk with you, or you can contact my supervisor Dr Sophie Bush, details also below.

I might wish to contact you in the future to discuss Burlesque and your relationship to it. You may choose to keep your identity anonymous or fully credited. Likewise, if you do give me your details but change your mind, you can withdraw from the research at any time.

Once you give me your information/interview, you will then have 2 weeks to withdraw, alter your responses or ask further questions. If you wish I can provide a transcript for you to confirm that you are happy with it, but this will take a few months.

My research will be presented in a PhD thesis and may be used for academic conference papers or journals articles, as well as inform my own performance practice. Yes, I will be attempting to perform a burlesque act, if not a few, as part of my research. If you are interested in keeping up to date with the research, please contact me.

Thank you!

Claudia Jazz Haley

Claudia.J.Haley@student.shu.ac.uk

Sheffield Hallam University

My supervisor is Dr Sophie Bush and she can be contacted at:
s.bush@shu.ac.uk.

Appendix 5: Information Sheet for Interview Participants

Below is the information sheet I would email and give a physical copy to audience members and performers before conducting the semi-formal interviews.

Participant Information Sheet (Performers and Audience Members)

The Politics of Voyeurism:

'Freakishness' and female-gendered live performance

Claudia Jazz Haley, Sheffield Hallam University

Information about the project:

This research project is investigating the audience-performer relationship particularly with in Burlesque. I am looking at four main areas:

Audience-Performer relationship in Burlesque

Politics of watching in a Burlesque context

Gender representations, perception and reception

Revealing of skills or nudity in performance

Selection of participants:

At this stage in the investigation, I hope to interview a mix of performers and audience members, 10 of each maximum. At an event or workshop Claudia may approach you give you her details via an information and invite sheet. Or if conversation has already started, she may ask if it would be ok to contact you in the future to discuss burlesque and your relationship to it in more detail. These interviews are planned to take place during the time period of 2015-2016.

The interview:

The interview may be conducted in several ways depending upon the convenience of the interviewer and interviewed. The options include Skype, arranging a meeting in public, at a Burlesque event, or via phone or email. Interviews will inevitably vary in

length depending upon the conversation and setting, however approximately between 10-40 minutes.

After the interview:

The conversation will then be transcribed and emailed to you. From that point you will have two weeks to read it and agree or alter your feedback. Also, within these two weeks should you wish to withdraw from the study you may do so. This is also an opportunity for you to raise any further questions or concerns.

There will also be the option for further conversations should you be willing to continue conversations with Claudia throughout the research.

Intended use of information:

The results from this research will be presented initially in an academic PhD thesis submitted to Sheffield Hallam University. The research findings and writings will potentially be used for conference or journal papers, as well as inform her own performance practice. Claudia will be attempting to perform a burlesque act, if not a few, as part of her research.

Overall length of study:

As a full-time PhD student who started her studies in October 2015 the expected end date for submission is 2018.

Participants and consent:

Participation is completely voluntary, and you are able to withdraw your consent at any time up to 14 days after receiving a copy of the interview. You will be reminded of this before the interview and upon receiving a copy of the interview. You will be asked to sign a consent form.

All comments can be made anonymous or credited depending upon your preference.

A copy of the interview will be sent to you after the interview. You may ask for amendments, withdraw parts of the transcript, or accept the transcript. If accepted I

will ask you to sign a form acknowledging this. You may also withdraw from the research at this point.

Data handling:

Claudia Jazz Haley is the only researcher working on this project and as such will be the only person who has access to the raw data collected over the entire project. No personal details are being collected specifically and any such information you wish to share is at your own discretion.

No one else will be given access to any personal details about participants and this information will be destroyed upon completion of the project. After this point only the researcher will keep only completed accepted transcripts of conversations.

Further questions:

If you have any further questions at any point, please use the contact details below for Claudia and her Director of Studies Dr Sophie Bush.

Claudia Jazz Haley
Claudia.J.Haley@student.shu.ac.uk
Sheffield Hallam University

My Director of Studies is Dr Sophie Bush, and she can be contacted at:
s.bush@shu.ac.uk.

Appendix 6: Interview Consent Form

Below is the interview consent form:

IMPORTANT PLEASE READ

Thank you very much for partaking in my research in order to use your comments please alter/delete the statements below as appropriate.

I give consent for my responses to be used in this research.

Please place an "X" in the box []

I am happy for my name (stage or real) to be attributed to these responses. *Please print your desired name below and sign here.*

If via a computer please type you name and if possible your electronic signature or an "X" in the box []

Print:

Sign:

OR I wish to remain anonymous.

