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GHOSTLY SISTERS

Feminist Collaborative Performance in Australia

This article examines how feminist performance has been, and continues to be, a key vehicle for the collaborative exploration of sexual difference and female subjectivity in Australia. It focuses specifically on the Lean Sisters and Generic Ghosts, whose collaborative performances occurred during the seventies and eighties, and their impact on subsequent feminist collaborative performance groups. As the article demonstrates, this counter-cultural tradition of performance typically deploys tactics of intertextuality, cross-media experimentation, humour, and détournement to critique gender oppression and its recurrence, while staging new possibilities of an embodied feminist politics.

Keywords: collaboration—poetry—intertextuality—performance—feminism

Feminist performance has been and continues to be a key vehicle for collaboration, and for exploring and deconstructing ways in which female subjectivity has been constructed in Australian culture. A hybrid form, it often combines theatre, poetry, music, and ritual among other elements. Yet, perhaps because of its focus on the 'live' ephemeral moment, performance is often absent in literary or art histories. While collaboration has been a feature of 20th-century avant-gardism and political art, it too tends to be overlooked in literary histories which typically focus on the individual author. This essay focuses on the Lean Sisters' and Generic Ghosts' collaborative performances that occurred during the 70s and 80s, and their impact on subsequent feminist collaborative performance groups. Feminist performance became a key vehicle for attempting to realise the revolutionary themes of '68, particularly critiquing Woman as sign and commodity, and the role of sexual difference in a political practice. As Judith Butler notes, sexual difference 'has psychic, somatic, and social dimensions that are never quite collapsible into one another but are not for that reason ultimately distinct.' Accordingly, sexual difference is 'not a thing, not a fact, not a presupposition, but rather a demand for rearticulation that never quite vanishes—but also never quite appears' (2004: 186).

To be feminist in the 1970s and '80s was to claim a political position that was anti-institutional and working towards reassessing women's agency, as well as deconstructing distinctions between the private and the public spheres. Feminist performance and feminist performance art (closely aligned, with the former being scripted) would emerge in the 1970s following the sexual liberation movement and happenings. Pam Brown notes that the Yellow House in Macleay Street, Kings Cross, was 'Australia's first 24 hour-a-day “happening,”' in which a house became the communal space for living artwork and an alternative to the art gallery (Brown 2014: 9). While her first collection, Sureblock (1972), was not performance, it foregrounded a more explicit feminist aesthetics that would come to characterise later
collaborations involving Brown. The small volume was produced at a commercial printery illegally, with three friends helping to typeset, make the metal plates, under layout and collation.

Historically, collaborations have challenged presumptions of ownership, particularly the elevation of authorship and the inauguration of copy laws in the nineteenth century. The title page of *Sureblock* mocks such laws with its declaration, ‘if anyone wants these poems use them’ (n.pag). Brown's sense of play and celebration of the ludic as strategies of textual subversion is already evident. Dedicated to two female outlaws of the American West, Cattle Annie and Little Breeches (sic), Brown's writing satirises the movement towards counter-cultural organisation. The poetic speaker of ‘Daylight Me’ dubs herself a ‘member of/ the vanguard of/ the world is flat committee’ while ‘The Red Cocacola Bottle’ begins with the stanza:

That we perform in syndicates  
became obvious  
when, whiles (sic) on weeks away  
we found ourselves creating  
some very unified notions… (n.pag.)

This sense of self-conscious, ex-centric solidarity informs many feminist collaborations and Brown would adapt the volume into a film, *Outlaw Queens* (1977), which was directed by Gillean Leahy. In 1976, Brown became part of The Lean Sisters Theatre Group, a group that emerged following a women's conference at Minto (Brown 2014: 15) and which had an activist agenda. The group raised funds firstly for Elsie Women's Refuge in Glebe, buying walkie-talkies as a means for staff to get help in the event of attacks. Lasting for two years, the Lean Sisters then raised funds for similar women's organisations. The group included pianist Netta Perrett, Josephine Dewar (lead singer of the all-women band ‘Sheila’), Pam Brown and Diana Fuller (who had just come from the all-women band ‘Clitoris Band’), and film-maker Jenny Neil. Scripts and sets were designed collectively. Brown notes that, ‘[l]images of women were positively re-interpreted, and feminist clichés were shaken up and tossed out along with other ideological power structures (the state, the church, big business, family hierarchies, and so on)’ (2014: 16-17). Even at that stage, theory was invoked, Brown recalling Perrett playing Louis Althusser in *The Leans Lurch Left*.\[i\]

