

Feminist Zines:
Cutting and Pasting a New Wave

by

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Abstract

This thesis describes how third-wave feminist zines exemplify the contradictions inherent in and embraced by third-wave feminists. Zines are reflective of third-wave feminists' cultural context, shaped both by second-wave feminism and the current culturally and economically globalized society. Influenced in part by the individualism promoted in a hyper-capitalist society, feminist zinesters are unabashedly individualistic. However, the focus on the personal is still connected to the political, as feminist zinesters, after personal reflection, turn outwards and engage in political activism. Employing a critical discourse analysis, I analyzed seventy Canadian third-wave feminist zines, through an intertextual and a linguistic analysis.

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Dedication

For my sister Stephanie, who taught me feminism when we were little cowgirls wearing Carhardts.

Chapter 1: Introduction/ Problematic: Feminist Clicks in a Gynarchial Cacophony

Gloria Steinem termed the ‘feminist click’ as the moment of self-awareness and radicalization (Crosbie: 1997). While it has been noted that the third-wave feminist context has been altered by the taken for granted feminist presence, feminist ‘clicks’ are not taken for granted. Not all contemporary young women define themselves as feminists. Within a feminist-infused context, personal, individual reflection induces the ‘click’. Barbara Findlen (1995) observes that, “[i]ndividual women’s experiences of sexism have always been an important basis for political awareness and action” (xv). Zines [pronounced Zeens], are do- it- yourself (DIY) personal publications which are usually a series of stapled pages containing the creators’ personal politics, art and general musings. Stephen Duncombe (1997) broadly defines zines as, “noncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish and distribute by themselves” (6). Zines represent one site of feminist clicking. Through writing their personal experiences of sexism and their individualized injustices women come to embrace and in the process continue to define feminism. The clicks in zine form most often take the shape of ‘womanifestos’. Feminists are experiencing their radicalizing clicks because:

I will proudly wear a pin emblazoned with flashing pink neon lights that spell out HUMANIST when women in our world are treated as humans. What I mean is: I don’t believe that it is human for a nine-year old girl to starve herself, waste her childhood so that she can look like her idol, who is a fashion model (*Discharge*)

We went to a music teacher every Sunday. I don’t know when it started but this monster would stand behind one of us as we played the violin. He would press and rub himself against the victim while feeling for developing breasts. We felt

helpless to stop him...The auto insurance man said I could not use my maiden name on my insurance policy. I had to use my husband's last name. I complained to the main office and was told there was no such policy. (*Let it be known* #3).

Pride is said to be a sin...doctors are deemed to know more about my body than I do...even fun stuff like hackey sack and DJing are male-dominated...sex and desire are where the feminine becomes valuable (*Queer Zine Morphodite*).

This inquiry explores how Canadian third-wave feminists use self-published zines to mediate, dialogue with, and resist complex pressures and privileges in a discursively produced world. Zines are some of the texts of third-wave feminisms. The style of zines, the inspirations that fuel zine creation and their contents all speak to the current context of feminism and the issues and passions of young Canadian feminists.

Within this thesis, third-wave feminism refers to a generational difference from second-wave feminists who were active in the 1960s and 1970s. Third-wave feminists were born after 1963 (Heywood and Drake 1997). Just like second-wave feminisms, there is not a uniform ideological stance amongst third-wave feminists. This term is a reference to a generation of pro-women women. Within third-wave feminism there are numerous contradictions and debates that will be explored. Through a study of third-wave feminist zines I am studying one form of third-wave feminism; zine feminism, the feminisms accessible through these underground publications created by certain women in certain contexts. While zine feminism is only one representation of third-wave feminism it does speak to some of the realities of the context, issues and identities of third-wave feminisms more generally.

Zines, as personal/political publications work at the junctures of many of the complexities and contradictions of third-wave feminism. They are reverent of feminist history, while making active assertions of the coming of a new wave. Feminist zines

adore popular culture while simultaneously critiquing it. They speak loudly and often about inclusiveness while, by focusing almost primarily on personal experiences, maintain many White, classist norms. Through a critical discourse analysis of feminist zines, the contradictions, complexities and oscillations between subjectivity, discourse, and texts will be explored. Chapter 2 will explore how critical discourse analysis, which involves an intertextual and linguistic analysis, is an appropriate tool for this research problem.

With the explosion of feminist popular culture in the 1990s, exemplified by the Riot Grrrl movement, and the co-opted 'girl power' represented by the Spice Girls, and the popular icons of Bridget Jones, mainstream culture has mistakenly come to understand third-wave feminism as a movement with much style and little substance, what Baumgartner and Richards (2000) have called the "jell-O shot versions of feminism" (56). Second-wave feminists and popular culture have misunderstood 'celebrity feminism' to be representative of third-wave feminist thought and activity. In Chapter 3, I will explore how second-wave and third-wave feminists are speaking past each other by relying on media representations of their generations.

Chapter 4 encompasses the linguistic analysis of this project. Bricolage, detournement, humour, fun, and personal narratives all work to create texts which act to resist and embrace aspects of our current cultural context. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 encompass the intertextual analysis of this thesis. Feminist zinesters draw from and rearticulate orders of discourse which affect their identities and their politics. Third-wave feminism is situated within a larger global justice movement and environmental movement and is heavily shaped by second-wave feminism. These movements provide language, action,

and politics from which third-wave feminists can positively draw. Other aspects that shape feminists' identities and politics are: popular culture, academia, and the workforce. The response to and use of these orders of discourse is studied in Chapter 5.

Chapter 6 discusses how feminist zinesters write from their individual subjectivities by writing about health, body image, and violence against women. In Chapter 7, the multiple axes of identity are explored as zinesters write about race, class, ability, age, sexualities and masculinity. While their writings are situated within their own experiences, their experiences and the framing of their experiences are derived from various orders of discourse available to them. Second-wave writings on the interconnections of race and gender, and the opening up of the dialogue surrounding alternative sexualities are discourses which allow for multiple feminist identities.

In Chapter 8, the data from these texts is used to demonstrate how postmodernism comprises the theoretical underpinnings of third-wave zine feminism resulting in highly personal forms of resistance. This Chapter explores the limits and potential limitlessness of individual acts of resistance.

Most of the third-wave feminist anthologies recently published: *to be real* (1995), *Listen Up* (1995), *Colonize This!* (2002) and *The Fire This Time* (2004), are all composed of personal narratives. It has also been noted that third-wave feminist cultural productions are largely expressions of individual experiences (Siegel 1997, Harde 2003, Shugart 2001). Some argue that with third-wave feminists, to an extent, the personal outweighs the political (Bell 2002, Murray 1997). Feminist zines, while firmly situated in personal experiences, also demonstrate active connections to political action.

The purpose of this discourse analysis is to uncover and strive to understand the identity formation processes of Canadian third-wave feminists as presented through self-published feminist zines. Through a critical discourse analysis, I explore the issues, passions and actions of Canadian third-wave feminists. I also explore how the style and content of feminist zines is indicative of a new wave of feminist thought and action which is both based on the successes of previous feminist generations, and situated in a contemporary media-saturated context.

Chapter 2: Methodology: Discourse Analysis

Data Analysis : Critical Discourse Analysis

Texts, Discourse, Femininity, Identity

In this study I explore how zines are one site where third-wave feminism is articulated. For that reason, Fairclough's "critical discourse analysis" (CDA) and Stuart Hall's use of articulation, which both engage in an understanding of the relationships between text, discourse and social change, are useful frameworks.

Norman Fairclough understands discourse as strongly embedded in texts. Fairclough (1995: 77) also argues that ideological change is a result of discursive struggles. Possibilities for discursive change therefore lie within the production, consumption and distribution of texts.

I am using Stuart Hall and his writings on articulation to understand how change through texts is possible. Stuart Hall (1986) defines an articulation as "the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time" (141). He continues to explain, "Since those articulations are not inevitable, not necessary, they can potentially be transformed" (142). The link which connects social forces to ideologies is the space where change is possible. Connecting old social forces to new connotations is a rearticulation.

Through critical discourse analysis (CDA), I have examined these zines as dialogical, textual means of resistance. Fairclough views orders of discourse as aspects of a broader Gramscian notion of hegemony. He (1995) asserts:

[h]egemony is a process at the societal level, whereas most discourse has a more local character, being located in or on the edges of particular institutions- the family, schools, neighbourhoods, workplaces, courts of law etc (78).

For Fairclough (1995), change is possible at the discursive level: “discoursal practice is a facet of struggle which contributes in varying degrees to the reproduction or transformation of the existing order of discourse, and through that of existing social and power relations” (77). Zines, as counter-hegemonic texts work at the discursive level through affecting social and power relations by means of creating constant rearticulations.

Gramsci explains that in counter-hegemonic texts, “the subordinate class brings to this ‘theatre of struggle’ a repertoire of strategies and responses- ways of coping as well as ways of resisting” (in Hall 1993:295). This repertoire he refers to as a “repertoire of resistance”. A repertoire of resistance does not privilege class struggle, acknowledging the myriad causes and modes of resistance. Hall (1993) explains that following Gramsci, “the struggle of meaning did not take the form of substituting one, self-sufficient class language for another, but of the disarticulation and rearticulation of different ideological accentings within the same sign” (296). Zinesters use the signs which are accessible to them, to construct new or altered meanings. In this way, Hall’s articulation is dialogical, using and incorporating pre-existing meanings in forms of cultural resistance. Counter-hegemonic texts rearticulate signs from existing orders of discourse in order to create dialogical articulations of meaning. The signs which are borrowed and re-articulated are both ideational and stylistic, thus necessitating an intertextual and linguistic discourse analysis.

Fairclough and Hall both argue that through re-articulations and discursive practices which lead to ideological change, new subject positions are created. Hall (1986) writes,

It is the articulation, the non-necessary link, between a social force which is making itself, and the ideology or conceptions of the world which makes intelligible the process they are going through, which begins to bring onto the historical stage a new social position and political position, a new set of social and political subjects (144).

Norman Fairclough (1995) writes that “discourse contributes to the creation and constant recreation of the relations, subjects (as recognized in the Althusserian concept of interpellation) and objects which populate the social world” (73). Through writing, identities evolve. This is true for zine creation. Stephen Duncombe (1997) writes that “for zine writers, the authentic self is not some primal, fixed identity that precedes them; it is something flexible and mutable that they fashion existentially; out of their experiences” (39).

Identifying as a woman is also a discursive production (Smith 1990). Dorothy Smith (1990) argues that the textually mediated discourse of femininity affects women’s identities, their subjectivities and their relations to themselves.

In the context of the discourse of femininity, a distinctive relation to self arises: not as sex objects so much as body to be transformed, an object of work, even of a craft. Participating in the discourse of femininity is also a practical relation of a woman to herself as object (Smith 1990: 187).

With femininity as a discursively produced gender, there is room for change — space for rearticulation. Understandings of femininity and its contingents of race, age, ability, class, sexuality, are re-articulated in zines, which may be textual acts of subversion. Through

the textual production of zines, third-wave feminists are re-articulating feminism and femininity. I argue that in effect they are also defining their fluctuating selves.

By using Hall's notion of articulation and Fairclough's critical discourse analysis, I am able to explore the many ways in which feminist zines are carving out new discursive spaces for women. Fairclough's critical discourse analysis is comprised of two parts: a linguistic analysis and an intertextual analysis.

Linguistic Analysis

Tami Spry (2001) declares: "As a woman's feet are bound in the unnatural form of the high heel, so are her voices and the voices of 'othereds' bound by the monoform of academes" (720). In the form of zines, women are finding ways to unbind their voices, rejecting patriarchal restrictive modes of writing in favor of the freedom of autobiographical, bricolage style writing and creating. Traditionally, the linguistic systems most available to women were systems made by men. The writing in feminist zines is, like other feminist writing, working to "establish a discourse that would no longer be defined by the phallacy of male meaning" (Felman in Cameron 1998: 8).