Please place an "X" in the box []

If you wish to review your response, please give your email address below:

Email:

Further contact in the future:

I am happy to be contacted again for further discussion/want to be updated on the research.

Please place an "X" in the box []

Please allow a few months for your responses to this interview/ conversation to be typed up and emailed to you. You then have two weeks to withdraw or alter your responses.

Appendix 7: Performer Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Below are the semi-structured interview questions, from which conversation would develop and lead to more specific response and discoveries:

Note: Interviews will be semi structured following these main themes. The questions will be tailored specifically to the performer and as with oral history will allow the participant to talk freely as well as directed responses.

Remember there is no right or wrong answer to these questions.

Performer and industry:

How and why did you come to be burlesque performer?

Where your expectations of the industry different to those you have experienced?

What exactly do you perform? How would you describe your performances?

When creating a performance what is your starting point?

Is there a desire to see certain performances more than others from the public? Or producers? And does this affect the performances you create?

There is a huge amount of imagination and inventiveness within Burlesque performance, what do you think makes burlesque the platform for such creativity?

Audience relationship:

Please tell me a little about the gender archetypes and narratives you may employ with in your performances? Are you aware how the audience might perceive the performance?

What is it you wish the audience to experience whilst watching your performance? Do you want them to take away something in particular, such as an awareness of an issue, a political statement, a fun time, or sensual pleasure?

Are audiences always welcoming and encouraging?

If yes, how do you create and inspire this reception?

If not, why is that and how do you alter your performance to turn the atmosphere around and elicit a more warm reception?

The “knowing look or wink” is a staple part of a Burlesque performers routine how do you feel you use it? Who exactly is watching whom and gaining pleasure from it?

Language and society:

Burlesque, stripping and pole dancing are all activities that at one point were considered (and some still do) taboo activities, undermining women individually and as a gender, rendering them as an object to be viewed for sexual gratification. How would you respond to this opinion?

Have you ever felt this in your line of work?

Today the words ‘empowerment’ and ‘reclaiming’ is used a lot when describing the resurgence of these performance skills with more mainstream publicity, productions, and accessible workshops, would you agree?

Or is there a more fitting word for how performing makes you feel and why you do it?

Reveals:

The point of most burlesque performances is the process of the tease eventually revealing the performer’s flesh (strip tease or fan dance) or unusual skill (such as aerial performance, fire eating, bed of nails), most people would see this as a vulnerable, and perhaps an abnormal, act of exposure. What is it that you reveal within your performance?

Where do you think Burlesque performance is placed within theatrical live entertainment and society?

Appendix 8: Audience Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Below are the semi-structured interview questions, from which conversation would develop and lead to more specific response and discoveries:

Note: Interviews will be semi structured following these main themes. The questions will be tailored specifically to the event the audience member attended and as with oral history will allow the participant to talk freely as well as directed responses.

Remember there is no right or wrong answer to these questions.

Relationship with industry:

Are you a regular to Burlesque performances?

How and why did you come here tonight?

Is there a style or skill in particular you enjoy seeing performed during a burlesque performance? And why?

What have you enjoyed most about this evening/event attended?

Have you taken part in any activities such as classes or performed yourself?

Performer relationship:

Was there at any point a moment when you felt particularly uncomfortable or awkward watching this performance or particularly celebratory and fun?

The performers give the classic “knowing look” to the audience, how did it feel to know they were looking at you watching they perform the striptease?

In your opinion what stereotypes were performed? Where they gender specific and what do you think of them?

Performers often mingle with the audience after a show, do you interact with the performers after the shows? If so, why?

Language and Society and Reveals:

Burlesque, stripping and pole dancing are all activities that at one point were considered (and some still do) taboo activities, undermining women individually and as a gender, rendering them as an object to be viewed for sexual gratification. How would you respond to this opinion?

Today the words 'empowerment' and 'reclaiming' is used a lot when describing the resurgence of these performance skills with more mainstream publicity, productions, and accessible workshops, would you agree?

The point of most burlesque performances is the process of the tease eventually revealing the performer's flesh (strip tease or fan dance) or unusual skill (such as aerial performance, fire eating, bed of nails), most people would see this as a vulnerable, and perhaps an abnormal, act of exposure. What is your feeling when watching such reveals that could be seen as freakish or make the performer exposed?

Where do you think Burlesque performance is placed within theatrical live entertainment and society?

