

## Twenty-first century fumerist : Bridget Christie and the backlash against feminist comedy

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**21<sup>st</sup> Century Fumerist: Bridget Christie and the Backlash Against Feminist Comedy.**

**Keywords:** Stand-up comedy, feminism, postfeminism, female comedians, popular performance, Bridget Christie.

**Abstract:**

This article will engage with the work of comedian Bridget Christie in relation to definitions of feminist and postfeminist comedy. The year 2013 was a highpoint in coverage and acclaim for feminist comedy and this article will explore how, at a time when the majority of female comedians operate from a postfeminist standpoint, Christie's work seeks to politicise and galvanise her audience. The evolution of Christie's work will be explored in relation to the changes in her delivery style and the implications this has on the accessibility of her material to wider audiences. Additionally the response of the wider UK comedy industry to the higher profile of feminist comedy and the reassertion of patriarchal masculinity in comedy will be considered.

**Introduction**

In 2013 the UK saw several explicitly feminist shows win prestigious Edinburgh Festival prizes. Although arguably the very act of standing on a stage and expressing your opinions as a woman could be considered a feminist act, the winning shows of 2013 went further, covering complex issues and deconstructing fixed gender roles.

Adrienne Truscott's *Asking For It*, dissected rape culture and rape jokes. Bryony Kimmings' *Credible Likable Superstar Role Model* dealt with the lack of age appropriate role models for girls. Furthermore, objectification and the right to education for women were interrogated by Bridget Christie's *A Bic For Her*, which won the Foster's Prize for Best Show. Christie was only the third woman to be awarded the Best Comedy Show prize since the competitions establishment in 1981 and it is with Christie's work specifically that this article will concern itself.<sup>1</sup>

Although there have previously been many comedians engaging with feminism, stand-up and activist Kate Smurthwaite providing an example here, this peak in acclaim for feminist comedy in 2013 was also a high point in media consideration of modern feminisms. The profile of feminist campaigns such as Everyday Sexism, No More Page 3 and Vagenda Magazine<sup>2</sup>, coupled with Caroline Criado-Perez's campaign for women to appear on banknotes, resulted in widespread press interest in the exclusion of women's achievements from public recognition. The resulting Twitter storm surrounding Criado-Perez's campaign also highlighted the backlash women face when speaking out about such topics.<sup>3</sup>

This wider feminist context in Britain coincided with the success of a new generation of female-led comedy in America, with the critical attention gained by HBO's *Girls*

(2012-) provoking TV executives and journalists to ask where the UK's Lena Dunham-esq 'voice of a generation of women' would come from?<sup>4</sup> The continued success of Tina Fey, Amy Poehler and the rising star of Amy Schumer contributed to a perceived disparity between the success of funny women in America and the UK.

So how did Bridget Christie, who started performing stand-up in 2004, and who had created comedy in various different guises, including dressed as deceased male monarchs and an ant, find herself the popular media's figurehead for British feminism and comedy?

It is relevant to add at this point that Christie is a comedian, not a female comedian or a feminist comedian – a comedian. This article will look at her work in relation to feminism, and will reference her gender identity, but her right to define as a comic without further caveat is an important thing to consider. The right to be considered a comedian (rather than a female-comedian) is central to current debates around women and comedy and this point is always worth restating. Gender should not be considered a genre.

The arresting thing about Christie's work is the explicitly feminist content of her material and it is upon this aspect of her work that this article will focus. Barreca, writing about the strategic use of female humour, points out that "The writer Kate Clinton has come up with a compact word for feminist humourists – 'Fumerist' - because it captures being funny and wanting to burn the house down all at once." (Barreca 2013, 178). Christie conforms to this idea in the way her comedy both deals with feminist issues and also clearly displays her anger at the injustices and inequalities experienced by women. Just as comedy can help maintain stereotypes, so too it can be used to unpick and undermine them, as Willett, Willett and Sherman articulate "Just as ridicule and humor provide an arsenal of tools that can reinforce these norms and practices, so too this arsenal can tear those conventions down." (Willett, Willett and Sherman 2012, 230). Christie sets about this tearing down with relish.