In a linguistic analysis, "texts selectively draw from linguistic systems" (Fairclough 1999: 184). Style, form or the text's "texture" is central to the analysis (Fairclough 1999: 184). The deconstructive, bricolage style of zines and the unique ways in which feminist zinesters use language to express themselves defines to an extent the transformative potential of the zines. In the genre of zines, many linguistic systems are drawn upon. In a linguistic analysis, communicative events are examined to explore: "in what ways is this communicative event normative, drawing upon familiar types and formats, and in what ways is it creative, using old resources in new ways?" (Fairclough

1995: 311). While in some instances women have used and radicalized traditional forms of women's writing such as letter writing, recipes and keeping diaries, other forms such as drawing comics, and aggressively using humour indicate the creation of new linguistic spaces for women. In this study sixteen linguistic styles were identified: poetry, autobiographical writing (diary-ing), recipes, d.i.y. instruction, photography, resource lists, art, reviews, utopian narratives, short stories, contributor bios and contacts, cartoons, letters, academic essays, activist ads/ announcements, newspaper (other mass media) clippings.

Third-wave feminist re-articulations of feminism and femininity are based on and appreciative of second-wave feminist history. This is evidenced by the legacy of 'the personal is political' reflected in the abundance of personal narratives. At the same time, third-wave feminist writings are stylistically rejecting many second-wave 'straw feminisms', including notions that feminism is humourless and stoic. The linguistic analysis is documented in Chapter 4.

Intertextual Analysis

Intertextual analysis examines how "texts selectively draw upon *orders of discourse*" (Fairclough 1999: 184). Fairclough's "order of discourse" is derived from Foucault's use of discourse. Fairclough (1995) writes "I have adapted the concept of order of discourse from Foucault (1981) to refer to the ordered set of discursive practices associated with a particular social domain or institution" (12). An intertextual analysis uncovers how these 'orders of discourse' are used, activated and rearticulated in order to create new conceptions of discourse and social domains. Fairclough (1999) writes that, "intertextual analysis as it is dynamically and dialectically conceived by Bahktin also

draws attention to how texts may transform these social and historical resources, how texts may ‘re-accentuate’ genres” (184). An intertextual analysis looks at what “orders of discourse” are drawn upon to create a strongly woven counter-hegemonic fabric.

Zinesters, through their engagement in linguistic systems of representation and their adoption, deconstruction and rearticulation of various ‘orders of discourse’ are forging various articulations of personal subjectivities and in effect, expressing new versions of femininity. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 are the intertextual analysis. In Chapter 5, the zines’ relationship to the context of their creation is explored. Fairclough (1995) insists upon the historicity of the ‘orders of discourse’: “the order of discourse is the social order in its discursal facet- or, the historical impress of sociocultural practice on discourse” (10). In using Fairclough’s critical discourse analysis it is imperative to appreciate the relationship between text and context. He (1995) writes, “the intertextual analysis crucially mediates the relationship between language and social context, and facilitates more satisfactory bridging of the gap between texts and contexts” (189). Chapter 5 assesses how zines are creations, responses and effects of their contemporary context. Chapters 6 and 7 explore how zine creators are responding to and engaging with discourses of femininity in order to create new selves and new articulations of the relationship between women, their bodies and the multiple facets of themselves.

Guiding Assumptions

This research is guided by the assumption that contemporary media offers limited representations of women while the representations offered are largely derogatory. These two phenomena can be understood as ‘symbolic annihilation’ and ‘symbolic violence.’

Symbolic annihilation was first named by Gaye Tuchman (1978) and refers to a lack of representations of groups of people in mainstream media. Tuchman used the term to refer to how, by their absence, women are marginalized and kept in their proper place. Through symbolic annihilation mainstream television maintains Anglo-Saxon nuclear family norms, erasing the possibility of other types of families. The effects of symbolic annihilation are best described by Adrienne Rich (2003), who is cited in *The Fence* as saying, “when someone with authority...describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing” (21).

The lack of adequate representations of women, especially young women, has not improved with the increased media monopolization of the last fifty years. In a recent study it was shown that women constitute a mere 9 percent of the boards of directors of media, telecom and e-companies (Breitbart and Nogueira 2004: 26). Jennifer Pozner (2003) explains that:

Control of the media is the single most important issue of our time... As the mouthpiece of the ‘white supremacist capitalist patriarchy’ discussed by feminist theorists such as bell hooks, the corporate dominated mass media are the key to why our fast-moving culture is so slow to change, stereotypes are so persistent, and the power structure so entrenched (37).

Mainstream media defines women, particularly young women, as passive, weak, and silent. Media bombardment is especially damaging to young women when it is targeted at them at crucial times of identity creation.

Symbolic violence is a term used by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu asserts that individuals submit to derogatory representations of themselves through the representations’ taken-for-granted pervasiveness. Loic Wacquant (1993) explains that

“symbolic violence, in turn, is exercised whenever instruments of knowledge and expression of social reality are imposed or inculcated *that are arbitrary but not recognized as such*” (131). Women are submitted to symbolic violence when the only source of media for them is “women’s magazines” that ascribe to taken-for-granted assumptions that women are delightedly obsessed with self body modification, home and hearth. Women read women’s magazines, despite what Naomi Wolf (1991) has termed as the “beauty myth”; the propagating of unnecessary consumption, body anxiety, and routine and collective attacks on women’s self-esteem. This is because,

in the absence of mainstream journalism that treats women’s issues with anything like the seriousness they deserve, women’s magazines take on a burden of significance- and responsibility- that would otherwise be spread out over half the “serious” periodicals on the market (Wolf 1991: 73).

Feminists have a history of addressing and resisting women’s symbolic annihilation and symbolic violence in mainstream culture. John Downing (1984) explains that radical alternative media has roots that are far deeper than acknowledged in contemporary mainstream media. Contrary to popular perception, alternative media did not originate in the 1960s but began much earlier as evidenced by the writings of Emma Goldman in the 1890s to 1920s (41-47). Feminist zines work within a lineage of historic radical media.

Radical alternative media was also a forum for second-wave feminists. In Canada, Doris Anderson led the way to reclaiming mainstream media by publishing provocative and progressive women’s liberation literature in *Chatelaine*, while Gloria Steinem did the same in the United States with *Ms*. However, the personal underground publishing form of zines became a popular form of feminist expression in the 1980s. While the style of zines as we know them today emerged in the 1980s from the punk subculture as fanzines,

self-published writings with personal and political sentiment have a longer history, and feminist herstory. For example, some root the history of feminist zines as far back as the first wave feminist pamphlets. Jennifer Bleyer (2004) pinpoints the anti-Vietnam War movement and the edgy and raunchy ‘commix’ of the 1970s and 1980s as the origins of zines (44).

The purpose of my discourse analysis is to explore how feminists are defining and engaging with feminism and dominant discourses of femininity. As counter-hegemonic texts, feminist zines challenge many oppressive discourses surrounding femininity. To define oneself as a feminist demonstrates a self-conscious awareness, and deliberate involvement in reflective identity-forming practices. Feminist zines, as the deliberate texts of feminisms, are active and articulate practices of subject formation. Using Stuart Hall’s theory of articulation, I explore how feminists, by rearticulating their relationships to various discourses of femininity, and aspects of second-wave feminism, are creating new discursive spaces in which to perform their femininity and feminism.

Methods (techniques):

My research employs the inductive, interpretive methodology of critical discourse analysis. In this section I will outline my researcher bias, sample, data collection strategies and data analysis strategies. My problem, to explore one site of identity formation of Canadian third-wave feminists, is a grounded research problem. In grounded theory, the researcher can “derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action or interaction grounded in the views of the participants” (Creswell 2003: 14). Zines, as cultural products of the participants of the study allow for unobtrusive exploration.

Reinharz (1992) explains that “historically ignored women are made visible when relevant artifacts are located and studied” (156). Zines, the underground and limited copy publications of third-wave feminists are highly personal narratives of feminisms. For Reinharz (1992), “cultural artifacts invite grounded research if the researcher allows the analytic categories to emerge from the artifacts themselves” (161). While the zines are not mainstream publications, through various strategies a sufficient sample has been generated.

Researcher bias:

I first became aware of zines five years ago when my sister and her friend started a feminist zine called, *Discharge*. I have contributed to that zine as well as to 52% and *Poutine Press*. These experiences uniquely situate me as a participant and a researcher. Since I began this project I have begun publishing my own zine, *Feminist Zine Pirate (FZP)*.¹ In *Feminist Zine Pirate* I borrow articles and images from my zine sample to make a compilation zine. In each zine I write an editorial and allow myself ample space to discuss thoughts that the content has provoked. FZP is my arena for active reflexive critique². It is also in this arena that I am able to work to bridge academic and grassroots feminisms by putting my research in zine form and sending it into the zine community. I also benefit by being able to experience and understand the joy and satisfaction of zining.

Sample:

This study is a discourse analysis of 70 feminist Canadian zines. My sampling frame includes zines that are a) Canadian, b) created by women, c) in paper format (not e-

¹ See Appendix 1: Feminist Zine Pirate #1

² Winston Jackson (2003) defines reflexive critique as, “a process that enables participants and researchers to make explicit, alternative explanations of events or experiences” (214).

zines) and d) written in the last ten years (1995-2005). I chose to focus on Canadian zines because while there is a growing body of literature on third-wave feminisms, most of this literature is American. I wanted to engage in a project that is grounded in my socio-cultural context. Many subcultures participate in the zine scene, however, due to the nature of my problem to explore how women are rearticulating discourses of femininity and feminism, I am focusing on zines produced by women with a feminist flavor. I am also limiting my study to paper zines as opposed to e-zines so that I am able to sufficiently limit my sample. Also, paper zines have a distinctive flavor and characteristic grassroots artistic properties which differ from e-zines. Finally, my zines are from 1995-2004 because this is the range of zines that I have accumulated.

My zine sample covers almost all zine genres. I have literature zines including original short stories and poetry; perzines: very personal diary style zines; sex zines; health zines; zines written entirely by one woman; zines created by collectives (women's centre collectives, or women's health collectives) or zines with one editor and various contributors. While some zines are consistently devoted to one issue— for example *Red Alert* is a zine about menstruation, and *the Fence* is a zine for and by bi-women— many zines have extremely varied content. Stephen Duncombe's (1997) definition of the "typical zine" is an apt description of the zines in my sample:

A typical zine- although "typical" is a problematic term in this context- might start with a highly personalized editorial, move into a couple of opinionated essays or "rants", criticizing, describing, extolling something or other, and then conclude with reviews of other zines, bands, books, and so forth. Spread throughout this would be poems, a story, reprints from the mass press (some for informational value, others as ironic commentary), and a few hand-drawn illustrations or commix. The editor would produce the content him or herself, solicit it from personal friends or zine acquaintances, or, less commonly, gather it through an open call for submission. Material is also "borrowed": pirated from

other zines and the mainstream press, sometimes without credit, invariably without permission. (10).

A zine is characteristically a grassroots, unprofessional publication, created to resist the homogeneity of mainstream media.

Data collection strategy:

In order to accumulate my sample of seventy Canadian feminist zines, I employed the following strategies. First, a poster which was a “Call for Canadian Feminist Zines”³ was sent to university women’s centres across Canada. It is a result of this strategy that my sample is largely limited to educated zinesters. I have called numerous women’s bookstores across the country to order zines. I successfully bought zines from the Toronto Women’s Bookstore, Mothertongue books in Ottawa and Venus Envy in Halifax. I have also bought a number of zines through zine distros such as⁴: Neon Pavement distro (B.C), North Star distro (B.C), Static Cling distro (Edmonton), McGill University’s Gender Empowerment Union Zine distro (Montreal), and Urban Armor (Montreal). The remainder of my sample was accumulated from acquaintances. The geographic distribution of my zines is as follows: Victoria: 9, Vancouver: 5, other B.C: 4, Alberta: 1, Ottawa: 7, Toronto: 15, other Ontario: 3, Montreal: 7, other Quebec: 5, New Brunswick: 2, Halifax: 4, P.E.I: 1, unknown: 7. Due to the nature of zines as underground, counter-cultural products, my defining characteristics (Canadian, feminist, paper, 1995-2005) sufficiently limited my sample to 70. Some zines that I have received but excluded were zines that I felt were too professional or were newsletters for organizations rather than zines.