The Lean Sisters performed at the Tin Sheds and Bondi Pavilion and emerged just before Blatant Image, a feminist art collective that also used the Tin Sheds. Blatant Image was part of the Women's Art movement which sought to recuperate the role of women in art and to foreground feminist aesthetics. An example was Helen Grace's *Women at Work* (1976), a series of photographs which documented women's labour. Grace also focused on cultural constructions of motherhood and femininity in *The lovely motherhood show* (1981) demonstrating the gap between drudge aspects of motherhood and idealised images then circulating in advertising. An example of collaboration from the women's art movement was Vivienne Binns and Toni Robertson's coordinated *Mothers’ memories others’ memories* (1979-81), which displayed the albums, artefacts, homecrafts and memorabilia of women from the socially disadvantaged western Sydney suburb of Blacktown. Exhibited not at a gallery but at the local Westpoint Shopping Centre, it celebrated the creativity ‘inherent in everyday women's lives’(Millner 2015: 9). As *Mothers’ memories others’ memories* demonstrates, there are degrees of collaboration in this example, with each contributor also becoming, in a sense, a collaborator.

While feminist performance of the ‘70s was often excessive and confrontational (I am thinking here of Jill Orr’s critique of ecological disaster and the female body in *Bleeding Trees* (1979) or Suzanne Lacy and Leslie Labowitz’s *Three Weeks in May* (1977), a three-week-long performance event in Los Angeles around rape awareness), the Lean Sisters revelled in a strong sense of the absurd and carnivalesque. Advertising a ‘santamime,’ a screenprint characterises the Lean Sisters as ‘from the precipice of simpleton theatre’
and features a woman be-heading Santa. A poster that Netta Perret designed for *The Poetry Water Gossip Show* (1977) similarly characterises the Lean Sisters as ‘the theatre of the naïve.’ That show included water ballet, live theatre, live music, tap dancing, dunk a poet, blue baptisms, films and light shows, and ‘dance to sheila.’ Using forms of ‘light’ or non-serious modes (‘gossip’, ‘dunk a poet’), the Lean Sisters would remove their performance from the metaphoric status of art and engage the audience to actively rethink consecrated patriarchal norms and institutions. The Lean Sisters’ shows demonstrated a ‘communal nature’, ‘amateurish messiness’, and ‘improvisational cabaret’ (Withers 1994: 160) that Josephine Withers has identified in feminist performance art and certainly there are resonances with American groups like Split Britches Company, which used vaudeville and the everyday in their shows in the early 1980s.

With the textual or linguistic turn in the 1980s, Australian feminist performance became more associated with universities and influenced by theory. Between 1984 and 1988, a small group of Sydney women poets, including Brown, Jan McKemmish, Amanda Stewart, and Carol Christie, joined together under the rubric of ‘Generic Ghosts.’ Emerging from the Tin Sheds’ vibrant feminist collectives, they collaborated on multi-media performances with Helen Grance and with musicians like Elizabeth Drake. The Generic Ghosts’ collaborations foregrounded the multiplicity of voice, including the trace of past voices within the present-day poetic environment. Influenced by the Situationists International, their preferred techniques were literary détournement and constructed situations. The former were a group of artists, activists and theorists, who sought to address a perceived increase in passivity due to mass consumption and mass communication in the post-World War II era.

According to Situationists, people were becoming alienated from everyday life and its practices. Seeking to heighten critical awareness, their practice of détournement took statements or messages without authorisation and placed them in a new situation where the statement or message acquired new meaning. Détournement was a ‘diversion, deflection, turning aside from the normal course or purpose (often with an illicit connotation)’ (Knabb 1981: 371). Détournement had a double action of negating the ideological conditions for artistic production (that all artworks are ultimately commodities) and negating this negation by producing something politically educative. (Oxford: n.pag.) While the first performance of Generic Ghosts focused on the theme of writing, the second performance focused on the state, and the third focused on love. Some texts were re-used across performances, thus creating a continuity that was not planned. The performances themselves might be thought of as creating a constructed situation in which the audience might perceive aspects of contemporary life differently. Following Walter Benjamin's discussion of Brechtian theatre in ‘The Author as Producer’ (1986: 233), the spectators are forced to actively generate meaning and also become collaborators.