### **Evolving from Ant to Woman**

Christie has performed an Edinburgh Festival solo show every year since 2006. Her approach, especially that of her earlier shows, displays a heavy influence from the alternative comedy scene of the early 1980s, significantly in the more surreal and absurd aspects of her earlier character comedy. Of this period Friedman observes that "Arguably the most significant high-art influence on alternative comedy was the tradition of surrealism and absurdism derived from visual art and Theatre of the Absurd." (Friedman 2009, 20). It is clear how Friedman's comments regarding the surrealist influence on the alternative movement also has a relevance to Christie's earlier comedy in her use of costume, characterisation and subject matter.

Although it is Christie's most recent work that has resulted in her popularly being termed a 'feminist comedian' the clearest example of how her approach has evolved, whilst maintaining a focus on feminist issues, is in the comparison of her 2010 show *A. Ant* and her current style evident in *A Bic for Her* (2013), *Ungrateful Woman* (2014), *A Book For Her* (2015) and most recently *Because You Demanded It* (2016).

Both her earlier work and more recent shows articulate feminist positions but in very different ways.

Christie's show *A.Ant* dealt with the complexities of being a woman on the live comedy circuit. Rather than tackle this issue head on however, Christie concocted the premise of being an ant, dressing in a homemade costume and angrily demanding equality for ant comics working on the circuit. A.Ant (the character) was livid at the compere for introducing them to the stage as an 'ant' comedian, complaining that this, as well as playing music by Adam Ant as they took to the stage, simply gave the audience a chance to recall and process all their preconceptions about ants not being funny. To quote her act "It's hard for us, okay? Even before an ant has got to the microphone you've already made assumptions." (Christie, 2015, 71). The character went on to make the point that there are lots of ants working on the circuit, performing many different genres of comedy, and that the endless debate about whether ants could be funny, or that they all say the same things, was simple "ant-ism". Such arguments certainly ring true for the treatment and context many human female comedians face on the current circuit.

Through the character of A.Ant, Christie managed to tackle some really provocative and political points about female comedians, including the preconceptions of an audience, the seemingly relentless "are women funny" debate, and the sexism still rife on the circuit. The feminism underlying this performance was not made explicit as all points were made through the premise of an ant comedian, and at no point did she break character and deconstruct her argument. By removing the gender stereotypes and replacing them with insects, this enabled the prejudice described to be laid bare and ridiculed by all present, irrespective of the audiences' own gender identity. Humour provided a way to challenge the gender stereotypes at play in relation to performed comedy.

This performance was an effective way to challenge some of the stereotypes at play in a comedy club environment, a tricky thing to attempt, let alone achieve, without falling into a "bites the hand that feeds you" scenario. In the case of the character of A.Ant however, the more surreal nature of the delivery potentially obscured the message and prevented it from being accessible to wider audiences. I first saw Christie perform as A.Ant as part of Robin Ince's *School for Gifted Children* at Bloomsbury Theatre, London on 29th March 2010 and was so willing to accept the premise of the performance, the concept of an ant comedian, that I almost missed the underlying critique of gender stereotypes completely.

Christie's move away from more surreal strategies coincided with her increased presence on BBC Radio 4 comedy shows, culminating in the first series of her own radio series *Bridget Christie Minds the Gap*, which was broadcast in April 2013. Arguably the constraints of radio provided an opportunity to explore less visual ways of conveying comic meaning to an audience. The topic of her radio show, which was re-commissioned for a second series broadcast in 2015, was also gender equality and formed the foundation of her subsequent live work.

Christie's more recent work and the shows that have garnered the most critical acclaim, and subsequently reached her biggest audience, have been delivered without costume or characterisation. Christie performs as an exaggerated version of herself,

leaving, as Double articulates in his broader discussion of the stand-up personality spectrum, “the dividing line between performer and persona unclear” (Double, 2014, 126). With this revised approach there is no chance of misinterpreting or missing the message.