³ See appendix 1, p.19

⁴ distros are online zine catalogues

After an open reading of the zines, many themes emerged from which I could develop an open coding system. Coding involves, “taking text data or pictures, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) or images into categories with a term, often a term based on the actual language of the participant” (Creswell 2003: 192). CDA is a dual form of analysis: linguistic (style) and intertextual (content). Therefore, during my reading I coded for references of discourses (intertextual analysis), literary genres and stylistic themes (linguistic). After an initial open reading of the zine sample, I came up with eighteen ideational themes, sixteen literary devices, and seven stylistic themes.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

While second-wave feminists largely came to feminism in their adult lives, growing up with feminism as a child and often with feminist mothers is an entirely unique experience of third-wave feminists. This phenomenon of ‘growing up feminist’ has created complex relations between second and third-wave feminists. One of the most common themes amongst these diverse third-wave writings is the effort to create dialogue with second-wave feminists. Stacy Gillis (2004) notes that “the generational divide between second-wave feminism and the new forms of feminism- whether it be third-wave or not- is one of the defining characteristics of the movement” (167). In a discussion of academic feminism, employing the much used mother-daughter metaphor for second and third-wave feminists, Susan Fraiman (1999) argues that in frustration “‘Why are they attacking me? Where is their gratitude?’ the mothers ask. ‘Why won’t they listen to us? Why can’t they see our separateness?’ the daughters cry” (527).

In this Chapter I will explore how the generation gap between second and third-wave feminists is an amplified problem. While third-wave feminists have grown up in a different context, the conflict between second and third-wave feminism is largely a result of the two generations speaking past each other by responding to ‘straw feminists’; reifying generational feminisms largely produced and reiterated by mainstream media. It is talking through these ‘straw feminists’ which has led to the amplified ‘generation gap’. By dialoguing with other third-wave texts, such as zines, the belligerence denoted by the much discussed ‘generation gap’ is overshadowed by an emphasis instead on reverence

and multiplicity, a feminism that is “non-linear, multidirectional, and simultaneous” (Roof 1997:86).

Surfing the Wave Problematic

“There is something lovely about a wave. Gently swelling, rising and then crashing, waves evoke images of both beauty and power. As feminists, we could do much worse than be associated with this phenomenon” (Bailey 1997: 17); however this metaphoric association has unsurprisingly not evaded earnest debate. For many, the wave metaphor serves to reify generations. Classifying feminists into generational waves is problematic in that in talking about third-wave feminisms as the current feminisms, the current activity of second-wave feminists is dismissed. Stacy Gillis (2004) argues that “the wave paradigm paralyses feminism, pitting generations against one another” (165). According to Judith Roof, the generational wave metaphor is a familial metaphor that reinscribes heterosexual and capitalist norms. Roof (1997) argues that “the family, especially this devoted and Oedipal version of the family, is a particular historical patriarchal formation linked to both ideology and the exigencies of capitalism” (85). Jennifer Purvis (2004) agrees, concluding that

Generational thinking, as familial, reinscribes hetero normative principles in its assertion of both hegemonic social structures and a heterosexist narrative of reproduction. These contradictions preclude any hope of familial communion among feminists and, on the contrary, function to forestall dialogue (109).

It has also been argued that the wave metaphor paints a monolithic, linear version of feminism that serves to whitewash women of colour feminists that have historically been active throughout feminism’s history (Purvis 2004, Springer 2002). Contrarily, Kimberly Springer argues that third-wave feminism both stems from women of colour feminism

and is essentially a term that erases non-White feminist thought. Springer argues that the wave metaphor, in its chronology, presents a linear, race-biased view of feminism's history. She (2002) argues that because of non-White women's continued anti-oppressive actions in the abolition movement and anti-imperialist resistance means that "the wave analogy becomes untenable" (1062). A wave metaphor has, to an extent, resulted in reified monolithic understandings of second and third-wave feminism, while in reality, the wave metaphor should lead to an understanding of the very fluid, oscillating nature of feminisms.

While it is argued that the wave metaphor reifies generations, others argue that the wave metaphor is an apt and poetic description of feminism's evolution, embodying the growth and continual historicity of contemporary feminism. Astrid Henry (2004) writes that the wave metaphor for feminism is appropriate because it "signals both continuity and discontinuity...While waves may inexorably be connected to other waves, and thus never stand alone in isolation, the announcement of a new wave is typically meant to stress the evolution of ideas and political movements" (24). A metaphoric wave is situated both in the past and moving forward. Deborah Siegel (1997) writes,

if we think of the third-wave as curving alternatively in the directions of the past and the future, if we think of the third-wave as overlapping both temporally and spatially with the waves that preceded it, then it becomes clear that the difference of the 'third-wave' may have been present in some moments and some places during earlier periods as well (60).

With the wave metaphor, the reified 'generation gap' between second and third-wave feminists can be conceptualized instead as a more fluid evolution, or more appropriately, contemporary third-wave feminism can be understood as existing in a time of 'radical openness' (Purvis: 2004).

A new third wave of feminism is understood by some as having been sparked by two conceptual shifts in the areas of sexuality and race. In both of these areas, third-wave feminists are taking in the critiques and understandings of second-wave feminists and exploding these critiques to create even more endless possibilities of identity and meaning. In this way, third-wave feminists embrace difference and contradiction and, simultaneous to deconstructing 'feminist orthodoxy', are intent on "weaving an identity tapestry" (Curry-Johnson 1995: 51).

On April 24, 1982 at Barnard College a conference was held entitled, "Towards a Politics of Sexuality". At this conference feminist scholars "attempted to explore the ambiguous and complex relationship between sexual pleasure in women's lives and in feminist theory" (Vance 1984: 3). Carol Vance explains that this conference was the beginning of new feminist understandings of female sexuality. While feminists had been rightly working to explicate and reduce the 'danger' associated with female sexuality, this conference saw the beginning of feminists exploring the 'pleasure' side of female sexuality, recognizing that an anti-pornography ideology led to new sexual shamings for women (Vance 1984: 6). Vance (1984) argues that the "multiple meanings, sensations and connections" (5) of female sexuality have been limited in a world of sexual hierarchy⁵. Continuing, Vance (1984) states, "the truth is that the rich brew of our experience contains elements of pleasure and oppression, happiness and humiliation" (6). This conference and the accompanying compilation, *Danger and Pleasure* (1984) demonstrated a shift in feminist thought that has been seen by some as signaling the beginning of third-wave feminism. The 2002 compilation, *Jane Sexes it Up*, took up the

⁵ The idea of an oppressive 'sexual hierarchy' is echoed in Anne Marie Jagose's (2002) concept of the "logics of sexual sequence" (1).

need identified in 1984 for a feminist analysis of female sexual pleasure. In *Jane* the complexities of desire and domination are beginning to be explored as the writers search for:

words for the middle grounds of subtle coercion where our libidinal drive is used against us, words for that adolescent place of fingers and tongues and exploration where so much female sexuality could thrive but, once one ‘goes all the way’, is more often frustrated or misused. (Johnson 2002: 38).

Like so much of third-wave feminist writing, the writings in *Jane* embrace contradiction and ambiguity, because as Vance described twenty years earlier, sexuality, the pleasure and the danger, is messy. These writings pick up from a shift that occurred in 1982 and continue to theorize the less understood pleasure aspect of female sexuality. Like Vance, Johnson argues that while the danger of female sexuality has been explored, this one-sided understanding is limited and devastating to women, limiting their creativity and power. In describing her reactions to the movie *Fight Club* Johnson (2002) writes of the necessity of mapping female desire:

Only here, within this multi-layered mapping of feminist desire—from false consciousness (enjoying the movie), to second wave feminist consciousness (critiquing or rejecting the movie), to a postmodern, parodic, third wave feminist consciousness (getting off on the movie) — do we begin to approach the complexity of sexual politics in the current historical moment. (43).

Another space between in which third wave feminism has emerged — both connected to and distinct from second wave feminism — is in its conceptual understanding of race. Ruth Frankenberg’s (1993) critical analysis of ‘whiteness’ ushered in new feminist understandings of race. Working upon previous feminist writings on race, Frankenberg (1993) asserted that “sites of productive, multiracial feminist dialogue and activity existed, but they were few and far between” (3). Frankenberg writes that there is

a cultural specificity to Whiteness. It is necessary to analyze the social construction of Whiteness, which would in turn “look head-on at the site of dominance” (6).

Acknowledging that women of colour were the first to theorize and acknowledge the “intersection in women’s lives of gender, sexuality, race, and class as well as visions and concepts of multiracial coalition work” (8), Frankenberg asserts that White women must take up and account for their own racialized selves. Analyzing whiteness as a social construction became a turn in feminist thought, signaling new understandings of race.

In my conceptualization of ‘third-wave’ feminism, ‘third-wave’ is an adjective which is descriptive mostly of the different social, economic, cultural context of feminists that grew up in the 1980s and 1990s. Third-wave Canadian feminists who came into their feminist consciousnesses during and after the 1980s can be defined as “daughters of the Charter”. Canadian third-wave feminisms emerge from a rich, feminist legacy. In the 1960s to 1980s, abortion was legalized (1969), and women were granted constitutional equality in the 1982 Charter.⁶ Canadian third-wave feminists grew up in an era which saw Canada’s first female Prime Minister Kim Campbell (1993), a female Governor General Jeanne Sauvé (1984) and Supreme Court Justice Beverly McLachlin (2000). It is necessary to talk about third-wave feminism because, despite the lessons learned or ignored from second-wave feminism, the feminism of contemporary young women today has been shaped by factors of history. Third-wave feminists also grew up in a context shaped by nascent understandings of the pleasure of female sexuality and the social construction of whiteness.

⁶ American third-wave feminists define themselves as women who grew up in the Reagan era and were radicalized by the Anita Hill hearings. Naomi Wolf (1994) credits the Anita Hill trials of 1991 as having contributed to the ‘genderquake’

Straw Feminisms: Talking Past Each Other

The dialogue between second and third-wave feminists is intercepted by media generated 'straw feminists'. Both second and third-wave feminisms speak of each other through media-mediated reified notions of the other generation.

One of the common features of third-wave feminist texts is an assertion of rejecting what is perceived as feminist orthodoxy. While second-wave feminists were writing the book, so to speak, on feminism, third-wave feminists must assert a right to rewrite the book to fit their particular issues, needs and desires. In this context, the third-wave feminist's relationship with second-wave feminists is most often, "tempered by the trope of obligatory gratitude, and mixed with the assertion of the right to speak" (Siegel 1997: 64). Largely, third-wave feminist texts seek to widen the possibilities of how 'to be' feminist, responding to what is perceived as a monolithic version of feminism. Rebecca Walker (1995) writes of the contributors of *to be real*,

as they struggle to formulate a feminism they can call their own, they debunk the stereotype that there is one lifestyle or manifestation of feminist empowerment, and instead offer self-possession, self-determination, and an endless array of non-dichotomous possibilities (xxxiv).

Many critics have argued that Walker's anthology represents how third-wave feminists miss the breadth of second-wave feminism. Cathryn Bailey (1997) writes, "Walker sees second-wave feminism as somewhat monolithic, as embodying one more or less identifiable set of values, many of which she regards as negative values" (21). Angela Davis, in the afterward to the third-wave feminist anthology, *to be real* (1995), writes, dismayingly of third-wave feminist texts,

What I find most interesting about these stories is the way many of them imagine a feminist status quo. While their various imaginations often represent very different notions of what this feminist status quo might be, many of them agree

that whatever it is, it establishes strict rules of conduct which effectively incarcerate individuality- desire, career aims, sexual practices etc (281).

Catherine Orr similarly argues that third-wave feminists are fighting with mythical understandings of second-wave feminism. Commenting on the narratives in *to be real*, Orr (1997) writes, “too often, in their quests to ‘be real’, many of the contributors end up fighting ghosts that could be exorcised easily (or at least rendered more complex) by consulting historical accounts of the women’s movement” (32).

Second-wave feminism was bound by expressions like “sisterhood is global”, collectivity as a feminist ideal was largely enshrined. This development has led to and reinforced notions of feminist orthodoxy. Deborah Siegel (1997) writes that “many third-wave narratives are pulled between a desire to deconstruct an essentialized feminist ‘we’ and the political need to confirm common bonds” (56). It has been argued that one central generational difference is that there is “a third-wave tendency to reject collectivity altogether, in favor of an incoherent politics of difference and an individualistic sense of empowerment” (Purvis 2004: 98). Through deconstructions of perceived essentialized feminist collectivities, in favour of individualized multiplicity, third-wave feminists are ignoring many shades and layers of second-wave feminism.