Appendix 9: Performances Reviewed

Below is a list of the shows I attended as research from the audience perspective. It also shows the number female (179 in total) and male (52 in total) presenting performers on stage at each event:

Performance/Event	Location	Date	F	M
The Pleasure Boys Present "Boylesque"	Cirque, Manchester	13/11/2015	2	5
Dr Sketchy Manchester - Magic and Fantasy	Mantra Live Mcr, Wellington House	26/11/2015	2	0
Alternative and Burlesque Fair	The Ritz, Manchester	05/12/2015	2	1
Black Cat Cabaret	Oscar Wilde Bar, London	15/01/2016	3	2
Dr Sketchy Manchester - The 80's	Mantra Live Mcr, Wellington House	28/01/2016	1	1
Alternative and Burlesque Fair	The Ritz, Manchester	06/02/2016	3	0
Slippery Belle 9 Birthday Show and Competition	Charlie K's Bar	06/02/2016	14	2
Cherie Bebe Burlesque Revue - Valentine's Night	Matt and Phreds	07/02/2016	3	1
Wildvixen's Burlesque Hall of Fame Extravaganza	Birmingham	17/04/2016	10	3
HBBF, Legends in the Making	The Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge	28/04/2016	8	1
HBBF, Laugh Your Knickers Off	The Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge	29/04/2016	5	1
HBBF, Diversitease	The Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge	29/04/2016	6	0
HBBF, Saturday Gala	Town Hall, Todmorden	30/04/2016	4	2
HBBF, International Showcase	The Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge			

		01/05/2016	9	1
Wet Spot	The Belgrave, Leeds	18/06/2016	3	3
Anonymous	Anonymous	01/07/2016.	2	1
Cabaret Roulette	Vauxhall Tavern, London	13/07/2016	5	3
Bobbie Dazzler Burlesque Presents: Showgirls and Sparkles	Keighly	30/07/2016	5	2
The Spare Rib	The Magnet, Liverpool	18/08/2016	9	0
Sexhibition After Dark	Victoria Warehouse, Manchester	20/08/2016	6	0
The Frou Frou Club	The Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge	27/08/2016	6	0
Burly Q	Queens Club, Sheffield	10/09/2016	4	2
Burlesque Noir	Blackpool Ballroom	08/10/2016	7	6
The Frou Frou Club - Halloween Spooktacular	Todmorden, Hippodrome	29/10/2016	6	0
Wildvixen's Burlesque Hall of Fame Extravaganza	The Crescent Theatre, Birmingham	08/04/2017	10	3
Exotica: The Grand Tiki Ball	The Winter Gardens, Blackpool	22/04/2017	7	2
HBBF, Legends in the Making	The Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge	27/04/2017	8	0
HBBF, Late Night Quickie	The Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge	28/04/2017	5	2
HBBF, Saturday Gala	Todmorden, Hippodrome	29/04/2017	5	2
HBBF, International Showcase	The Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge	30/04/2017	10	2
HBBF, Diversitease	The Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge	04/05/2018	5	1
The Art of the Teese	London Palladium, London	01/10/2018		

			4	3

Appendix 10: Practice-as-Research Performances

Below is a list of the performances I undertook as part of my practice-as-research:

No.	Performance	Location	Date	Routines
1	The Frou Frou Club	The Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge	04/03/2017	Cruella de Vil
2	KitKat Club	Warrington	14/04/2017	Cruella de Vil
3	Spare Rib Superstar Competition	The Magnet, Liverpool	18/05/2017	Cruella de Vil
4	Burlesque Idol UK Competition	The Hippodrome Casino, London	14/07/2017	Cruella de Vil
5	KitaCon Cabaret, KitaCon Quest,	Conventry	18/08/2017	Cruella de Vil
6	Titters and Tassels	Manchester Pride, Tribeca, Manchester	26/08/2017	Cruella de Vil
7	Cherie Bebe's Burlesque Revue	Matt and Phreds, Manchester	10/09/2017	Cruella de Vil
8	The Spare Rib	The Magnet, Liverpool	26/10/2017	Cruella de Vil and Frida
9	Cherie Bebe Presents Burlesque	Richmond Tea Rooms, Manchester	16/12/2017	Cruella de Vil
10	The Frou Frou Club	The Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge	27/01/2018	Cruella de Vil and Frida
11	Legend in the Making, Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival	The Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge	03/05/2018	Cruella de Vil
12	Spare Rib Superstar Competition	Constellations, Liverpool	17/05/2018	Cruella de Vil
13	Titters and Tassels	Gulivers NQ, Manchester	01/07/2018	Cruella de Vil and Frida