The tone and style used for both 2013’s *A Bic For Her*, 2014’s follow up *Ungrateful Woman*, and *A Book For Her*, in 2015, is much more akin to mainstream stand-up in its delivery style. The material is presented as Christie’s own attitudes and opinions and delivered by a performed version of ‘Bridget Christie’. This performed nature of her identity is acknowledged at the start of *A Bic For Her* when she introduces herself to the audience as a comedian, wife, mother and so on, commenting that she means different things to different people, and highlighting her awareness of the cultural connotations of these traditional female roles.

Although the content of these shows is overtly feminist, in tackling complex emotive subjects such as rape and domestic violence, the trick Christie has mastered is to make these topics humorous. She manages to ensure the show does not feel like a lecture whilst at the same time not belittling or lessening the severity of the subjects being covered.

Christie has not completely rejected her old approach, still using her expressive physicality and ability to conjure up characters to further her points. For example this can be seen in a section of *A Bic For Her* describing the Brontë sisters’ struggles to use a ‘man’s pen’. The sisters lament the lack of gender specific writing tools (satirising the notion that stationary company Bic thought that creating a pen specifically for women would be a good idea). Christie inhabits the roles of the three Brontë sisters and their brother Branwell, with voices and mime. Her continued physicality and clowning style are also equally evident in the same show when graphically acting out Sir Stirling Moss’s imagined funeral.

Despite the critique of gender stereotyping being much clearer than in previous shows, Christie does not underestimate the audience’s abilities to still make connections themselves. A telling example of this comes in her use of audience interaction to get a point across. As part of *A Bic For Her*, after outlining her issues with the depictions of sexualised female nudity on both page three of national newspaper *The Sun* and in “lad’s mags”, and putting forward the idea that these images of women should require opting-in rather than opting-out, Christie asks the male audience members “which magazine has the best women?”. By this stage in the show the audience are wise to the problematic nature of these magazines and so Christie makes it clear that there is a prize to be won and the male audience members will not get in trouble for answering.

Rather than challenge the men responding, she does indeed reward them. This is done with an acute awareness that their very presence in the room this far into the show means that potentially they already agree with her message. The prize is revealed as a direct debit donation form for *Refuge* (a charity that works with women in need of assistance as a result of domestic violence). She presents this in a stamped addressed return envelope. The audience is left to make the link: that the dehumanising effects of depicting women as sex objects potentially contribute to a culture of abuse and

domestic violence. Enabling the audience to participate individually and draw their own conclusions makes the moment more powerful.

### **Feminist rather than postfeminist**

At a time when increasing numbers of female comics are entering the industry, and in the context of multiple and sometimes contradictory notions of feminism, the question that cannot be avoided is what makes Christie's comedy feminist rather than postfeminist in tone and content?

As Shifman and Lemish argue in their analysis of Internet humour, it is vital to distinguish not only between sexist and feminist humour but also between feminist and postfeminist humour, as this is another aspect of how comedy in the current context engages with notions of gender difference. This is especially relevant to the current UK circuit where the number of women in the industry has significantly increased in recent years.<sup>5</sup> Shifman and Lemish comment that:

The analysis of humour on gender, along the axis running from conservative/sexist to subversive/feminist is important and fundamental. However, we believe that in order to properly assess contemporary humour, a third construct – postfeminist humour – must be conceptualized and assessed. (Shifman and Lemish 2010, 872)

The attributes of postfeminist humour outlined by Shifman and Lemish (2010, 875), which are in line with analysis of postfeminist media cultures, can be summarized as follows;

- A renewed focus on gender differences.
- The targeting of both men and women rather than just one gender, the de-politicisation of feminist concepts - the “context of postfeminist humour is the world of leisure and consumption rather than politics or work.” (Shifman and Lemish, 2010, 875)
- Focus on the individual, the female body and “sexuality as a means of empowerment and goal achievement.” (Shifman and Lemish, 2010, 875)

Although it is possible for comedians of any gender identity to be sexist in their material, the comedy on the current circuit operates predominantly at the postfeminist end of this proposed axis.