Amanda Lotz (2003) defines three types of contemporary feminism: women of colour- third world feminism, postfeminism, and reactive feminism. The third-wave feminist texts that are most often heralded by mainstream media as representing contemporary, young feminism fit the definition of reactive feminism. Lotz (2003) writes that amongst these writers, “the use of a very generalized understanding of second-wave feminism and representing second-wave feminists as being of one mind serves as a key

tactic in composing their criticisms” (4). Represented by authors such as Katie Roiphe, Naomi Wolf, Rene Denfeld, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Christina Hoff Sommers, they exalt individual, personal power and a focus on individual issues. They are harshly critical of the feminism they grew up with. They have little or no critique of capital, consumer culture, and corresponding issues of class, race or sexuality. Their writings and personas mirror contemporary ‘celebrity feminism’ represented by the innocuous personas of Ally McBeal and Carrie Bradshaw. They are, unsurprisingly perfect citizens of an oppressive consumer culture. Lisa Rundle (2003) asks “[j]udging by mainstream media, third-wave feminists are cute, white, stylish, urban women. And that’s different from what Cosmo’s publishing, how?” (1).

The much media hyped reactionary feminism of Katie Roiphe, Rene Denfeld and Naomi Wolf which portrays second-wave feminism as anti-sex and puritanical, exemplifies the amplified feminist generational strife. Katie Roiphe, in her (1993) *The Morning After*, criticizes Catharine McKinnon’s anti-pornography stance as propaganda and the Take Back the Night marches as unnecessary hype. Rene Denfeld’s (1995) *The New Victorians* posits feminism as puritanical and moralistic. Finally, Naomi Wolf’s (1993) *Fire with Fire* contrasts a contemporary “Power feminism” with a second-wave “victim feminism”. Wolf’s (1995) ‘victim feminism’ “is judgmental of women’s sexuality and appearance” (137). All of these representations of contemporary feminists’ understandings of historic feminism’s position on sexuality are ignorant to the abundant second-wave feminist writings exulting the exploration and celebration of female sexuality, writings such as Nancy Friday’s *My Secret Garden*, Germaine Greer’s “Lady,

love your cunt” and Anne Koedt’s writings on the “myth of the vaginal orgasm” (Johnson 2002: 313).

While Roiphe, Wolf and Denfeld specifically and pointedly target second-wave feminists, there is more frequently a sense or tone within third-wave feminist texts of rebellion. Rather than rebelling specifically against second-wave feminism, most reactionary third-wave feminist texts are rebelling against media images of feminism as humourless, exclusive, and puritanical.

One characteristic of third-wave feminisms that has emerged is that third-wave feminists are very introspective and focus more on the personal than the political. These critics view the third-wave as ‘me-feminism’. For some, this unabashed focus on the personal is what makes third-wave feminisms exciting, Erin Harde (2003) declares, “I believe that the emphasis on individual expression makes the third-wave inviting and effective” (119). For others ‘me-feminism’ is a consequence of the increasingly celebrity-obsessed and individualist, capitalist society in which we live. Power feminism was coined and promoted by Naomi Wolf in her 1993, *Fire with Fire: The New Female Power and How to Use It*. In this book, Wolf advocates that where many aspects of second-wave feminism went wrong is when they promoted the idea that women were innately more moral, collective and compassionate, and that capitalism was therefore not female. She defines this as victim feminism which has many premises, some of them being:

believes women to be naturally noncompetitive, cooperative, and peace loving. Sees women as closer to nature than men are. Exalts intuition, “women’s speech” and “women’s ways of knowing”, not as complements to, but at the expense of, logic, reason, and the public voice” (136).

Contrary to this, Wolf's "[P]ower feminism has little heavy ideology beyond the overarching premise 'More for women' (138). This "more" is an economic more which easily leads critics to view this type of feminism as "me-feminism" and "consumer feminism". This type of feminism is highly accessible in popular culture through programs such as HBO's *Sex and the City* as the women exalt their right to "more"; more shoes, more sex, and more cocktails.

Wolf's harsh critiques of other feminisms have led to vibrant discussion in third-wave feminist texts. Danzy Senna (1995) describes power feminism as "little more than a new language for free market individualism" (16). She (1995) continues to state that, "[t]he power feminism phenomenon represents not a 'new school' in feminism, but rather a very old school imbedded in whiteness, privilege, 'beauty', and consumerism of which the mainstream media has always been in favor" (17). This 'me-feminism' is also a characterization of the media, "according to the most widely publicized construction of the third-wave, "we" hate our bodies, ourselves and our boring little lives, yet we focus incessantly on ourselves, our bodies and our boring little lives" (Heywood and Drake 1997: 47). Power feminism conforms to the increasingly hyper-capitalist society in which we live. Michelle Goldberg (2001) explains,

shopping-and-fucking feminism jibes precisely with the message of consumer society, [saying] that freedom means more- hotter sex, better food, ever multiplying pairs of Manolo Blahnik shoes, drawers full of Betsey Johnson skirts, Kate Spade bags and MAC lipsticks (np).

While Catharine McKinnon and Andrea Dworkin do not represent second-wave feminism, the reactive feminists do not represent contemporary, young feminist thought. However, through media skewed representations that uphold these writings as the

perspectives of a new generation, it is possible to understand how a generation gap can emerge because reactive feminists are antagonist towards second-wave feminism.

Riot Grrrl Feminism

The other third-wave feminist movement that has made an impact on and is reflected in popular culture is the Riot Grrrl movement. The Riot Grrrl movement began in Olympia, WA in the early nineties, and was largely a response to sexism in the punk scene. Women became riot grrrls in resistance to the assumption that they would become groupies or girlfriends to the band. They would *be* the band. Baumgartner and Richards (2000) describe the beginning of the movement,

Seizing the radicalism and activism from the dump in which they thought it had slumped since the mid-seventies; Riot Grrrls weren't pushing rational feminism. They scrawled slut on their stomachs, screamed from stages and pages of fanzines about incest, rape, being queer and being in love. They mixed a childish aesthetic with all that is most threatening in a female adult: rage, bitterness, and political acuity. (133).

The Riot Grrrl movement was largely sparked by the punk band Bikini Kill, who popularized zines as a form of feminist expression. Part of the Riot Grrrl revolution is expressed in this section of its manifesto from the zine *Bikini Kill #2*, (1992):

BECAUSE we are angry at a society that tells us Girl=Dumb, Girl=Bad, Girl=Weak
BECAUSE we are unwilling to let our real and valid anger be diffuse and/or turned against us via the internalization of sexism as witnessed in girl/girl jealousies and self-defeating girl type behaviors
BECAUSE I believe with my wholeheartmindbody that girls constitute a revolutionary soul force that can, and will change the world for real.

Riot Grrrl zines emerged within a culture shaped by feminism and infused with punk rock, making the zines aggressive and fully critical of patriarchy. Duncombe (1997) writes that they were

bringing together the radical critique of patriarchy and desire for female community of past feminist movements, and in-your-face, rebellious individualism of punk rock, Riot Grrrl was a network of young women linked by zines and bands... (66).

The riot grrrl movement is mentioned in academic writings on third-wave feminism. Deborah Siegel (1997) writes that “the rapid proliferation of girlzines and the rise of the riot grrrl underground” (51) have become part of what is theorized as the ‘third-wave’. Catherine Orr (1997) writes of zines that “these young authors tend to self-identify with Riot Grrrl, a movement of sorts that emerged in the early 1990s from the punk music scene when the testosterone level reached unbearable highs for some young female devotees” (58). Riot Grrrls have been given some attention in the literature of third-wave feminism. The influence and spirit of the 1990s Riot Grrrl movement, as the origin of the ‘feminist zine’ is strongly felt in these zines.

The Space In Between

Neither representation— the reactive feminist or the Riot Grrrl— fully captures the breadth of third-wave feminism. Many third-wave feminists identify with a space in between being critical of consumer capitalism while at the same time critical of what they perceive as ‘feminist orthodoxy’. Zine feminism is characteristic of this space in between. This space in between is best explored in the Canadian third-wave compilation, *Turbo Chicks: Talking Young Feminism* (Mitchell, Rundle and Karaian: 2001). The texts in this compilation offer both gratitude and critiques of second-wave feminism. Mariko Tamaki

describes how meeting Robin Morgan as a high schooler was fundamental to her feminist becomings, while Jessica Ticktin's narrative centers around how her interactions with older women have been essential to her personal growth. Alternatively there are also critiques of the limitations of second-wave feminism as in Jennifer Harris's article, "Betty Friedan's Granddaughters: *Cosmo*, Ginger Spice & Other Marks of Whiteness" and in Candis Steenbergen's article, "Talkin' 'Bout whose Generation" in which Steenbergen criticizes Germaine Greer's quick dismissal of third-wave feminism.

Rebecca Walker (1995) also writes that

linked with my desire to be a good feminist was, of course, not just a desire to change my behavior to change the world, but a deep desire to be accepted, claimed, and loved by a feminist community that included my mother, godmother, aunts and close friends" (xxx).

Similarly Heywood and Drake (1997) write,

We've hated our mothers (and ourselves) long enough. Their struggles are still our struggles, if in different forms. Bridging generations as much as races, as much as classes, as much as all our other bisecting lines, and being humble enough to realize that our ideas are not so new, is one fine way to fight paralysis, to move, to shake, to rock the world one more time (54).

While there is a desire to be accepted by our second-wave mentors and mothers there are also constant attempts to re-evaluate and redefine what third-wavers consider second-wave feminism to be.

Third-wave feminisms are intent on unpacking the meanings of feminism. This does not mean discarding the meanings of feminism. Third-wavers are engaging with and rearticulating feminism to fit the contemporary context and individual needs. This leads to a feminism of contradiction and multiplicity, the overriding characteristic that has achieved consensus amongst third-wave feminist scholars. Catherine Orr (1997) states

that “navigating feminisms’ contradictions- historical, cultural, psychological- is a primary theme of third-wave feminism” (31). Multiplicity and contradiction, a product of the emphasis on the individualized and personal may be the third-wave’s contribution to feminist practice. Helene Shugart (2001) asserts that

third-wavers’ predilection for contradiction may well be reflective of a more sophisticated understanding of, tolerance for, and acceptance of difference, thus enacting the pluralism that even most second-wavers acknowledge is not characteristic of second-wave feminism (3)

Jennifer Purvis (2004) declares that one of the defining characteristics of third-wave feminism is that it is “prideful of its inconsistencies- especially if these inconsistencies defy, startle, or shock what practitioners of the third-wave deem rigid, intolerant, and monolithic codes of purportedly tyrannical second-wave feminists” (99).

Through a reading of feminist zines, an alternative understanding of third-wave feminism emerges. Between the binaries of conservative reactive feminisms of media pop feminism, and the angry radicalism of Riot Grrrls, lie multiple feminisms of which zine feminism is a part. While third-wave feminist zine creators still do respond to many second-wave ‘straw feminisms’, the emphasis on generational strife and resentment evident in the media third-wave is absent.

Chapter 4: Linguistic Analysis

Personal Narratives: New Readings of 'The Personal is Political'

Personal narratives, unapologetic introspective discussions of individuals' lives are the most common linguistic feature of feminist zines. Personal narratives are a tool of identity (subject) formation. According to Norman Denzin, autobiography is a means through which various aspects of the self are realized. For Denzin, "when a writer writes biography, he or she writes him or herself into the life of the subject written about" (26). Through personal narratives in feminist zines, feminist identities emerge.

In this section I will explore the many themes of personal narratives. Firstly, and most importantly they serve as an uncensored arena for young women to speak about whatever, in whatever voice they choose. Through personal narratives, women can explore the organic, complex, and multiple aspects of their identities. Personal narratives also aid in healing processes. Telling one's own story has a feminist legacy. Second-wave feminists called this form of sharing and exploring each other's everyday realities consciousness raising. Zines are one of the text-based consciousness raising strategies for a new generation of women.

Keeping diaries is a traditional form of women's writing (Cameron 1998: 3). Women are radicalizing this traditional form of writing by making them public, deeming their ordinary, everyday lives interesting and valid. Publishing diary-style writing is radical in that it extols the every person in a world saturated with celebrities, leveling the hierarchy of the importance of the mundane. While *Life and Style* publishes the headline, "Kirsten keeps Jake hanging on" (April 4, 2005:91), in the perzine *Tune Out*, the reader has access to the creator Maria's life, her breakup with her boyfriend, her trip to Quebec,

her relationship with her parents and her experiences home-schooling. While *Life and Style* includes a four page spread on “Mischa and Brandon’s private pool party at Bacara”, in the zine *Bathtub*, I read of Mareille’s drug use and parties in Montreal, “june to november, 5 months isn’t so big a gap to have in one’s memory. A gap is maybe an exaggeration. I remember people I met, but never their names. I remember so many bathrooms, Porto potties, alleys on the way home.”

