

Bitch

The Politics of Angry

Women

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Kylie Murphy

ABSTRACT

‘Bitch: the Politics of Angry Women’ investigates the scholarly challenges and strengths in retheorising popular culture and feminism. It traces the connections and schisms between academic feminism and the feminism that punctuates popular culture. By tracing a series of specific bitch trajectories, this thesis accesses an archaeology of women’s battle to gain power.

Feminism is a large and brawling paradigm that struggles to incorporate a diversity of feminist voices. This thesis joins the fight. It argues that feminism is partly constituted through popular cultural representations. The separation between the academy and popular culture is damaging theoretically and politically. Academic feminism needs to work with the popular, as opposed to undermining or dismissing its relevancy. Cultural studies provides the tools necessary to interpret popular modes of feminism. It allows a consideration of the discourses of race, gender, age and class that plait their way through any construction of feminism. I do not present an easy identity politics. These bitches refuse simple narratives. The chapters clash and interrogate one another, allowing difference its own space.

I mine a series of sites for feminist meanings and potential, ranging across television, popular music, governmental politics, feminist books and journals, magazines and the popular press. The original contribution to knowledge that this thesis proffers is the refusal to demarcate between popular feminism and academic feminism. A new space is established in which to dialogue between the two.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Copyright License	i
Declaration	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	iv
Table of Contents	v
Introduction	1
<i>Part 1: Bitch Feminism</i>	
Tell me why?	25
Chapter 1: I'd Rather be a Bitch than a Bad Girl Any Day	28
<i>Part 2: Pop Culture Bitches</i>	
Choosing Cordelia	61
Chapter 2: Re-Vamp-ing Feminism: The Third Wave on the Small Screen	63
The Affect of Popular Music	102
Chapter 3: "I'm Sorry – I'm not Really Sorry": Authenticity and Feminism	104
Seeking Rap(port)	140
Chapter 4: Missy Elliott's Feminist Movements	142
<i>Part 3: The Conservative Bitch</i>	
Including the Original Celebrity Feminist	169
Chapter 5: Germaine Greer: a Feminist Provocateur	171
Lighting the Red Head Match	205
Chapter 6: Pauline Hanson: Bitch Nationalism	208
<i>Ending</i>	
Conclusion	243
Bibliography	258
Vision and Sound	293