Cultural theorist Angela McRobbie comments that “in popular culture there is a process which says feminism is no longer needed, it is now common sense, and as such it is something young women can do without.” (McRobbie, 2009, 8). Christie fully articulates her own position in relation to feminism in Chapter 6 of *A Book For Her* (2015). Christie clearly acknowledges within this section of her writing, as she does within her live performances, the long complex history of women's fight for equal rights and crucially, in respect of descriptions of postfeminism, that the task is far from over.

In contrast to Christie, arguably the majority of female comedians working on the circuit operate from a postfeminist standpoint where gender equality is seen, as

McRobbie articulates, as common sense. Recent examples of postfeminist comedy can be found in Luisa Omielan's commercially and critically successful show *What Would Beyoncé Do?* (2012/13) which focused on empowering life-lessons following a traumatic relationship break-up. This is also true of Katherine Ryan's *Glam Role Model* (2014), which culminated in the story of her ex-partner cheating with a glamour model, and also operates from a self-improvement and empowerment perspective.

It is important here to note that I am not in any way opposed to this style of comedy, having found both Omielan and Ryan's shows humorous and inspiring, but one can observe a reductionist focus on the individual in relation to bigger issues such as body image. The focus on the personal rather than political is one of the defining characteristics of postfeminist sensibilities, as Rosalind Gill notes

One of the most striking aspects of postfeminist media culture is its obsessive preoccupation with the body. In a shift from earlier representational practices, it appears that femininity is defined as a bodily property rather than a social, structural or psychological one. (Gill, 2007, 149)

Although the body as a site of protest has long been an area of feminist concern, it is the de-politicisation of the body as a tool of resistance to gender norms that is evident in these shows. Omielan regularly eludes to a "natural" difference between men and women, often with reference to behaviour in relationships. Likewise, Ryan focuses on the impact that glamour modelling and revenge porn<sup>6</sup> has had directly on her own life rather than the wider issues around objectification of women, which is the definitive focus of Christie's work.

The differences between these comedians' approaches is epitomised in the way in which each handles, at some stage in their shows, the topic of popular singer Beyoncé. Ryan and Omielan focus on Beyoncé's empowerment through the use of her body, referencing both the "Crazy in Love" (2003) dancing style and the "Single Ladies (Put a Ring on It)" (2008) hand gesture – without any deconstruction of the gesture or the wider cultural connotations around marriage and "ownership" of women.<sup>7</sup>

Christie also engaged with the star text of Beyoncé in *A Bic For Her*, in a time before Beyoncé's public appropriation of the term feminist, but did so from an alternate perspective.<sup>8</sup> Christie reminds us how we can respect women's achievements and empowerment without having to claim those achievements for feminism. She elaborates this idea with a discussion of Margaret Thatcher, whose historical position as a powerful woman is undeniable, despite her vehement public opposition of feminism, which she famously described as 'poison'.<sup>9</sup> Therefore we can acknowledge that having a woman in a position of power can be useful in terms of representation, the need for women to see these achievements as attainable, however not every woman in power will be working towards equality for others. Christie is addressing women and men in her work and calling for collective action to relieve both genders of the burden of stereotypical notions of difference, rather than dealing in the personal 'self improvement' narrative focused on in modern postfeminist media and evidenced in the work of her contemporaries, including those explored above. However just as quickly as feminists such as Christie are challenging and confronting stereotypes

other comedians, often with the support of large media companies, are busy rebuilding them.

### **An (un)equal and opposite reaction**

The increased profile of feminist thought and feminist comedy has, as with every step forward for women into male dominated areas, engendered a backlash. Live comedy has historically been male dominated and although women have made significant headway, especially since the 1980s alternative comedy movement, both the live circuit and televised comedy continues to be overwhelmingly male. Outside of performed comedy the cultural association between men and humour, or “banter”, continues to hold strong, and the caveats of “just joking” or “a bit of fun” are still regularly wheeled out as a defence for problematic sexist comments in a range of social and political situations. Gill comments that “most significantly [...] in postfeminist media culture irony has become a way of ‘having it both ways’, of expressing sexist, homophobic or otherwise unpalatable sentiments in an ironized form, whilst claiming this was not actually ‘meant’.” (Gill 2007, 159).