14	Cherie Bebe's Presents Burlesque	Richmond Tea Rooms, Manchester	28/07/2018	Cruella de Vil and Frida
15	Chester Pride, The Glitter Lounge	Castle Square, Chester	11/08/2018	Cruella de Vil and Frida
16	Leeds Cabaret and Burlesque Festival	Belgrave Music Hall, Leeds	20/07/2019	Cruella de Vil and Frida
17	Barefoot Festival	Prestwold Hall, Leicestershire	27/07/2019	Cruella de Vil and Frida
18	Peel of Fortune	Roundabout Theatre, CAST, Doncaster	21/09/2019	Cruella de Vil
19	Cherie Bebe's Burlesque Revue	Matt and Phreds, Manchester	07/12/2019	Cruella de Vil and Frida

Appendix 11: Burlesque Script Accounts of Routines

“Cruella Wants It All” – Burlesque Script:

Using S.T.R.I.P (Suggest, Tease, Reveal/Remove, Interact, Present) here is an account for the routine “Cruella Wants It All”. This is an account of what has been choreographed but at any given performance this may not happen as planned. There is also room for improvisation at any point with only a few moments that have to be retained to keep the narrative aspect of the routine intact. If I have performed S.T.R.I.P. successfully, and the Burlesque Script of call and response, the audience should respond to my actions, eye contact, facial expressions (See Methodology and Context: Mechanics of Burlesque).

Cruella saunters onto the stage to Dr Hooks crooning of “Cruella De Vil”, from the wings or through the audience, swinging a canvas bag with “SWAG” written on it. If entering through the audience, I would smile, wink and stroke audience members I pass, complimenting them on the style or appearance (the character Cruella is a fashion house icon). When on stage I present the Swag Bag to the audience, look at them, at the bag, then smile at the audience and drop it to the floor.

Shifting my focus away from the bag to the audience I take a long slow drag on my cigarette holder, closing my eyes, and then on opening them I throw the cigarette holder away, smiling back at the audience, and make a flourish with my hand as clarinet is heard with the rif.

I prowl along the front of the stage, point to someone in the audience stage left, make eye contact, lean forward, and blow a kiss to the audience member and raise my gaze to those around them and smile. Backing away Dr Hook sings “all innocent children...”, I turn on “...better beware” to stage right and mock scare an audience member on the side with my hands as claws and a snarl, then a wink and a smile. I move to centre stage and allow the audience to take in my image as I smile, snarl and wink at them, as the words “Look out of Cruella De Vil” are played and bop my shoulders in acknowledgment that that is me and the audience knows it.

With the introductions done (this is the first narrative point that can't move) Queens' starting lyrics "I want it all" are repeated three times, first time I raise my right arm, second time, my left arm to complete the "V" shape, turn attention to my hands. The third time, I look to the audience, smile, and I lower my arms and with my hands caressing the shape and outline of my figure knowing they are watching and tracing the curves of my body. As I lower my hands over my legs, I lower my gaze to the Swag Bag, then up to the audience, then back to the Swag Bag.

I slowly pull out a dalmatian puppy, tail first towards the audience as I play with it suggestively smiling. I discard the Swag Bag and present the puppy to audience as I walk across the front of the audience stroking, playing, and even kissing the puppy on the nose stage left. At this point some improvisation can be created, offering an audience member to stroke the puppy etc. Walking to stage right just before the chorus for a second time I stop, hold the puppy close to my breasts and caress it is looking at the audience. The caressing becomes increasingly more ardent as I close my eyes as if in pleasure and then frustrated, I open my eyes look to the audience slowly raising my right arm as I did at the beginning of this track. I look at the glove, look at the audience and proceed to remove my glove using my teeth, a finger at a time, like a dog on crew toy and pull the glove off whilst never removing my eye contact with the audience. Still holding the puppy, I can now for the first time feel the puppy's fur with my skin and it feels exquisite.

This pleasure is interrupted by my/Cruella's eye getting caught on an audience member, stage left. Discarding the puppy for this new prize, I stalk the audience member pointing at them. I smile, look at my gloved hand, look back at them, give them a wink, then look to the whole audience. Returning my gaze back to the audience member I stroke the gloved arm outstretched towards the audience member, raising it above my head, again I raise my gaze to the whole audience. By doing this I bring the whole audience on the special relationship I have created with this audience member. I begin to tug at each gloved finger and bump hips to beat of the music. Engaging the audience with eye contact, I changed focus to different sections of the audience with each tug. Pulling the glove from my arm above my head. Keeping hold of it in both hands I bite onto the glove and shimmy keeping eye contact with the audience. Then bringing it to my groin, look at audience, look at it and I proceed to tug

at it as though masturbating my own glove penis and enjoying it as I thrust my hips in motion with the tugs. Throwing the glove to one side, I look to my exposed hand, then at the audience, then at the prop puppy, and proceed to remove and caress the fur of my cape with the newly exposed hand. Pulling the cape across my body, I body ripple laughing with the audience, walk to the puppy whilst dragging the cape behind me to stage right. Throwing the cape to one side I drop to my knees next to the puppy as the music changes for the bridge in the song.