Through zines it is possible to learn a lot about the zinesters as they declare what they want to be and what they resist. In *Some Things Are Impossible*, a diary style perzine about Andrea’s experiences in law school, she states, “I am the kind of person who wears black clothes but doesn’t own a lint brush. I’m the kind of person that worries about height to weight ratios failing to account for the precise shape of her skeleton.” Christina, who creates *Don’t Fall Asleep*, “is nervous and very prone to questioning the sincerity of actions and speech”. Erin Lois O’Reilly in *She Breathes*, writes, “I’ve always been a freak. I always thought purple and green looked good together. I never shut my mouth. Yeah. Long before I started getting piercings. Long before I discovered hair dye. I’ve always been a freak.”

Personal narratives in zines are also largely a response to a society which marginalizes and silences a vast majority of young women that are not white, straight, able bodied, or have a limited range of pop culture interests. In zines women respond to the symbolic annihilation of a variety of women by quite literally creating media mirrors by publishing photos of themselves in their zines. The zines, *Femme Vitale*, *Halfbreeds*, *Homos and other Heroes*, *Bathtub*, *Huesbook*, *the Fence*, *Vagina Dentata* and *Queer Zine Morphodite* all include photographs of the zine creators. Zines also respond to a limited

understanding of femininity by using personal narratives as a means of holistically exploring the complex aspects of personal identity. Feminist zine creators take a traditionally feminine style of writing- the diary - and through publishing it for public consumption, reject the authority of hegemonic culture which deems their lives unimportant.

It also appears that publishing personal narratives through zines can be instrumental in processes of healing. The survivor narratives of sexual abuse, the death of a loved one, abortion, and depression that are published in zines serve this healing function. *Shrub* and *Contraction* are two zines written by Kelly about the death of her mother. In the very personal perzine style, the reader has access to Kelly's diary and thoughts in a most stressful, grief-stricken time in her life. She begins *Shrub* with, "I crave telling the story of my mother's death. It is something in my heart I know I have to do". Maria also uses her zine as a tool for healing. In *Growing Up in an Alcoholic Home*, Maria begins, "This zine was hard for me to write. It brought up a lot of feelings that I don't particularly want to feel... This is just me, getting my feelings and thoughts out. Let me know what you think of this, communication is important".

One emergent third-wave feminist characteristic is that third-wavers are highly individualistic. Astrid Henry (2004) writes, "Challenging the perceived dogmatism of second-wave feminism, third-wavers have steered clear of prescribing a particular feminist agenda and instead have chosen to stress individuality and individual definitions of feminism" (43). Individual definitions of feminism are evident in the main form of third-wave feminist writing; the personal essay, which makes up a large part of third-wave feminist literature. Personal narratives are written identity-formation strategies, as

the creators explore both the multiple axes of their personal identities, and the fluid nature of their identities. These narratives also offer an opportunity for healing. Personal narratives in diary form demonstrate the radicalization of a feminine form of writing in an attempt to extol the ordinary in a world obsessed with the extraordinary.⁷

Bricolage, Irony, Emulation

Zines have a very characteristic style. They usually include a lot of hand writing and are originally made with scissors and glue before they hit the photocopiers. They are inter-textual productions with magazine images and texts cut out and reassembled in new, often provocative ways. Zines are made locally usually by only one or a few creators, and are largely distributed and read locally in local bookstores, music stores, and amongst friends. This D.I.Y aesthetic contrasts glossy, computer generated, impersonal magazines imported from New York. The zine style is a powerful response to an atmosphere of media bombardment, transforming young women from media consumers to media producers. Kristen Schilt (2003) explains that “by making a zine, girls learn that if they do not like the cultural products offered to them, they can produce their own” (79). Similarly Carly Stasko (2001) who began her first zine at 16 states, “Media is a powerful tool, and the Do-It-Yourself philosophy of zine culture inspired me to engage my media environment instead of simply reacting to it” (276).

By cutting and pasting from various sources the zine creator has the potential to express an alternative reality. In this way the zine aesthetic exemplifies a new form of cultural bricolage. Claude Levi-Strauss (1962), in describing mythology, uses the image of the bricoleur. “The ‘bricoleur’ is adept at performing a large number of diverse

⁷ See Appendix 2: Feminist Zine Pirate *In the Spirit*

tasks...His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with ‘whatever is at hand’” (17). Within a media-saturated society, zinesters use tools found inherent in mainstream media to subvert that media, or create their own alternative medias.⁸

Zines steal irreverently from mainstream culture, and reverently from other zines. As such, zines are characterized by ‘la perroque’. La perroque involves “poaching an abstract or intellectual ‘property’ in order to appropriate space” (Knobel and Lankshear 2001: 12). Krista Scott-Dixon (2001) states that, “constructed with a clear postmodern pop cultural consciousness and drawing heavily on so-called girl culture, zine creators appropriated from every source with cheerful irreverence” (303).

Through bricolage and la perroque zinesters demonstrate their aptitude with irony. Feminist zines rarely miss the opportunity to reprint a 1950’s garter belt advertisement, or an antiquated article from *Good Housekeeping* magazine. Stephen Duncombe (1997) writes that for

those in the underground, using irony is a pragmatic response to a commercial culture that eats up any positive statement, strips it of its original meaning and context, and reproduces and disseminates it as an affirmation of its own message of consumption (146).

Irony in feminist zines often takes the form of detournement. Detournement, which is the literal ‘turning around’, involves “the reuse of preexisting artistic elements in a new ensemble” (Debord 1959: 55). Detournement is effective in that the energy and resources invested in the original image are turned against it for ironic and satirical effect.

⁸ John Clarke (1979) defines cultural bricolage: “together, object and meaning constitute a sign, and within any one culture, such signs are assembled, repeatedly, into characteristic forms of discourse. However, when the bricoleur re-locates the significant object in a different position within that discourse, using the same overall repertoire of signs, or when the object is placed within a different total ensemble, a new discourse is constituted, a different message conveyed” (In Hebdige: 104).

Feminist zine detournement largely focuses on satirizing a consumer culture that constantly targets women. Through placing excerpts of *Woman's Housekeeping* (1956) and contemporary ads for feminine hygiene products next to a cutting article about the whitewashing and Westernized shame of menstruation in zines, feminists demonstrate an understanding of the power of irony. For example, in *Beating Around the Bush: the boobular issue*, they reprint bra ads from *McCall's* magazine (1943), and *Ladies Home Journal* (1952). The one ad's tagline is "Do your breasts sag? A SPENCER brassiere helps Nature restore weakened breast tissue". It accompanies a before and after picture of a woman with and without sagging breasts. The ad is reprinted beside an article written by a fifty-four year old woman who writes about the ridiculous cultural obsession with breast perkiness and her recent decision to go braless. Detournement and irony in feminist zines are often used to demonstrate the ridiculous nature of insidious beauty industries that demand that women consume and consume their products in order to discipline their bodies to fit unrealistic standards. In *Unpoetic Arsenic*, an ad for a diet program is subverted with the addition of a headline, "why be real when you can be fake!" The original tagline, "created especially for teenage girls" is complemented with "to make you feel like you're never good enough". The original box which asks you to "check all the parts of your body you want to change" is complemented with an assortment of other body parts like: "mouth- want it smaller, mouth- want it bigger, mouth-want it gone, spleen, belly button-inny, belly button- outy, oh hell, just turn me into Cindy Crawford".

The romantic discourse is the target of detournement in the zine, *we all begin as strangers*. In this zine, the creator Emily subverts the meaning of a standard image of a

heterosexual couple. In this image a woman is looking admiringly into the eyes of the man, her hair flowing in the breeze. Emily subverts the romanticized, heterosexual ideal embodied in the image by adding commentary. Beside the man she has added, “oh darling. I’m so stupid. I just go along with matcho (sic) roles. Let me be your protector and provider cause I don’t have the balls to be anything else. I love you”, accompanying the woman she has added, “oh darling, my self esteem has been oppressed alongside the role of women; let me be your mute slave. Please treat me as a wimp and a ditz. I love you too.” In *The Laughing Crone*, discourses of domesticity are the object of ridicule. In this zine, 1950s images of nuclear families are juxtaposed with text subverting the 1950s ideals. In one image a white 1950s woman, smiling, serves a pie to her son. The accompanying text reads, “oh joy oh bliss! Domesticity. What a meal this is. What ever woman should know” underneath the text is the statement, “rise above it”. Through selective and ironic uses of mainstream media, feminist zinesters are able to use hegemonic images in acts of subversion.

Detournement, bricolage and irony all emphasize the D.I.Y and possibly transformative properties of zines. D.I.Y is also a form of progressive culture. Progressive culture, according to Walter Benjamin, is that which has the ability to transform the bourgeois properties and means of culture production. Benjamin (2002) writes, “Only by transcending the specialization in the process of production which, in the bourgeois view, constitutes its order, is this production made politically valuable” (76). In this way, the form of the culture can be more transformative than the content. Benjamin (2002) borrows Brecht’s term *umfunktionierung* (functional transformation) to explain what he sees as the key to liberation; instead of supplying the apparatus of

production, radicals need to transform the means of production (74). While feminist zines actively deconstruct and critique mainstream women's media through irony, humour and detournement, they also actively create alternative media, asserting that women can be culture producers as well as consumers.

Another way zines promote women as media makers is through their transparency. By making the sources of the zines obvious, and the zine creation process transparent, readers can become writers. This is what Duncombe (1997) refers to as 'emulation':

This notion of *emulation*- turning your readers into writers- is elemental to the zine world. Emulation is facilitated by the fact that most zines don't copyright their material...material is expected to be shared and reprinted, or 'borrowed' as zine writers delicately put it (123).

Of the 70 zines in this study, only three specified that readers ask for permission to reprint their work. More commonly, the transparency of the zine creation was emphasized as zinesters stressed the ease and fun of zine creation, and zinesters' contacts were published. In the D.I.Y. gynecology zine *Hot Pants*, the creators write, "Women are encouraged to share this information amongst themselves. There is no copyright on *Hot Pants*". Sara Evans in *Root* zine writes about the goal of her zine:

We wanted to make zines more accessible, both to see and make. Halifax can feel so small and isolated that I am happy to keep things locally focused...when people say "oh I have always wanted to make a zine" I said "so do it". And I mean it. And I love that.

Through emulation, in which the seams of the zine-making process are in full view, feminist zinesters are involved in producing progressive culture by dismissing the authority and specialization of mainstream media.

Creating Communities

Political activism, while inspired by personal transformation, is fuelled by the growth of activist communities. Writing, especially through forms of emulation, inspires the growth of feminist communities. Helene Cixous (1989) explains, “It is in writing, from woman and toward woman, and in accepting the challenge of the discourse controlled by the phallus, that woman will affirm woman somewhere other than in silence” (111). There are communities of zine readers who, although they may not know each other, find comfort in knowing that there are others who share their desire for less restrictive gender ideals. The zine scene, communities of zinesters connected by post with interactions based on writing rather than face-to-face interactions, is a sort of “bohemia diaspora” (Carr in Duncombe 1997: 53). Duncombe (1997) explains,

With coffeehouses owned by corporations and traditional bohemian neighborhoods populated by middle-class professionals, zines...offer an invaluable service, acting as café, community center, and clubhouse that help connect these bohemians to one another providing the ‘cement; that holds together a dispersed scene (56).

The zines in this collection act as a feminist bohemian diaspora. *The Fence*, *Discharge*, *Avoid Strange Men* all demonstrate their role in creating community through publishing letters and calls for submission, while other zines, *Red Alert*, *Huesbook*, *52%*, *Letters From the War Years*, *We Are Warriors*, *Little Words*, *PussyWillow*, demonstrate their role in community-building by working as zine-creating collectives. Zines often cite other zines. In *Slightly More Than Soundbites*, Jessica acknowledges another zinester Matilda in her editorial. The zines *Root*, *Musk Glad Sally*, *Let It Be Known* review other zines. Sara Evans, creator of *Root*, best explains the zine community,

The first zine I ever made was when I was 16 ½. Now I am 23 ¾ This year I felt as excited about them as I did when I began. For a few years the self-indulgence of it all started to get to me, and I wondered why I kept making them..but lately I feel like I am part of a community of zine folks, in my own town and not just through the mail. It is nice to feel confident and excited about them again, not just weird and nerdy.