So, just as Christie’s work with humour vocalises the problems faced by women and attempts to engage both men and women as equals, several comedians have taken an approach that re-establishes the divide between men and women and attempts to reassert a hierarchy of active males and passive females.

We can consider this from an industrial perspective. Lindsey German in *Material Girls: Women, Men and Work* (2007) analysed women’s struggle for inclusion within the paid labour sector and work outside the home. German describes how the increased participation of women in the workplace, across all industries, has historically provoked men to reassess their identities and the concept of masculinity.

So we see the reassertion of traditional male values, at least amongst a layer of men: lap dancing clubs, lad magazines, an insidious campaign against the notion of ‘date rape’, a resurgence of sexist language, and continuing high levels of violence against individual women. (German 2007, 115)

This holds true for the British comedy industry. The inclusion of women into this competitive and predominantly male industry has resulted in the crisis of male identity and a reassertion of traditional masculinity, now being played out through reactionary humour.

The 2014 controversies surrounding comedian Dapper Laughs provides us with the ultimate example of this. He could arguably be referred to as the Anti-Christie. Having attracted thousands of followers by vlogging online before transferring to what would be a brief stint on ITV2 (September to November 2014), Dapper’s work was allegedly presented as a satirical take on modern “lad culture” with the above mentioned caveats. However, much of his work was indistinguishable from straightforward sexism. The telling comparisons to real life Pick Up Artists such as the much talked about Julien Blanc,<sup>10</sup> only highlights that the distance between the real behaviour and the ‘satirical, exaggerated behaviour’ was simply too close to call or indeed non-existent.



Whilst receiving heavy criticism, and in reaction to an online petition from other comics and members of the public for ITV2 to remove him from broadcast, statements were often released by the broadcaster and Dapper himself, real name Daniel O'Reilly, in line with the 'not actually meant' argument Gill articulates in her analysis of postfeminist media culture. Although character-based satire is a very successful and well-loved tradition within the British stand-up scene, one can only assume that there was insufficient consideration by the broadcaster as to whether the irony would be clear to the television audience, or whether the humour would be read on a less sophisticated level.

Al Murray's Pub Landlord character provides a useful counterpoint to Dapper. Murray has faced similar criticism in the past in relation to the ways his performances can be read on multiple levels.<sup>11</sup> Both performers are playing with stereotypes, but whereas Dapper's work seemed to advocate that others act in a similar way to his character, the Pub Landlord does not seem to be advocating specific behaviour from his audience (beyond maybe just enforcing the consumption of wine and beer along gendered lines?). Murray is clearly provoking his audience to ridicule the Pub Landlord's out-dated views, and there is sufficient distance between Al Murray the comic, and this performed character for him to achieve this, and so no caveat is therefore necessary. For Dapper's comedy the women targeted by his pick up lines or "antics" were the butt of the jokes rather than Dapper himself. Further complexity arose as the audience were unaware of any discrepancy between the comic, Daniel O'Reilly, and the character of Dapper Laughs. The distance between performer and character, and the way in which Murray's act does not incite others to behave in a similar way, are crucial factors in understanding how Murray's work, which has been regularly televised, is more clearly read by an audience as satire.

*Dapper Laugh's On The Pull* (2014) involved Dapper giving members of the public dating advice and demonstrating behaviours (often in line with out-dated gendered stereotypes) that they could adopt to attract partners. Murray's work has been a longstanding fixture on the UK circuit, winning the Edinburgh Comedy Award for Best Comedy Show back in 1999, and can be understood as part of the challenge to patriarchal norms through ridicule present in much post-alternative movement humour. In contrast Dapper's work, arriving in the context of 2014, highlights a more aggressive insistence of old school macho humour. This demonstrates German's argument that traditional masculinity seeks to reassert itself in the wake of increased gender diversity in workforces, in this instance specifically through humour and in reaction to the increasing inclusivity of the British comedy circuit.