During the musical bridge I pick up the puppy, second narrative point, I stoke the puppy at first like a puppy and then place it on my left arm/hand, stroking it with my right hand whilst staring at the audience. Bobbing with each stroke I begin to rise (still kneeling) as if stimulating sex, eyes focused on the audiences, winking, and snarling at different audience members, raising the puppy higher and higher with each bob. Until Freddy Mercury sings the high note and the bridge breaks to a guitar solo, at this point with the puppy raised above my head I rip it's head off, red confetti cannons explode from the side of the stage, and shimmy. Throwing the head to once side, in a frenzy I roll onto my back like a dog, kicking my legs in the air, frolicking in excitement. This is the climax of the narrative script – Cruella kills the puppy.

Rocking back up onto my knees I extend my right leg, look the audience, look at my leg, back at the audience and with the puppy's body in my right hand I use it to caress my extended leg. Then dropping the body near my foot, using my hand I caress my leg back up towards my groin. When I reach the zipper of the dress at the bottom I begin the unzip it, pausing to smile at the audience, I stand up and stride to the other side of the stage (stage left) laughing maniacally. I tease the audience as I slowly finish unzipping the dress for the climax of the guitar solo, removing it just before Freddie Mercury begins to sing again.

Standing stage left, dressed in a red satin babydoll bra and knicker set, with both hands I run them up my body, scrunching the babydoll in my hands to reveal my stomach and stretch out my arms and hands, like flexing claws, snarling at the audience. Looking down at the babydoll bra, I look back at the audience, smile and raise an eyebrow as I gesture and present my breasts from under the bra cups. A little shimmy of the shoulders and extend my left arm, using my right hand I pull down the

bra strap raising the newly released arm to the sky. I smile at the audience. I do the same with the right arm as the final chorus of the music increases in intensity. Doing the classic Burlesque move of unhooking the bra whilst facing the audience I turn my back as the hooks release to reveal my back but also a dalmatian dog tail on my knickers. Still holding the bra in place, I look over my shoulder at the audience, I look at the tail, and back to the audience, wink, and gab the tail with my left hand and rub it up and down suggestively as I snarl. I throw the babydoll bra off to one side.

Turning around I raise my arms and bob on the balls of my feet, bouncing my breasts and start tassel twirling. This is the Burlesque Script's climax. As the music reaches a crescendo and the drums beat out twice, I pause, I look to the audience, I enjoy caressing my body and breasts in front of the audience as they watch me. Before the final notes I pull at the ribbons on either side of the red satin knickers; revealing a tiny dalmatian print G-string to match the dalmatian nipple tassels. I stroke the newly exposed skin whilst watching the audience, put my arms out to shoulder height, angular and hands shaped like claws I shimmy and tassel twirl until the end.

Appendix 12: Brief History Timeline of Burlesque

As previously mentioned in section 5. Mechanics of Burlesque the history of Burlesque is a difficult one to map. However, performer Lilly Laudanum (under the blog pseudonym 'ronnie' at Bluestocking Lounge 2015) also notes 5BC Aristophanes, who wrote of women using their sexual power over men to manipulate them into negotiating peace treaties (Lysistrata) or his parody of other writers he felt misrepresented women (Thesmophoria), as the 'Father of Comedy' whose plays could sway the public's political opinions. Performer and Burlesque blogger Mina Von Vixen (2017) agrees with Laudanum, all three performers in their writing, focus upon the parodying and lampooning of society within Greek plays as the beginnings of Burlesque. It should be noted that the performers in these plays, according to all three writers, would have been men even though women performed comedy as 'Dorian Mimes', known for their mimicry of others (Parker and Parker, 1975; Johnson, 2000; McKechnie, 1931).

My range of sources for this section come from historical studies of Burlesque performance and imagery, academic studies into Neo-Burlesque and "Stripping", performer's educational websites, PhD research theses, as well as writings in popular press publications for general interest reading. I have created this list of some historical highlights.

1800s Music Hall and Belle Epoque

Most writers start Burlesque history in the Victorian era with its' illegitimate entertainment of Music Halls, Variety Shows, Pantomime Travesty, Extravaganza or "Burlesque". There is often a brief nod to the Italian origins of the word and Commedia del'Arte (Nally, 2009, p.3; Von Tease, 2005, p.4; Von Vixen, 2017) which can also be seen to influence the Victorian entertainments mentioned above.