The first performance, *And That Is Very Interesting*, by Brown, Drake, and Stewart was designed to intervene into the linearity of academic papers that were delivered at the ‘FUTUR* FALL: Excursions into Postmodernity’ conference in 1984. Besides academic papers, the conference drew together a large Australian body of writers, performers, artists, and film-makers. Many sessions attracted audiences of over 700 people. As E.A. Grosz discerns:

[I]t was the first conference of its kind in Australia: the first conference on postmodernism; the first coming together of different, usually disconnected projects which nonetheless share an interest in the analysis and representation of contemporary culture; and it was a first attempt to deal with the question of futurity, not only as a multi-dimensional utopia (atopia?), but also a trajectory traceable in the present, an immanence anticipating the future. (Grosz 1986: 7)

*And That is Very Interesting* was a series of short pieces performed over two weeks at the Bondi Pavilion. The title is a line by Gertrude Stein and also reappears in ‘The Painting,’ a monologue by Brown and
Drake performed to Drake's music composition. Starting with a woman being bitten by a snake, Elizabeth Drake's 'The Painting' unsettles narrative expectations as reality and the fantastic soon begin to blur. The setting shifts surrealistically between hospital, hotel, and science laboratory. A critique of animal experimentation slides into a focus on visual aesthetics: 'Dogs helping science. Science helping dogs. A good clinical atmosphere ...Dogs. Lots of dogs. Different colours. Primary colours. Could be seen to be expressionist. Fashionable or designer like fabric' (Brown, Drake and Stewart 1984 CD). Stewart's piece has resonances with Bonita Ely's *Dogwoman makes history* (1985) in which 'the story of art from a feminist perspective was retold through canine representations' (Marsh 1993: 146).

Another piece, 'The Dinner', intersperses Drake's music between Brown's monologues. Brown's speaker echoes the anonymous, dissatisfied wife from TS Eliot's 'The Wasteland' in her need to talk and the failure of the Other to listen. Unlike Eliot's figure, Brown's turns comedic, with reflections like 'I should just talk to the dog' (1984 CD). The music emphasises the shortstopping of any possible conversation. Two meta-performance pieces, 'I mean' and 'Foyerism', enact the 'shell of ritual' and the 'insides' of habit in having 'Brown and Drake' as two figures undertaking small talk at an event similar to *And That is Very Interesting*. The presumed coherent individuality of the first person ‘I’ is questioned and an argument made for a different identity ‘through language, through relationships, through context’ (1984 CD). Occurring before Butler's theory of citationality, 'The Dinner' demonstrates how identity or the 'same old story' is reinforced through repetition. Light-hearted, ironic quips like 'It's about alienation. I couldn't talk to him any more' and 'I hadn't been sick for so long, there must be something wrong' are juxtaposed with cut-ups from Ronald Reagan's speeches. (1984 CD)

Stewart's 'War Poem' foregrounds the mediality of war, where 'the bomb appears like a postcard.' She notes, 'When you're at the movies you think you're there and when you're there you think you're at the movies.' Other pieces looks at the postcard kitsch of nationhood disseminated through the postcard genre. Stereotypic terms of nation like 'lucky', 'young', 'sunburnt', and 'easy-going' are shuffled in the same deck as the mass culture of 'Kmart', and there is a slide into the war-as-tourism missives of 'Gallipoli' (1984 CD). There is an imagined movement from 'eyes to sea, back to the desert' to 'eyes to the desert' (1984 CD).

The second performance, *Professional Mourning by Generic Ghosts*, occurred at the CAAMARP conference at the University of Technology, Sydney, in 1986. While none of *And That is Very Interesting* was published in the ‘Futur* Fall’ proceedings, a written version titled ‘The return of the dead I or Modes of Goo’ subsequently appeared in the *Writers in Park* anthology, co-edited by Christie and Kim O'Brien. An epigraph notes that it was ‘a response to the writer as authoritative voice, to the language of threat and terrorism and to the notions that feminist or women’s writing be concerned only with the I and the other’ (Christie et al 1986: 84). The montage includes excerpts from cultural theorists like Meaghan Morris, Guy Debord and Jean Baudrillard (who had been a speaker at the ‘Futur*fall’ conference), as well as from avant-garde writers like Gertrude Stein and Tristan Tzara. The opening of the montage foregrounds inherited attitudes towards the female speaking subject, such as 'Least said soonest mended', as well as other sayings such as 'Keep your breath to cool your porridge' (Christie et al 1986: 85).

