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AC⚡DC

: A STUDY IN ART, GENDER AND POPULAR CULTURE.

**AN EXEGESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF**

**MASTERS
IN
FINE ARTS**

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JEMMA SYME

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ABSTRACT

This thesis began as an artistic investigation into the politics of identity and sex/sexuality. The main ideas that run throughout this exegesis position themselves within Nicolas Bourriaud's ideas in the book *Postproduction*, and also around a parafeminist ideology. Within this I focus on popular music culture, the body, video and performance art, and visual representations of the body. I pay particular attention to the female body, and look into ideas of conventional social norms and how people challenge these.

I look into the work of several female artists who deal with the visual representation, and also look at figures within popular music culture. Within band culture I look into how the band can be used as a vehicle to disseminate ideas wider audience. Art and music culture have fed off of each other for generations and can provide valuable strategies within each context for thinking beyond social norms.

The remix can be used as a tactic to decode forms and narratives in popular culture. This can be used to investigate representations of identity within a space that is in a constant state of flux. This is particularly useful as a parafeminist strategy because it allows a context in which to question, rather than answer.

As a result of this study I have found that there are no concrete answers when it comes to identity and sexuality, but can conclude that conventional gender representations and signifiers of identity can be remixed into different scenarios and narratives that can challenge social norms.

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eh/DC

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FOREWORD

'AC/DC' is a term that Clare Hemmings uses to describe the "dual current"¹ of bisexuality. While this exegesis is not a study in bisexuality in art and popular culture, the term AC/DC indicates a lack of stability, inconsistency or unpredictability within the idea of gender roles. Hemming argues that "...bisexual identity is not only a question of displacement or substitution of one meaning for another..."² and my work vacillates between ideas surrounding the female and sexual identity. My work is not bisexual in nature, but prefers to challenge gender representations by employing a sort of 'dual current' in regards to the issues that surround it. I am not androgenous in this sense, but rather feel that a binary distinction between the male and female sexuality is destructive when it comes to furthering representations of identity. It is a complex issue, and I will look into questions of gender representation throughout my thesis.

AC/DC also links to the popular Australian rock band of the same name. AC/DC are 'manly' men, who epitomise certain stereotypes of masculinity. I love AC/DC, and even though they might be seen as sexist, I feel that you have to take them for what they are. Even though context should not be an excuse for sexism, the context of popular music is a space in which the stereotyped gender roles are commonly performed. Instead of producing a closed idea of gender representation, I try to insert my own narratives into this context that challenge and broaden ideas surrounding representation. The idea of stereotypes in popular music culture is something I talk about within this exegesis, and how artists challenge and decode these stereotypes by providing alternate narratives.

The title also suggests a cheeky attitude when dealing with issues involving gender. I use humour in my work as a strategy for disarming and/or disguising serious topics. Humour "... thumb[s] its nose at pigeonholes,"³ which allows it to throw stereotypes and social narratives into a state of confusion. Humour is a tactic that is readily accepted by a wider public, making it a cunning tool for disrupting conventions. Gender representation is still an important issue to me, but I like to deal with it in a way that is entertaining and seriously funny.

I feel the idea of the "AC/DC" can act as a suitable title and representation of what I am talking about in this exegesis.

¹ Hemmings, 2002, p 23.

² Hemmings, 2002, p 24.

³ Higgle, 2007, p 12