1800's – UK: Thought to have started as an interval entertainment to keep the audience in their seats for the final comedy act, women would show a little ankle or shoulder. However, women had been performing 'breeches' roles in pantomime long before. They started to build up routines and sketches that made it onto the billing. (Allen, 1991; Banks and Swift, 1987; Farson, 1972; Gillies, 1999; Laudanum, 2015;

Parker and Parker, 1975; Nally, 2009; Stedman Jones, 1974, p.477-479; Von Teese, 2005; Weldon, 2010; Willson, 2008).

1843 – UK: Victorian entertainment is split into Legitimate Theatre (plays subject to scrutiny of the Lord Chamberlain and venues) and Illegitimate Theatre (requires licence to perform dance, music and variety sketches) by The Theatre Act 1843. (Evans 2002, p.56-57; Farson, 1972; Gillies 1999, p.24).

1868 – UK/USA: Lydia Thompson and her British Blondes perform sell-out shows in New York. (Allen, 1991, p.3, p.13, p.21 ; Banks and Swift, 1987; Farson, 1972; Gillies, 1999; Laudanum, 2015; Parker and Parker, 1975; Nally, 2009, p.3; Montgomery, 2013, p.6; Von Teese, 2005, p.7; Weldon, 2010, p.11; Willson, 2008, p.18).

1869 – France: Folies Bergere founded, Paris. (Parker and Parker, 1975, p.37; Von Teese, 2005, p.10)

1889 – France: Moulin Rouge founded, Paris. Lampooning the fashions of the Upper Classes, women cavorted in outfits that were supposed to restrain and contain the female form. (Adlington, 2015, p.4-6; Lynn, 2010, p.20; Nally, 2009, p.3)

1893 – USA: At the World's Fair Columbian Exhibition, the performer Little Egypt, Fahreda Spyropolos, performed "danse du ventrue", now known as a "belly dance". (Cheng, 2010, p.5; Von Teese, 2005, p.23; Weldon, 2010, p.257)

1894 – UK: Music Hall licences were up for review and consequently The Purity Party publicly hounded Music Halls forcing them to sanitise their performances. Many performers are brought to trial on charges of indecency, including Marie Lloyd. (Banks and Swift, 1987, p.48; Farson, 1972, p.69)

1900s Freedom and Decadence

1907 – USA: Ziegfeld's Follies opens, New York. The choreographer of Ziegfeld Follies, Ned Wayburn, creates several dances and "Legmania" as the costumes followed "a less-is-more philosophy" (Redniss, 2006, p.28, p.40; Weldon, 2010, p.11).

European and Art Nouveau influenced (Willson on Allen, 2008, p.39; Redniss, 2006, p.30)

1912 – UK: Royal Command Performance, “final kiss of death” (Steadman Jones, 1975, p.496) for Music Hall. The desire to gain royal favour leads to further censorship of Music Hall entertainment. Lloyd counters the performance with her own sell-out show “for the British Public” (Banks and Swift, 1987, p.43).

1913 – USA: Billy Minsky produces Burlesque at the Winter Gardens, New York. Focus on the curvier American girl. (Weldon, 2010, p.11; Von Teese, 2005, p.33)

1920s-30s Rising Hemlines and Censorship

1920s-50s – USA: Creation and development of the nipple tassels as a result of censorship laws being introduced. (Fraser in conversation with Burlesque Legends BBC Radio 4, 2015; Von Teese, 2005, p.35; Weldon, 2010, p.57-59)

1925 – France: Revue Negre takes Josephine Baker to Europe. She makes a huge impact in Paris and across Europe. (Baker and Boullion, 1977, p.51; Damase, 1962, p.29; Jules-Rosette, 2012, p.248; Svendsen, 2013, p.28).

1926 – USA: Gypsy Rose Lee starts Burlesque and becomes known as the “Intellectual Stripper” (Blessing, 2013, p.53). She talks to her audience whilst parading and peeling, harking back to Lydia Thompson’s British Blondes. (Steinbeck, 1957; Willson, 2008, p.21, p.32)

1931 – UK: The Windmill Theatre opens, London. To circumvent Theatre Licencing Laws, Vivian Van Damm’s performers posed as nude tableaux. Coining the phrase “If it moves, its rude” and exemplifying the high vs low art attitudes. (Mort, 2007, p.30, p.31, p.33; The Windmill Theatre Website, 2015)

1935-36 – USA: Baker returns bringing Danse Sauvage to the Folies Bergere. American critics were not ready for a sophisticated black woman (Louck and Hamberman, 2002; Jules-Rosette, 2007, p.280).