Due to a public outcry regarding a video clip of Dapper addressing the media criticism of his work in one of his live shows, and his comment to a female audience member that she was "gagging for a rape", ITV finally bowed to pressure and dropped the ITV2 show. Whilst his comments in his live shows were considered by ITV as part of the decision to drop the show, they still maintained that the content of *Dapper Laugh's On The Pull*, his television show, was "carefully considered and compiled".<sup>12</sup>

However, if we reflect on the statement made by ITV (and the production companies Hungry Bear Media and Big Minded) initially announcing the commissioning of this series, it is clear they were well aware of the problematic aspects of his act. With Kate

Maddigan, the commissioning editor from ITV, saying “I’m excited to bring him and his risqué brand of humour to ITV2”.<sup>13</sup> In this statement both producers from both Hungry Bear and Big Minded articulate their excitement at having been given the opportunity to share Dapper’s work with a wider audience. The press release signs off with the following statement “Dapper Laughs said, ‘I can’t wait to bring my brand of comedy to the ITV2 viewers, who says you can’t sleep your way to the top.’”

Why is this backlash against feminist comedy important to consider? It could be argued that this form of comedy could simply be articulating a differing, perhaps more distinctly ‘young male’ sense of humour. However, this position runs into problems when we consider the vehicles afforded Christie and Dapper’s humour and the inequality between them. Christie’s non-live work has so far been confined to those areas sometimes referred to as ‘niche feminism’ - the pages of *The Guardian* (for which she has previously written several columns), and BBC Radio 4 for example. By televising Dapper’s work, however briefly, it created the idea of endorsement, and enabled it to access a much wider populist audience not currently afforded to feminist humour.

The inclusion of Christie’s humour into mainstream formats has been much trickier to achieve, as epitomised by the example of her problematic inclusion into panel shows. On 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2014 Christie was a panellist on the long running BBC satirical panel show, *Have I Got News For You?* This was her first appearance on the show. In a poignant echo of the complaints made by the character A.Ant about poor introductions effecting audience’s pre-conceptions, Christie’s position was undermined before she had even said a word.

Christie’s introduction welcoming her onto the show was delivered by the guest host that week comedian Jack Dee, and was as follows “On Ian’s team tonight is a comedian who collected the Foster’s Comedy Award wearing a T-Shirt saying No More Page 3<sup>14</sup>, and she got an extra round of applause when she took it off. Please welcome Bridget Christie.”

Christie protested this introduction at the time and has been quoted in an interview with *The Guardian* as saying she will never return to the show, asking “Have they ever introduced a male comedian with a joke about his cock?”<sup>15</sup> This comment at the start of the show immediately cast Christie as an outsider, and focused on her difference, her gender and her feminism, rather than her status as a comedian. The joke not only undermined Christie as an individual but also made light of a campaign with serious objectives.

The rest of the show effectively illustrated how Christie’s position on rights for women has the potential to make it difficult for her to contribute to shows dealing with politics and the media, as so much of this broadcast culture is from an ‘old school’ patriarchal perspective. For example at the time of the recording and broadcast of this episode of *Have I Got News For You?* the trial of Max Clifford, and Operation Yewtree, were in the news and therefore were covered as part of the show.<sup>16</sup> Christie’s live comedy is diametrically opposed to humour that makes light of the impact of sexual harassment or assault and therefore it would understandably have been difficult to participate in this kind of humour without compromising her views or comic persona.<sup>17</sup>

## Conclusion

The importance of accessing wider audiences through televised work is clear 'Given that social norms shape cognitive habits, the unravelling and disrupting of conventional norms through ridicule might free our thinking as well' (Willett, Willett and Sherman 2012, 218)

The norms that are in need of disruption, in order for feminism to have a wider voice within comedy programming, are not just the predominantly white male sense of humour these shows perpetuate. It is also a matter of formats. If existing panel shows cannot accommodate the humour of arguably one of the most successful female comedians of recent years, then maybe the existing formats are also partially the issue?