The zine creators are also active in creating communities through their involvement with distros, online distribution catalogues. Many of the zines in this sample were purchased through distros. Two zine creators in this sample are the operators of distros. Maria, editor of *Tune Out* and *Growing Up in an Alcoholic Home* is the operator of Neon Pavement distro, while Kelly, editor of *Shrub* and *Contraction* is also the operator of North Star distro. Emulation — turning readers into writers, consumers into producers — is embedded within the style of zines. Zinesters, explicitly, through engagement in zine creating collectives and distros, and implicitly through the D.I.Y style, promote the democratization of media.

Zines are also an arena for encouraging women's entrepreneurship and the development of alternative economies. While by definition zines are not for profit, many zinesters are active in producing other goods such as clothing, soaps, washable menstrual pads and music. Doreen Piano (2002) writes of feminist zinesters,

Through the activities of writing, editing, distributing, and consuming texts and other good, participants in the subculture build their own economic practices and in the process become better technologically equipped as well as more informed about issues pertinent to women (3).

Discharge includes ads for t-shirts, handmade soap and washable menstrual pads, *Matilda* includes an ad for the creator's band's new CD, and *Hotel Chaotica* includes an ad for *Hotel Chaotica* gift cards. Some zines are produced by grassroots feminist production companies. *Hot Pants* and *Red Alert* are creations by the *Blood Sisters*, a

Montreal-based alternative menstruation collective that is part of *Urban Armour*, a larger company that also produces t-shirts, and cloth menstrual pads. *We Are Warriors*, *Huesbook* and *Little Words* are all Gurl-on-Gurl (GOG) productions, which is a “small publishing firm specializing in small informational booklets, feminine packets, and zine guides” (*Little Words*: 2002). Many more zines include ads and calls for submissions for other zines. In *Discharge*, Gillian, who runs her own soap company, encourages others to start their own business with her article, “the ½ assed approach to starting your own small business”.

The zine style is characterized by bricolage, irony and emulation. Within a highly media saturated environment, zine creators use what is at hand, largely mainstream media, and through detournement, produce new highly ironic creations. By promoting the D.I.Y. nature of the zines and encouraging the readers to create their own zines, zinesters are involved in the production of progressive culture, alternative economies and activist communities.

Fun!

If I can't dance I don't want your revolution- Emma Goldman

The best part about being a woman, is the prerogative to have a little fun!- Shania Twain

The popularizing of feminism as fun is a third-wave phenomenon. Popular feminism, as advocated through mainstream media as the Power/ capitalist/ me feminism espoused by the Upper East Side socialites from *Sex and the City*, and the blond, short skirt adorning Buffy the Vampire Slayer, definitely promote the idea that now that the major battles have been won, feminism can be sexy and fun. Demons can be slayed in style and single White rich women in New York can toil through their problems in Prada.

The third-wave feminist magazines *Bitch* and *Bust* both demonstrate a third-wave embracing fun by offering critical articles alongside colourful D.I.Y crafts and reviews of sex toys. Reclaiming fun is a third-wave feminist issue because fun has been traditionally gendered and is increasingly commodified. Third-wave feminists are also resisting the stereotype of second-wave feminists as humourless.

The definition of what is fun for women is limited; shopping is fun, make-up is fun, gossiping is fun. Not surprisingly, fun for women largely involves consumption and is in the interests of upholding patriarchal capitalist norms. For example, women are supposedly natural shoppers. Greer (2000) writes that, “Women are supposed to be possessed by a lust that can only be satisfied by shopping; left to their own devices they will shop till they drop. Shopping is actually exhausting work for which women are trained from infancy” (180). Third-wave feminist zines and third-wave feminism in general has made reclaiming and redefining fun a feminist politic.

Reclaiming fun is an apt response to an increasingly commercialized world. Kalle Lasn (1999) writes that in the 1960s the Situationist Internationalists were concerned with reclaiming fun; “people were allowing their leisure hours to be gobbled up by programmed entertainments. Increasingly, they weren’t in control of their own fun anymore. The Situationist solution: *take back the show*” (105). By choosing to create zines instead of spending their leisure time reading *Seventeen* or *Cosmopolitan*, zinesters reclaim and rearticulate the gendered understandings of fun. This is evidenced throughout this zine sample. The back cover of *Poutine Press* is “brought to you by the letter...” in the vein of Sesame Street, with the definition of words of importance to the *Poutine Press* zinesters. The first issue is “Brought to you by the Letter A” in which they define the

words: activism, apathy, autonomy and able. Both *52%* and *New Moon* have ads and articles about the Radical Cheerleaders, a group epitomizing the third-wave feminist politic of fun. The Radical Cheerleaders dress up in crazy costumes and, waving pompoms chant their politics at various demonstrations. One such chant, cited in *52%*, sung to the tune of “I will survive” is entitled “Chrétien bye bye”:

At first we were afraid, we were petrified
Kept thinkin’ we could never make it though our degrees alive
But then we spent so many nights, thinkin’ how Harris done us wrong
We grew strong, that bastard done us wrong. (52 %)

The zines are frequently printed on a variety of brightly coloured pages, and are sometimes even adorned with stickers. *Revolution Girl Style Now*, on a purple page with the question “what is feminism?” has a photo of two women dressed up as Wonder Woman. *The Laughing Crone*, which is “an art zine in celebration of the female midlife and life beyond...” demands that woman’s midlife is revered and enjoyed through a variety of art collages. In one image a woman takes off an eye mask and the accompanying text demands, “Be FLAMBOYANT, Unmask... the sparkle that lies in your eyes”. The zine *Femme Vitale* includes a magnetic doll cut-out toy. *Femme Vitale* also documents the zinester’s adventures in hairstyles with a photo odyssey. Tara writes, “Hair is fun, dress up is fun, genderfuck is fun. My life is fun. Femme is fun.” Both *Discharge* and *Pussywillow* include lists of the many ways in which women can celebrate menses. In discussing sex, an overarching attitude is one of fun and celebration. *S/he’s Got Labe ?* includes articles about sex parties, reviews of sex toys and a sex column, “Dear Raunchy”.

While mainstream media sells a form of 'fun empowerment', through a variety of stiletto-clad high powered female pop icons, feminist zinesters are reclaiming and renaming their own form of D.I.Y 'fun empowerment'. Through colour, fun and celebration, feminist zinesters are creating eye-catching, pizzazy politics. Zinesters deconstruct discourses with stickers, are enthusiastic culture jammers and proficient employers of irony.

Humour

Q: How many feminists does it take to change a light bulb? A: It's not the light bulb that needs changing.

In feminist zines, women rearticulate both women's and feminists' relationship to humour. Through this rearticulation, women are able to harness humour's transformative power. For Regina Barreca (1991) making a joke is an aggressive act in which women are not supposed to engage frequently. Barreca continues to argue that for men, having a sense of humour has meant being able to tell a joke while for women to have a sense of humour has meant laughing at men's jokes. Feminists are called humourless when they argue that sexist/ racism/ homophobic jokes are not funny. This is seen as a lack of a sense of humour. However, when feminists do make jokes and men argue 'that's not funny,' it's still because feminists don't have a sense of humour. Either way men are controlling *what* is funny. Obviously they think they are always the ones who have the sense of humour. One of the lingering images of second-wave feminism that third-wave feminists reject is that of the staunch, angry, humourless feminist. Susan Douglas (1994) explains that,

The moment the women's movement emerged in 1970, feminism once again became a dirty word, and with considerable help from the mainstream media...The result is that we all know what feminists are... deliberately

unattractive women with absolutely no sense of humour who see sexism at every turn (7).

The humourless feminist is one 'straw-feminist' that third-wave feminists are resisting.

The use of humour, while resisting second-wave feminist stereotypes, is also political. Mikhail Bakhtin (1965) argues that comedy is inherent in the spectacle of carnival, because comedy represents an alternate world. Comedy is a second life epitomized by play, almost a world upside down, which acts as a temporary form of resistance (1965: 3-11). Through humour, the absurdities and injustices of everyday life can be revealed. Bakhtin also believes that folk humour is marked by a deep cultural uniqueness that has gone largely unexamined by academics. Women's use of humour has even been more neglected. Regina Barecca (1991) states that

women learn from an early age that making other women laugh is more than an acceptable idea – it's a good one. ... It is no secret to women that women have a sense of humour. Yes, women's lines have always gotten a laugh – but only in secret (103).

When women's humour has been eventually shared with men, men have often not considered women funny because women and men have different perceptions of humour (Akass and McCabe: 2004). In the free spaces of zines, men's laughter is not required as validation.

The humour in the zines is expressed through written personal narratives, articles and comics. Of the 70 zines in this study, 30 overtly used humour. Cartoons are used to tell stories, provide D.I.Y instructions and are a form of satire. Cartoons were used often as a story telling device. In *Breath*, Caroline O uses a cartoon to tell a story of her discovery of girl power when bullying boys told her she threw like a girl, in the next square of the comic she sates: "we smiled. We weren't offended. First off, we WERE

GIRLS! Secondly, we were PROUD to be girls, which confused them”. In *Don't Fall Asleep*, Christina writes a comic strip called, “living with anneka” which is a cute story about her fun and lovely roommate. Similarly, in *Red Alert*, there is a comic about a breakup that follows the main character’s travels around Montreal.

Cartoons are also a different form of sharing information. *Some stuff you should know* is a zine exclusively about relationship abuse. While dealing with a weighty subject, the zine is infused with many cartoons. In one cartoon there are two couples socializing and the man, laughing, is saying, “Can you believe she thought that? I’m dating the dumbest girl alive! Wait, I’ve got million of ‘em... hoo ha!”. The cartoons, while weighty help to reinforce the message of the zine, while avoiding a preachy tone. Similarly, Carly Stasko’s cartoon, “A Fun Game for Girls” in *Beating Around the Bush*, gives comic form instructions on how to give yourself a breast exam. My favorite comic, which comes from the zine *Red Alert*, is titled, “Candida: a true story”. This comic follows the story of this girl named Candida and her cat Pinhead. In this cartoon, Candida eats a lot of candy, has a lot of sex, and then “Miss Candida’s snatch become itchy”, at which point a talking loaf of bread comes to tell her “a yeast infection of the snatch may occur as a result of extreme sugar intake, messy sex, tampons, antibiotics, sex with bread or you could get it from your partner” to which Candida replies, “oh no, sex with bread”. The loaf of bread then gives her a variety of natural remedies for her condition. In *Hot Pants*, a D.I.Y. gynecology zine accompanies its remedies for Chlamydia and crabs with charming hand drawings of delightful and creepy insects and crabs. Through humour, the creators of *Red Alert* and *Hot Pants*, decrease the weighty taboo of discussing gynecological issues, embracing humour as a feminist response to a society that only lets

men make snatch jokes. Gay zinesters reclaim the ability to make gay jokes and write gay comics. *Pussy Pen*'s "I love pussy" comic is a celebration of lesbian sex and masturbation. Humour is another means through which the zinesters can express celebration of their bodies and angst towards mainstream society. Lisa McElroy's cartoon "Gazongas" in *Discharge* and Heze's "My Boobies" in *Beating Around the Bush* are both comic celebrations of breasts.