They then align the female speaking subject with other acts of revolutionary speech. Section 13 declares that 'The first things anarchists do is to think and talk' (Christie et al 1986: 91). Another section cites Jean Genet visiting the Palestinian camps and bases in Jordan shortly before September and saying:

> A revolution which does not aim at changing me by changing the relationships between people does not interest me; what is more, I doubt whether a revolution which does not affect me enough to transform me is really a revolution at all. The Palestinian revolution is my revolution … They can talk of everything. I cannot recall that any subject was taboo (Christie et al 1986:...
Throughout the performance, there are references to political movements including Aboriginal land rights and the Free Papua movement. The performance emphasises the need for the conscious artist rather than a reliance on the unconscious. Part of such consciousness is a self-awareness, with section 14 adding to section 13, ‘The second thing anarchists do is to send themselves up’ (Christie et al 1986: 91).

The montage touches on the circulating nature of gossip, with certain kinds of talk merely effecting a meaningless parroting. The counter of constructive talk is that which domesticates us through television and other forms of media. These are the modes of ‘goo’: ‘We are over-protected, swathed in good; and as a species we may be dying of security in domestication’ (Christie et al 1986: 91). The ‘Generic Ghosts’ note how sound and performance poetry mobilise techniques of the modernist avant-garde but also that avant-garde techniques are not inherently dissident, having been used both to critique and sanctify war. Moreover, they remind their audience how sound and performance poetry have been implemented in advertising practices (‘already used to sell Bex and the Price is Right’ (Christie et al 1986: 89)).

For the ‘Generic Ghosts’, truth and context are linked. While words and narratives may be deceptive, there is a recognition of ‘[t]he way writing, independent of style or attitude or intentions, comes back to the writer’s own knowledge of the situation of its being written’ (Christie et al 1986: 93). Vitality rather than clarity is important. The closing section refers to the dead, the ‘Generic Ghosts’ becoming agitated. The idea of distributing pamphlets is floated: ‘To this end they intend to write texts, protests, suggestions, demands to be laid before those who are responsible for conditions among the dead’ (Christie et al 1986: 96). The movement away from ‘the same old story’ is a utopic one, envisioning that ‘A theoretical wind will toss the theoretical pamphlets into a megalopolis fabricated out of countless bright ideas’ (Christie et al 1986: 97). Part of this is a vision of a growing crowd eager for foreign pamphlets with unknown texts.

As Much Trouble as Talking was the third of the Generic Ghosts’ collaborations. Written by Pam Brown and Jan McKemmish, it was performed at the Belvoir Street Theatre in August 1988. Unlike the sections of And That’s Very Interesting, As Much Trouble as Talking was one long piece, running for an hour and a half without interval. Whereas Brown, Drake and Stewart had performed And That’s Very Interesting, As Much Trouble as Talking deployed two women actors as the bodies on stage. Its subtitle, ‘A Generic Ghosts Montage for Live Voices’, emphasises Brown and McKemmish’s presence as only spectral voices. While many feminist performances of the 1970s and ’80s focused on the physical female body (whether to emphasise it as authentically essential or always already shaped through representation), As Much Trouble as Talking split the subject as voice and object of the spectatorial gaze. It further confused presumptions of gender, having the female voices read texts by both men and women. Excerpts from Brown and McKemmish’s own past texts were interwoven with those of others, including texts by Sylvia Plath, Mina Loy, John Dos Passos, Gilles Deleuze, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, Hannah Arendt, Julia Kristeva, Carol Christie and Sasha Soldatow, as well as many more.

As Much Trouble as Talking was thought of by its producers as an ephemeral ‘open text’, Pam Brown noting the sense that ‘you could sleep through it and wake up with some of the text in your mind’ (1988b). With Dalí and Bunuel’s surrealist process as a precursor, texts were brought along and...
collectively assembled with the hope that glimpses of the unconscious would surface (1988b). As one voice says in *As Much Trouble as Talking*, ‘I thought I had two voices; one which hardly belonged to me and was not dependent on my will—was dictating to the other what to say. I was dual.’ Elsewhere, *As Much Trouble as Talking* is defined as ‘an obscure adventure, half sordid, half fantastic’ (1988a: n.pag.). While there is a working by chance and association, *As Much Trouble as Talking* was also highly structured and stylised. It aimed to be very quiet and beautiful to look at, even as it was without plot or characters (1988b).