Christie's discussion of how we can respect women's achievements without claiming them for the feminist cause becomes relevant in terms of the comedy industry. Just as we can admire the achievements of female comedians working across the circuit today for their success within a male dominated industry, it is clear that they are not necessarily using their comedy to promote feminist issues or challenge existing stereotypes about women. This is what makes Christie a true feminist for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Not only can we respect her achievement within her sector but we can also see how she is using her anger and humour to challenge structures and ideas that impact all women and men negatively, and to advocate vociferously for further equality.

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<sup>1</sup> Since 1981 when the first Best Comedy Show prize was awarded there have only been 16 instances of solos shows by women being nominated for the award. One comedian alone, Josie Long, accounts for 3 of those nominations.

<sup>2</sup> More information on these projects can be found using the following links. See <http://everydaysexism.com> , <http://nomorepage3.org> , <http://vagendamagazine.com> (accessed 28/2/16)

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/dec/19/stories-of-2013-caroline-criado-perez-twitter> (accessed 28/2/16)

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2014/may/30/where-is-britains-lena-dunham> (accessed 4/3/16)

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/aug/01/edinburgh-fringe-number-female-standups-comics-women> (accessed 28/2/16)

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of revenge porn see Stroud, S. (2014) The Dark Side of the Online Self: A Pragmatist Critique of the Growing Plague of Revenge Porn. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*. 29:3: 168-183.

<sup>7</sup> Miranda Hart also made use of the cultural phenomenon of Beyoncé in her *My, What I Call, Live Show* in 2014. Hart ended her show, which I saw at the Manchester Arena on March 14th 2014, by deriving humour from her physical differences from Beyoncé. Hart dressed and danced in Beyoncé's style to "Crazy in Love". Again the focus was on the individual, in this case the discrepancy between the "average" woman (Hart) and the idealized body and confidence of this modern day icon (Beyoncé).

<sup>8</sup> Christie adapted material on Beyoncé within subsequent performances of *A Bic For Her* in order to accommodate the changes in Beyoncé's publicly expressed opinions on the subject.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.newstatesman.com/archive/2013/04/margaret-thatcher-feminist-icon> (accessed 3/3/16)

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/julien-blanc-is-a-racist-sexual-predator-teaching-men-to-prey-on-women-like-me-he-must-be-stopped-9843939.html> (accessed 2/1/16)

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<sup>11</sup> See Oliver Double's discussion of the character comedy personality spectrum and how Al Murray's character relates to this in Double, O. (2014) *Getting The Joke: The Inner Workings of Stand-Up Comedy*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. London. Bloomsbury. Pp 124-126 and 276-279.

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/news/dapper-laughs-itv-under-fire-over-dating-show-vloggers-rape-comedy-routine-9852224.html>, (accessed 2/1/16)

<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.itv.com/presscentre/press-releases/dapper-laughs-pull> (accessed 2/1/16)

<sup>14</sup> The No More Page Three campaign challenges the use of sexualized images of topless female models on page three of national newspaper The Sun. See <https://nomorepage3.wordpress.com/faqs/> (accessed 28/2/16)

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2014/aug/29/bridget-christie-trickery-hiding-serious-bits-comic-framework> (accessed 2/1/16)

<sup>16</sup> The (at time of writing) on-going work of the government's enquiry into historic cases of sexual abuse, Operation Yewtree, and the prosecutions in the light of findings, highlights how the British entertainment industry has historically failed to protect the vulnerable or take allegations of sexual harassment and abuses of power seriously. <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/yewtree-report-giving-victims-voice-jimmy-savile.pdf> (accessed 20/8/15)

<sup>17</sup> Christie was nominated for the British Comedy Awards Best Female TV Comic for her one appearance on television in 2014 (on *Have I Got News for You?*). This could be read in relation to the way in which the wider industry wishes to be understood as inclusive whilst actively reinforcing a gender divide. Achieved by othering women when they do appear on TV panel shows, both in terms of the introductions they receive, which mark them out as different from the established male panelists, and in their gender-specific categorisation for the comedy awards.