Humour in feminist zines specifically attacks the humourless feminist motif. In a cartoon in *Discharge*, the creator answers to the age old "I'm not a feminist but..." by asking, "Do you ever wonder what a feminist butt looks like?" The following square has an angry 'feminist butt', dagger and whip in hand yelling, "Fuck you world! Hey, there's a man! Let's get him!" In *Slightly More than Soundbites*, the creator provides, "top 10 answers to the question 'Are you a man-hater?'" Some of the best retorts are: "Oh come on! You're not serious! That assumption is soooo 2nd wave backlash! The rest of us are so over that crap" and, "who are you? The 'love patrol'? I think you should start with the woman-haters... they're more numerous, louder, more belligerent, generally easier to spot". Finally in *Beating Around the Bush*, Allison Bechdel's cartoon pokes fun at the academizing of sexuality. A dildo-adorned woman says to her female partner who is in bed, "Oh please, Mo. You're so provincial. Can't you see I'm disarticulating the epistemological foundation of gender through deferral and deconstruction of fixed sexual signifiers?" Finally, zine humour pokes fun at the mainstream media that they are resisting. *Musk Gland Sally*, includes a satirical letter to "Self Help Cindy" in which Cindy provides the most cost and time effective ways for managing friendships. *Discharge* includes a cartoon entitled, "The Long Term Effects of Cosmo" in which a

blurry eyed woman ponders, “Am I sick? Really, tell me. Am I all right? It’s all right, I can handle the truth, doc. Is it all in my head? Am I sick?” The humour in zines also publicizes women’s largely suppressed sense of humour. Finally, the humour in zines contributes to making zines both fun to create and accessible to readers. Kristina Sheryl Wong (2003) succinctly declares, “Don’t be afraid of the word ‘feminist’! It doesn’t mean man-hating or being humourless! There is a new thing called ‘third-wave’ feminism that will open the door so you can embrace politics by being who you are!” (296)

Conclusion:

The linguistic tools employed by feminist zine creators are contextual means of resistance, responding to the third-wave context of a feminist altered society and a media-saturated consumer culture. Through personal narratives, the zine creators reassert the importance of the every person, and create an arena through which to explore elements of their burgeoning identities. The abundance of personal narratives connects third-wave feminists to the second-wave feminist axiom, ‘the personal is political’.

Feminist zine creators respond to consumer culture through their original, colourful, and humorous creations which attempt to reclaim fun. Through the use of bricolage and irony, zinesters use what is at hand to produce new, poignant cultural representations. Finally, as D.I.Y. media, zines encourage media creation, and create progressive culture that empowers the every person to create their media, inspiring the growth of progressive communities.

Telling stories, taking back the show, and promoting D.I.Y creations are all

ways in which feminist zines are contextual acts of resistance. They are resisting both consumer culture and what is perceived as 'feminist orthodoxy'. Through this resistance and creation of new texts, new feminist subjects are emerging. Cutting and pasting, humour and stories are allowing change, political and personal to occur. Feminist zines are accomplishing the goals set out by the editors of *Discharge*:

To provide a forum that will mobilize women's voices...use our own words...create our own language...self-representation...self-definition...let's make a transformative space, an opening, an open space...there is room for change...multiplicity ad infinitum.

Chapter 5: Third-wave Context: Generation XX

Coined in Douglas Coupland's 1991 novel, 'Generation X', generation Xers are "cynical, rather antisocial children of the media" (Shugart 2001: 3). It is an unapologetically narcissistic, whiny, and media-saturated to the point of toxicity, generation. Generation X is considered to have been born between 1965 and 1976. They came of age in the gluttonous and conservative eighties when Reagan and Thatcher ran the free world. I would extend this generation to include those born into the mid eighties, because coming of age now, in a context of George Bush and Paul Martin, internet shopping, and designer culture-jamming running shoes⁹, is an era with just as much possibility to inspire cynicism. One of the few broad similarities amongst third-wave feminists is that they grew up in a similar cultural context. Piepmeier and Dicker (2003) argue that

the third-wave has less to do with a neat generational divide than with a cultural context: the third-wave consists of those of us who have developed our sense of identity in a world shaped by technology, capitalism, multiple modes of sexuality, changing national demographics, and declining economic vitality (14).

Third-wave feminism as political practice has its foundation and roots in various historic and present movements. These movements, with their tools, language, and 'repertoires of resistance' provide various 'orders of discourse' from which to act. In this Chapter I will first explore how feminist zines draw from the various 'orders of discourse' that shape their context. The impact and influences of second-wave feminism are apparent in a majority of the zines. Feminism, as a school of thought and a social movement is often learned in school. The academic discourse and feminists' relationship

⁹ In 2004, Adbusters, a culture jamming magazine, anti-consumer corporation, launched and promoted their own sneaker, for radicals would didn't want to support Nike.

with school and academic feminism will be addressed. Third-wave feminism is situated within the larger contemporary global justice movement. Third-wave feminists are also drawing upon established environmentalism, continuing to rearticulate women's relationships to the environment and food. Finally, third-wave feminists use zines as a platform from which to express their ambivalent relationship with popular culture. While these zines are largely based in personal narratives, in this Chapter it will become apparent that feminist zinesters are also actively engaging with the world around them; their unique Generation XX context.

Legacies of the Second-wave

The feminist writings in the zines demonstrate a strong and reverent connection to second-wave feminists.¹⁰ Academic essays, reference lists and recommended reading lists are common features of feminist zines. In this zine sample, recommended reading lists consistently cite Adrienne Rich, Audre Lorde, and bell hooks. The zines include essays on second-wave feminist writings, reprints of second-wave feminist art, and interviews with older feminists. *Vagina Dentata* (1999) includes an affectionate, "Top Ten Reasons I Dig Old Skool (sic) Feminists". Old skool feminists she defines as "'second-wave', possibly (ex)hippie wimmin, hereafter referred to as 'The OSF'". Some of the reasons Venus includes are:

Causes they make me feel like I exist: How amazing and validating it is for a confused young grrrl to talk to an older, educated woman that respects you and can tell you your feelings of anger and alienation are legitimate and shared in an experience that can not be underestimated....

¹⁰ This reverence is mirrored in the Canadian compilation, *Turbo Chicks* (2001). In this compilation each contributor offered a list of top 10 feminist influences. The majority of the contributors cited a professor, teacher, or writers they had read in their post-secondary studies.

Cause they're such women: I love the OSF because they get so much power out of their womanhood--- they've spent years cultivating love and power for their bodies and they exude it with every step they take...

Cause they haven't heard of Britney Spears: I dif the OSF because first, they tend not to pay attention to pop culture, giving Britney less airtime, and second, they know all the reasons Britney makes me so desperate, and will say how terrible she is if I tell them about her.

The zine, *Little Words* (2002) includes a detailed plan on how to create workshops to teach feminists to break down their white privilege. The text is largely based on the writings of Audre Lorde. *Discharge's* (1999) special issue on sacred spaces is inspired by a similar issue of the characteristically second-wave feminist magazine *Ms. Discharge's* "holiday reading/ wish list" includes: Alice Walker, Angela Carter, bell hooks, Margaret Atwood and Jeanette Winterson. *A little something for your body and mind* (2000) and *Pussywillow* both include reproductions of Judy Chicago paintings, while the *Queer Womyn's Diversity Zine* (2004) includes a drawing of a sassy lip-pierced goldfish with the accompanying classic Irina Dunn witticism, "a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle".¹¹ Throughout all aspects of the intertextual analysis, employing the resources of second-wave feminism is unsurprisingly present.

Astrid Henry explains that the relationship between second and third-wave feminism is often seen as a mother-daughter relationship. This is in part because many third-wave feminists were raised by second-wave feminist mothers. Some third-wave feminists view the feminism of their mothers as "confining, regulating, and puritanical" (Henry 2004: 47). Astrid Henry (2004) writes,

¹¹ While this quotation is often credited to Gloria Steinem, it was actually the Australian writer and politician Irina Dunn who first wrote the saying on a bathroom stall door at her university in 1970. <http://www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/Vista/3255/herstory.htm>

when one compares Steinem's 'unmitigated and joyful freedom' with the depressing sense of confinement and curbed independence found in some third-wave texts, it is clear that there has been a definite generational shift in the way that women experience feminism (41).

There is a sense amongst the third-wave generation that along with the revered liberating aspects of second-wave feminism comes an oppressive form of 'feminist orthodoxy'. Lynn Crosbie (1997) describes this oscillation between the feminisms perfectly when she states, "While I still define myself as a feminist as I understood it then- I am one of *them*- I find myself bound by the collective but also asserting, like a rake and miscreant, that 'I don't want to be tied' to one way of thinking or another" (4).

Deconstructing or at least responding to the perceived master narrative of feminism is a common theme in the zines. In *Matilda* (2003), Matilda writes an article about her favorite bad ass boys on television. Feeling feminist guilt she writes, "So let's not delay, here are my current, favorite, television badboys. And yes, this is still a feminist zine, give me a break already". Similarly, in *Beating Around the Bush* (2001), Josey Vogels struggles between what she has been taught about feminism, and her desire to be supportive of her friend's breast-reduction surgery: "having your boobs cut open and their insides gutted like a Newfie codfish. Wasn't this against everything feminism had taught me? We're supposed to be learning to love our bodies, dealing with whatever we've been dealt" While a feminist-altered culture is a privilege, it also comes with the weight of many feminist constructs and stereotypes as explored throughout this project.

There is also a consistent third-wave feminist critique of the second-wave's maintaining of white and heterosexist privilege. In *52%* Kate MacLean (200) writes,

Upon entering a new wave of feminism, the third-wave, which I assure you does exist. We're demanding new choices that offer us opportunities to express our unedited ideas with our own voices. The second-wave feminist ideal of womyn's

homogeneity does not fit for many of us. Maybe that mold never did, and in some womyn's excitement to reclaim space, racist, heterosexist and elitist ideologies went unchallenged (27).

Third-wave feminist zinesters continue to work towards an inclusive movement as is explored in Chapter 7. Third-wave feminist zinesters also challenge the supposed orthodoxy of second-wave feminism by challenging its image as humourless and ugly, as was examined in Chapter 4.

Feminist zines contribute to an ongoing dialogue between second and third-wave feminists. Third-wave feminists acknowledge loudly and often their indebtedness to second-wave feminists. This is expressed through the constant citing of second-wave literature and articles which make this gratitude explicit. At the same time, as expressed by Henry (2004), third-wave feminists desire to break away from some aspects of second-wave feminism, and stereotypes of feminists that have developed over time. This is evident in critical articles, and aggressive assertions that feminism is fun, guiltless, and beautiful.

Academia:

Feminist zinesters are largely influenced by their experiences at universities, studying women's studies, or being involved in student activist groups such as womyn's centers or people's interest groups. Drawing from second-wave feminist discourses has largely been made possible because of the growth of women's studies programs in the last thirty years. In 1970 the University of British Columbia offered the course "The Canadian Women: Our Story" while in the same year the University of Toronto offered "Women: Oppression and Liberation". These two courses, organized and taught by women's liberation activists represented the first women's studies courses in Canadian

academia. In 2005, there are forty-one women's studies undergraduate programs and seventeen women's studies graduate programs in Canada. Many third-wave feminists learn or adopt their feminism at college or university with second-wave professors as their mentors. Sixteen of the zines in this study were compilations based from, or supported by university womyn's centers. Of the zinesters, 26 identified themselves explicitly as students. The influence of academia on third-wave feminist zines is demonstrated through academic essays, resource and reading lists, articles critiquing academia, and more general discussions of life as a student.

In Sara Evan's zine *Root* and Andrea Ryer's zine, *Some Things You Should Know*, their school lives are central. In *Root*, Sara has just graduated with a degree in biology. She writes about her school experience, stating, "I am not in school, but I will always be learning. And science/school has been everything I do". *Some Things You Should Know* is a zine explicitly describing Andrea's experiences in law school. Andrea's world is one full of studying: "I study at the kitchen table, on the balcony, back and forth, back and forth, I study in the tub, I study in bed". In *Huh?* Jess reflects at length, through cartoons and poetry on her postmodern art class and her holocaust class. She writes, "I'm still not positive if taking the course was entirely healthy for me...I did realize something listening to my classmates talk, my people are strong". *Poutine Press*, a zine produced by three women at Bishop's University frequently discussed issues of the Bishop's University faculty strike and includes a reoccurring critique of the Golden Keys society. The zines often publish sections of academic essays. In *Beating Around the Bush*, Jess Carfagnini reprints an excerpt from her honors thesis in psychology on "the relationship between positive sexual functioning and happiness and well-being". The zines are also

replete with recommended academic reading lists. School, university and academia have a demonstrable impact on the zinesters.

Feminist zinesters also use their space in zines to critique academia. In *Discharge*, Laurie Dawson writes about a handbook distributed at her university, St. Francis Xavier University which advertises the university as a match-making service. She writes,

I attend a university whose handbook advertises the opportunity to take advantage of top-notch courses, facilities, faculty and marriage. It dotes upon the fact that the majority of its students find their future spouses amongst the digital classrooms, beer-fests and paper-writing insomnia. It is written for women, and alarmingly, by women (33).