1937 – USA: Mayor Fiorello La Guardia shuts Burlesque theatres down in New York. (Weldon, 2010, p.21; Von Teese, 2005, p.69-71)

1940s-50s WWII to Hollywood Glamour

1939-45 – UK: The Windmill Theatre became known for Home-Front morale as the show that never closed during the Blitz. (Mort, 2007, p.33-34; Sutherland, 2018; The Windmill Theatre Website, 2015)

France: Baker performs for the troops and becomes a French Resistance Spy. (Follies Bergere website, History, n.d.; Baker and Boullion, 1977; Jules-Rosette, 2012)

1940-60 – USA: Hollywood film heavily influences performers (e.g. Lili St. Cyr, Tempest Storm) in the creation of what we now call the 'Classic Burlesque' style. Focussing on the glamour of the Upper Classes and the tease (due to nudity laws), they looked to film actors such as Marilyn Monroe, Betty Grable, Rita Hayworth, Hedy Lamarr, Vivien Leigh and others. (Burlesque Bible special, 2016; Weldon, 2010 p.37, p.53; Von Teese, 2005, p.71, p.84, p.87, p.95, p.97, p.107, p.109)

1947 – USA: Lili St. Cyr is arrested in LA over a performance and fined \$350. (Weldon, 2010, p.257)

1951 – France: The Crazy Horse opens, Paris. (Weldon, 2010, p.257)

1951 – USA: Baker returns and demands integrated audiences and stage crews, which was granted and successful. (Jules-Rosette, 2007, p.222; Dudziak, 1994, p.551)

1953 – USA: Playboy Magazine is created. (Burlesque Bible special, 2016)

1954 – USA: Tempest Storm and Bettie Page perform in the film Varitease and then Teaserama in 1955. (Burlesque Bible special, 2016)

1958 – UK: Raymond's Revuebar opens, London. Advertised as 'Worlds Centre of Erotic Entertainment'. Due to its status as a private member's only club, it was one of

the few venues legally allowed to present full frontal nudity and moving performers. It was able to evade the Lord Chamberlain's scrutiny. (Mort, 2007, p.36, p.44-45)

1960s-80s Sexual Freedom and Sex Sells

1962 – The film Gypsy, based on the memoirs of Gypsy Rose Lee, is released. (Weldon, 2010, p.257)

1964 – The Windmill Theatre closes to later reopen in 1994 as Windmill International as “the West-End's best gentleman's” strip-club. (Windmill International website, homepage, n.d.)

1965 – Raymond Revuebar presents Festival of Striptease that later becomes Festival of Erotica. (Mort, 2007, p.50; Truman, 2015) Hosting international performers including dance troupes such as Paris' Crazy Horse. (Thames News, 1988)

1968 – UK: The Lord Chamberlain's Theatre Censorship is abolished, and the musical 'Hair' is performed on the West End. (Montgomery, 2013, p.17)

1972 – Cabaret the film is released. (Weldon, 2010, p.257)

1974 – France: Follies Bergere comes under new direction from Helene Martini, Empress of the Night, and reverts the production house to its original concept. It continues today, as does the Moulin Rouge and the Lido. (Follies Bergere website, History, n.d.)

1975 – The film The Rocky Horror Picture show is released. Panned by critics but gains a cult following.

1980's – Tease is no longer in demand as full-frontal nudity is easily accessible in theatre, film, magazines, and strip clubs. However, performance art, film, theatre and music take on some of burlesque's attributes. (Montgomery, 2013, p.17; Weldon, 2010, p.12)

1980 – UK: Raymond Revuebar becomes a comedy club and closes in 2004. (Trueman, 2015).

1990s Renewal, Revival, Retro

1990s – USA: Burlesque born out of a need for alternative entertainment, from the punk and party scene dance troupes and clubs emerged like The Velvet Hammer and The Blue Angel Cabaret. Performers like World Famous Bob, Jo Weldon, Tigger!, Dirty Martini and Dita Von Teese are beginning to make their mark. (Carr, 2008; Dodds, 2013, p.78; Weldon, 2010, p.258)

1990s – UK and Australia: Politically conscious performer Britain's Queen of Burlesque Immodesty Blaize and Australia's Lola the Vamp [also known as, in this thesis, Dr Meghann Yavanna Montgomery] lead the resurgence, performing Burlesque, often being called Performance Art. (Blaize Q&A at Sexhibition, 2016; Willson, 2008, p.15),

1990 – USA: Burlesque Legend Dixie Evans takes over fellow performer Jamie Lees' Exotic World Burlesque Museum (Burlesque Hall of Fame website, history – Dixie Evans, n.d.).