This had a purpose. As one of the voices notes in the performance:

> We do not know, but that is not the problem. The problem is that we pretend to know or think we should pretend. We think we know what we are and what the world should be. We could be ... missing ... worlds without end more fulfilling than this one might be within our grasp. But these lie in the margins of an unconscious inner life we presently flee in all our ideologies and institutions ... It would seem now to have to begin in silence again; we must drop all our expectations and see just how quiet and observant we can be—keeping our eye on each thing as it arises (1988a: n.pag.).

Through undoing habitual structures of thought and being attentive, alternative utopic possibilities might be perceived.

The first community addressed in *As Much Trouble as Talking* is the dead. The performance starts in darkness with a voice-over of how the dead are unable to write ‘texts, protests, suggestions’, being stuck with the ‘same old story’ until they are agitated by theoretical pamphlets which they view as foreign and exciting. (1988a: n.pag.) With the stage becoming lit, the suggestion is that critical theory is re-energising literature. What occurs is a resituating of past literature into the present. An example is the opening lines of Allen Ginsberg’s ‘Howl’, which is quoted then revised several times. In the first revision, the second voice states:

> I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness running hysterical naked, dragging themselves through to Gaza streets at dawn looking for an angry mob keffiyeh-headed youngsters burning tyres for the ancient heavenly connection to a Beat and Beaten Generation (1988a: n.pag.).

In ‘Notes for Howl and Other Poems’, Ginsberg explains how he was exploring Hebraic-Melvillian breath, with ‘Loose ghosts wailing for body try to invade the bodies of living men.’ He further states, ‘I hear ghostly Academics in Limbo screeching about form’ (1999: 415).

In *As Much Trouble as Talking*, Brown and McKemmish consider the Israel-Palestine conflict that then appeared to be reaching a crisis point. Furthermore, there is a more general backdrop of science used in space and weapons development, including the creation of the nuclear bomb, Sputnik in 1957 (contemporaneous to ‘Howl’), and onto Reagan’s Strategic Defense Initiative (dubbed ‘Star Wars’ by the media), until such apocalyptic knowledge functions more as entertainment to be watched while eating Baskin-Robbins icecream. One voice notes how a nuclear designer called Peter says that before 1980 he saw nuclear weaponry as ‘fundamentally evil’ but now views it as an ‘interesting physics problem’ (1988a: n.pag.).

Peter’s girlfriend threatens to leave him in the face of such ethical bankruptcy and, in the collaboration, there is continually a question of the role of gender in the discourse of knowledge, particularly the
possibility of a female ‘howl’ or protest. Switching back to ancient Greece, Brown and McKemmish use an excerpt from Christa Wolf with the story of a more ancient Peter and the fate of Hypatia. They recite Wolf’s account of how Hypatia, too threatening a figure as a female public intellectual, was killed by a mob led by Peter who proceed to ‘strip her stark naked and rend the flesh with sharp shells until her breath departed: they quartered her body ... and burned the quarters’ (1988a: n.pag.)

The voices note that ‘When we remember we are also always thinking of the present’ and that ‘When we write about the past we locate it in the present again.’ As with the introduction to ‘Howl’, there are contemporary variations or theses of Hypatia’s fate. One is the arrest of a woman who responds cheekily to a request to see her identity card: ‘Oh, I thought you wanted to fuck me.’ She is brutally held down by police while television crew film her, with the scene then shown all over West Germany the same evening. Hypatia’s teachings and death also resonate in an example concerning the failed suicide of a first year teacher, in which her vomiting and bleeding body is rendered abject. Till then, the teacher has kept up a public performance of authority while feeling the ‘rolling pressure/blood pressure’ of ‘getting everything done’. In response to a concerned inquiry following the incident, the teacher declares that ‘Everything’s fine. I’ve had a busy day. No trouble. No trouble at all.’ (1988: n.pag.)

One of the voices reflects that one person swallowing things may set off a wave of other people swallowing things. Thus incidents may find repetition in history through dramatic ritual, a ritual, they suggest, of ‘imitation’. What is set up is a problematising of the relationship between individual resistance and a collective unconsciousness. As Much Trouble as Talking cites Germaine Greer’s TV statement that school teachers were the only ones doing anything about social issues like unemployment, drugs, South Africa, Aboriginal Land rights, or the mining of uranium, but were unsupported. Brown and McKemmish’s collaboration would follow this but precede, almost predict, a wave of political debates that occurred soon after over New South Wales’ state education.