1991 – USA: first Miss Exotic World Pagent in 1991 (Burlesque Hall of Fame website, history – Dixie Evans).

1993 – The original Irving Klaw films starring Bettie Page, Tempest Storm and Lili St. Cyr films are rereleased on VHS. (Weldon, 2010, p.258)

1995 – The Pussycat Dolls, dance revues, feature performances from Dita Von Teese and Catherine D'Lish. (Nally, 2009, p.632-633; Weldon, 2010, p.258)

2000s Empowerment and Exploration

2000's – Film continues to keep Burlesque and Cabaret in the public eye: The Moulin Rouge (2001), Chicago (2002), Mrs Henderson Presents (2005), Burlesque (2010).

2005 - Dita Von Teese' own book *Burlesque/Fetish and the art of the Teese* cementing herself as the modern icon for Burlesque.

2007 – UK/USA: Immodesty Blaize is crowned Reigning Queen of Burlesque at the Las Vegas Burlesque Hall of Fame, formerly known as Exotic World.

2007 – UK: London's Burlesque Festival establishes the first European festival, swiftly followed by the rest of Europe, Australia, Canada and the U.S.A Burlesque festivals to celebrate local and international talent. (Weldon, 2010, p.258)

2008 – UK: The 30th year of the only British Burlesque Legend Goodtime Mama JoJo aka Jo King, teaching and founding the London Academy of Burlesque. (Burlexe website "Goodtime Mama JoJo Burlesque History", 2016)

2013 – UK: Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival (HBBF) establishes and receives backlash. (Culturevulture website 2013)

2015 – UK: actors union Equity recognises and accepts Burlesque performers in their union. (Equity 2015).

2016 – UK: Three years on HBBF receive Arts Council funding from the Government recognizing the art form as "theatre". (Art Council 2016)

Appendix 13: Arabella Twist Biography

Below is the biography of Arabella Twist from the website that is given to producers who wish to publicise their events I am performing at:

“As a Neo-Burlesque performer Arabella relishes in exploring the edges and pushing the boundaries of known narratives. Learning to manage and accept her Multiple Sclerosis diagnosis, Arabella, has through Burlesque, brought audiences scintillating strong women characters to the stage. Arabella has performed at various North West venues since her debut at the renowned Frou Frou Club, and competed upon the London Hippodrome stage as part of Burlesque Idol. Silky smooth with a little bit of bite, she won the Audience Choice Award at the Spare Rib Superstar Competition 2017 and performed as a Finalist at Hebden Bridge Burlesque Festival’s Legend in the Making 2018 and World Burlesque Games 2019. Arabella is a firecracker of a performer, so expect the unexpected!”

(Twist, <https://twistedtaleofarabella.com/about/> , 2020)

Appendix 14: Performer Links

Below is a list of links that correspond with the performers who feature “In Detail” throughout chapters 4-6 and also links of relevant Arabella Twist’s performances mentioned:

Clips of Perle Noir’s performances at HBBF Gala 2016:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BnBzDLI7wI&t=606s>

The routine “Peacock Fantasy” can be seen here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZbJV0b82G_c

The routine “Pink Fantasy” can be seen here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0EXGpF4Nj8>

Promo Video for Dita Von Teese’s production The Art of The Teese:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGu7eK9tuRs>

Rubyyy Jones’ performances of “Potty-mouth” Princess and “Tellinnng” can be seen here:

<https://rubyyyjones.wixsite.com/rubyyy/portfolio>

Cinnamon Cheeks’ routine “Stroke Survivor” can be viewed here:

<https://burdy.co/featured-act/cinnamon-cheeks/>

Arabella Twist’s Performances:

Debut performance of Arabella Twist, “Cruella wants it all”, The Frou Frou Club, Little Theatre, Hebden Bridge, 4th March 2017:

<https://youtu.be/ZtlwHfjC2XU>

Debut performance of “Frida”, The Spare Rib, The Magnet, Liverpool, 26th October 2017:

https://youtu.be/HCybOz_T26c

Examination Performance, Cherie Bebe's Burlesque Revue at Matt&Phreds, Manchester, 8th December 2019.

"Cruella wants it all":

https://youtu.be/TdS4RYV9B_w

"Frida":

https://youtu.be/3bOV9_ZQhik

Leeds Cabaret and Burlesque Festival, Belgrave Music Hall, Leeds, 20th August 2019.

"Cruella wants it all":

<https://youtu.be/Teajr5tAsVo>

"Frida":

https://youtu.be/AusNe_stBnE