As Much Trouble as Talking foregrounds how people in a sense also become a part of an economy grounded on instrumentality and which, moreover, is largely mediated by the media. Another revision of ‘Howl’ states:

She watched some of the poets of her generation turn into journalists.
She said to a friend, ‘I have seen the best minds of my generation become journalists’ and they laughed. Some days later she heard her friend repeat this at a party. (1988a: n.pag.)

Just as young teachers are consumed by the system, funny lines are not owned but circulate in a world of blue jeans, Coke bottles, and ice cream. As one of the actors notes, ‘History throws its empty bottles out the window’ (1988a: n.pag.).

Within such a world, sexual desire also leaves one wanting more. Sex and love undoes scientific rationalism and individuality; it renders us strange to ourselves: ‘bodies have their own arguments and discussions. They make dramatic scenes, tonight: tears, melodramatics, haunted by ghosts, melancholy.’ In the condition of love, ‘We faint away from the body ... Into a borderline condition ... Love takes it away from ourselves and into ourselves. We faint in love. And, briefly, we dwell in the slim peripheries of consciousness.’ In love, mind and body become dissociated; the bodily cannot be analysed or voiced. Significantly, this state of borderline consciousness is shared by the collective pronoun, ‘we’ (1988a: n.pag.).

This condition also undoes temporal finitude:
Death is communal, entering the community of the dead, and these dead are always present in the heart. They are like presences. They may be the ground of love. An underground world. Maybe love comes to us from the dead. (1988a: n.pag.)

What is troublesome is that love takes away conscious choice and as such may be a state that in some ways resembles the instrumental subject of hegemony. At the same time, it resists investment, measurement, or possession. As Much Trouble as Talking foregrounds the complexity of acting against identity and of acting against rules and restraints that may limit the individual and society more generally. It does not offer solutions. Instead it offers a conversation ... and also the value of pausing, as the flow of ‘talk’ is halted by spaces of silence that foreground that which is unanswerable (and signalled in the script by lines like ‘pause pause pause’, ‘nothing much pause’, and ‘big pause, big pause, big pause’ (1988a: n.pag).

As Jacqueline Millner discerns, contemporary collaborative feminist performances are building upon the feminist archive of the 1970s and 1980s that this paper explores. They continue to draw attention to the role of sexual difference in the everyday while continuing a sense of playful humour reminiscent of the Lean Sisters and Generic Ghosts. The Sydney-based collective Brown Council (Frances Barrett, Kate Blackmore, Kelley Doley, and Di Smith) undertake endurance performances such as One-Hour Laugh (2009) which saw them wear costumes and dunce-caps reminiscent of clowns. Remembering Barbara Cleveland (2011) recuperates an Australian performance artist who practised in the 1970s and died in 1980, who may or may not be a real person. Their Mass Action: 137 Cakes in 90 Hours (2012) was a continual event over four days and nights with the mission of cooking all the recipes in the Country Women's Association cookbook, Jam Drops and Marble Cake. Staged within the space of the Country Women's Association headquarters, the performance foregrounded the history of women's work and can be seen to have resonances with Mothers' memories, others' memories. The Melbourne-based Hotham Street Ladies (Cassandra Chilton, Molly O'Shaughnessy, Sarah Parkes, Caroline Price and Lyndal Walker) have likewise focused on installations and street art that highlights aspects of women's lives (although their work is entirely food-based). Their You Beaut (2013) decorated a men's toilet cubicle at the Victorian College of the Arts with a bleeding uterus, its and the menstrual waste being made from lollies and glacé cherries. A second version of it was on display in Punt Road, Melbourne in 2014. Others such as Bakesy (2015), where the graffiti is done in icing, parody the now iconic male artist Banksy and the institutionalisation of street art. Both collaborative groups continue to deconstruct the forces that gender the author and to focus attention on the role of sexual difference in everyday life. Like The Lean Sisters and Generic Ghosts, there is an ex-centric solidarity and trouble-making tendency to these collaborative groups, which remains grounded in a utopic impulse of ‘instantiating social and political change’ (Schneider, qtd. by Millner 2015: 7).[iii]

[i] Pam Brown, Email to the author, 9 November 2015.

[ii] A further feminist pair of performers are Jessica Olivieri and Hayley Forward who form Parachute for Ladies.

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