Within the 'ivory tower' zinesters identify contentious issues. Dawson finds it disturbing that a university education is still touted as a match-making service for women. Sarah, in *Halfbreeds, Homos, and other Heroes* takes offense more specifically to the "whiteness in women's studies". Sarah writes that as a queer¹² woman of mixed blood, she had hoped that women's studies would acknowledge difference more successfully than other departments and

that not only would there be other aboriginal women in my classes, but that I would find allies in the people around me, and that I wouldn't have to stand up and yell at the prof, running out of the room as I had done in other departments, such as anthropology.

Unfortunately, for Sarah, her hopes aren't realized and she proceeds to discuss her frustrations with women appropriating Native spirituality, and the lack of dialogue surrounding colonization.

¹² In this context, I am using 'queer' as an "umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications" (Jagose 1996: 1). Annamarie Jagose (1996) explains that 'queer' is now more commonly used to "describe a nascent theoretical model which has developed out of more traditional lesbian and gay studies" (1). Queer studies extend much broader than 'gay and lesbian studies' and focus on "mismatches between sex, gender and desire" (Jagose 1996:1). However, I will be using 'queer' in line with the zinesters' use of the term 'queer' in this context which follows Jagose's first queer definition.

The feminist zinesters in this study are largely educated university students or graduates. Their writing, through including academic essays and reading lists, and by explicitly discussing student life, reflecting on classes, and critiquing academia, demonstrates the impact of academia on their lives. Judith Stacey (2000) writes that

By literary dictionary standards, academic feminism is *by definition* oxymoronic. If an academic is someone ‘scholarly to the point of being unaware of the outside world’ who pursues knowledge that is ‘theoretical or speculative without a practical purpose or intention; and should find herself categorically at odds with the fundamentally political character of the ‘F’ word (1190).

Stacey (2000) continues to write that “however oxymoronic the concept may be in theory, in practice academic feminism has become a social fact” (1190). While women’s studies programs and academia in general maintain some elitism, in practice, third-wave feminists are inspired, engaged in and enraged by their women’s studies and feminist-influenced post secondary educations.

Global Justice Movement: You Can’t Theorize Breakfast

Third-wave feminism is situated within a larger global justice movement: an international movement which protests the moves towards economic globalization advocated by institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The global justice movement includes activists from diverse backgrounds and perspectives such as environmentalists, labor activists, peace activists and anarchists who recognize and resist against the compounding negative effects of economic globalization. Dennis O’Neil and Eric Odell (2000) from the organization *Freedom Road* describe the movement:

The new movement is in fact a movement of movements. It came into being as dozens of streams of struggle swelled in the ‘90s, fed by the steady rain of greed

and repression in the hills. These streams burst their banks and began to merge, creating a new river which is even now cutting a new course through the wide plains of U.S. and world politics (1).

Third-wave feminism is situated within this river as feminists recognize that their feminist issues are similarly issues of race, class and economic globalization. Alison Piepmeier and Rory Dicker (2003) write, “we no longer live in the world that feminists of the second-wave faced,” and continue to state that third-wave feminists “are therefore concerned not simply with ‘women’s issues’ but with a broad range of interlocking topics” (10). Contemporary feminism is shaped by a global move towards integrated activism as a response to the contemporary era of increased economic globalization. Despite perceptions of third-wave feminisms as largely individualized and focused on personal expression, increased economic globalization leading to increased global injustices largely inflicted upon the world’s women, has made some third-wave feminists increasingly global in scope. Third-wavers grew up in a globalized world which has made them more aware of their place in an international context. Tim Falconer (2001) explains that those generations born between the 1960s and 1980s “have internalized the idea of the global community; they take it for granted and see themselves as citizens of the world” (95).

New, globalized, feminisms take on many forms. Trying to bridge her academic feminism with grassroots work with women in Honduras, Samantha Sacks (2001) declares, “no matter how many post-colonial, postmodern binary pedagogies I wrench from some underexposed academic, YOU CAN’T THEORIZE BREAKFAST (capitals hers)” (55). Feminist zinesters demonstrate their involvement in the global justice movement by first exploring the problems of economic globalization, and then writing

about their activities such as protesting, being Radical Cheerleaders and sticker campaigning.

Firstly, by outlining the problems of economic globalization, zinesters encourage awareness and activism. *We Are Warriors* includes a description of structural adjustment programs. They explain how institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank give loans under the terms of numerous conditions which effect domestic economies, culture, and lifestyles. They write,

the two institutions continue to be the chosen tools of the political and business elites for ruling the global economy, and run, to one degree or another, about 90 Southern countries economies. These countries are forced to adopt policies even more committed to the deregulation and withdrawal of government from insuring public welfare than those in the U.S.

This zine includes a list of website resources and activist groups where the readers can further their understanding of economic globalization, and get involved. *Let it be known* includes, “One Way to Look at it” which outlines the gendered nature of global economics. They cite that, “Women represent about 60% of the billion people earning \$1 or less a day...80% of Third World workers who manufacture products of export are women. They work up to 80 hours a week for as little as 18 cents an hour”. By making explicit the gendered nature of the global economy, readers are armed with reasons to act. In 52% Charu Bhaneja writes about sex-selective abortions in India, and the meanings of “choice”. In her article, Bhaneja tackles how Western feminist notions of reproductive choice have entirely different meanings in an Indian context. ‘Choice’ is affectively coerced by other issues. Bhaneja (2000) writes, “the focus on choice, to me, seems irrelevant because population control is aggressively promoted by the government and international agencies where abortions are available on demand for family planning

purposes” (13). In *Red Alert #2*, the zinesters draw attention to the exploitation of non-Western women by contraceptive corporations. They write about how Depo-Provera, an injectable contraceptive, has been administered to women without their consent in Bangladesh and factory workers in Central America. The drug has serious side effects and has not been approved by the FDA. Through explicating the nature of economic globalization, and its gendered effects, feminist zinesters encourage activism within the global justice movement.

Feminist zinesters also demonstrate an active involvement in the global justice movement by writing about their activities. The activities of third-wave feminists are often ignored. The typical anti-corporate globalization activist image is a young, white, hippie, male. Jess (2003) in *Slightly More Than Soundbites* writes that while all activists are constantly challenged on their stances, “women activists get this kind of bullshit even more than our fellow male activists, since women are already not taken seriously when it comes to politics, not listened to or given as much air space as men, not considered experts on anything”. In feminist zines, women are activist. In *Red Alert #4*, a zine produced by the Montreal based menstrual health collective, *Blood Sisters*, Suzanna writes about the activities of the Blood Sisters in Mexico City. In 2001, the Blood Sisters went to Mexico City to give workshops on alternative menstrual health products. Suzanna writes, “Tampax Kotex etc. have dominated Mexican minds because of U.S. imperial expansion has spread all over the continent promising Mexican women to achieve a higher and more healthier quality of life by using their products”. By bringing their Blood Sisters activities to Mexico, they recognize how economic globalization is affecting women internationally.

Feminist zinesters also discuss their participation in anti-corporate globalization protests, which are a central part of the activities of the global justice movement. In *Let it be known #3*, Caroline Brennan (2002) writes an eyewitness account of protesting at the G-20 meeting in Montreal, 2000. She writes, “our group numbered in the hundreds, with students of all economic and ethnic backgrounds, and from both Francophone and Anglophone communities” (38). The contributors of *Letters from the war years* write about the limits of street protesting. A contributor writes, “we were women of colour turned off by the white dominance of many antiwar meetings and afraid to participate in marches because of being racially profiled” (10). In *Can U See Yr Self*, Allyson diaries her experiences at a “Reclaim the Streets” party in Toronto, 2001. “Reclaim the Streets” parties often include blocking intersections with couches, jungle gyms, sandboxes, guerilla gardening (drilling holes into the pavement to plant saplings), or staging mock car crashes at the site of the secretly planned party (Klein 2000: 312). Allyson Jayne (2001) writes of her experience, “I made a pair of wings for the event. I wore my prettiest new vintage dress and running shoes for dancing...I thought back to my first RTS in 99, and how I had such a great time, letting loose and dancing in the streets. And maybe making people think a bit about public space and how it should be used” (5).

A frequent sight at anti-globalization protests is the Radical Cheerleaders. Dressed in funky, alternative cheerleader attire and waving pompoms, the Radical Cheerleaders write their own anti-oppression chants. Radical Cheerleaders define their cheerleading as “protest and performance! It is activism with pom-poms and combat boots! It is non-violent direct action in the form of street theater. And it's FUN!” (Radical Cheerleaders: 2005). Calls to join the Radical Cheerleaders, photos of the

Cheerleaders, and chants are printed in zines. 52% includes chants and a Radical Cheerleader womanifesto:

Well sistahs and bruthahs, nuf with the bullshit. It's time to send all this inequality crap back at the man. It's time to unite to yell, scream, shout, and dance it from the rooftops with a little crew we're calling the RADICAL CHEERLEADERS.

The zine *New Moon* includes an ad declaring, "RAD Cheerleaders Wants U!", they add that "issues to be targeted include: working forest initiative, queer/ transphobia, other human/ animal rights and environmental issues".

Feminists are active in a broader global justice movement, acknowledging that economic globalization has gendered effects. Feminist zines serve as sites for both reflection and action. Zines act as an alternative media source where another view on the International Monetary Fund, World Bank and global economics can be expressed. Feminist zines also demonstrate the practices of third-wave feminists within the global justice movement. While third-wave feminists are often perceived as overly self-absorbed, their activities surrounding global issues suggest otherwise. The third-wave perspective is as a global citizen, astute about global corporate control and their place in an international context. The content of the zines, as I have emphasized is largely about individual identity making formations. However, as citizens of the world, third-wave feminists are globally conscious. Paulo Freire argues that liberation of the oppressed is possible, "only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (1970: 33). In the zines, third-wave feminists both write about the effects of increased economic globalization, as means of reflection, and also their activities— the action.

Graffiti Grrrl

“If I had a hammer I’d smash Patriarchy!”, “If she’s got a tummy, she’s extra yummy”, “Feminism’s Not Dead”, “toxin free uterus”, “Meat’s not treat to those you eat”, “I like feminists, I think they’re cute” and “Women’s Place is in the struggle. REVOLUTION NOW!” are some of the various slogans, accompanied by an assortment of clever images that are on stickers produced by feminist activists and reproduced in zines. Third wave feminists actively engage in their environment by responding to the increasing pollution of their mental environment, an effect of an ever increasing consumer culture. Stickering is one space reclaiming action promoted in feminist zines. Allyson Mitchell (1998) explains that “advertising reduces who we are and what we think into a consumption crazy greed-culture demographic that excludes anything ‘queer’, ‘ethnic’, ‘poor’ or ‘fat’. Slapping a sticker on an ad or a bus seat can be a way of dealing with urban rage” (62). The zine, *Letter From the War Years: A queer/trans POC anti-war zine*, includes a call for activists to “plaster the city and subways with creative weapons of mass resistance images and messages”. While this call includes information about meeting date and time, the images for the stickers are also throughout the zine. This particular zine included stickers declaring, “I Resiste! U.S Out of Iraq!” and “Operation Homeland Resistance: the war is not over”. Contributors of *Letters from the war years* were active in sticker-protesting—plastering public spaces such as newspaper boxes and parking meters with politically charged stickers. They give D.I.Y advice on how to create subversive stickers and graffiti. They (2003) write,

the possibilities are endless. Each day’s surreal newspaper headlines and pictures provide ample opportunities to cut out text and add a few key words. Writing “lies” “impeach Bush” or “the revolution is not being televised” with a phat, oil

based marker...on newspaper boxes, ads and other forms of propaganda is quick and easy activism (10).

Because stickering is low-technology activism, emulation is easy; the images can easily be copied onto sticker paper by any zine reader.

Feminist zines both reproduce 'found' works of art and advocate for reclaiming space in various graffiti-like activities. Allison Mitchell (2001), in her study of feminist and lesbian graffiti in Kensington Market, Toronto explored how graffiti was used to create open space for marginalized peoples. She writes that, "feminist graffiti is a necessary 'emergency storytelling' for those women who are marginalized by mainstream politics and culture" (222). *Pussywillow* includes an image of a woman, smiling, with her arms in the air, the accompanying text reads: "take up space: love your natural size". The zinesters write, "We found this poster stuck to a tree on Wards Island in Toronto". In the zine, *Red Alert #2*, there is a cartoon that follows a woman drinking coffee, thinking, going to an art store to purchase a marker; she walks across town, climbs up to a billboard and ads armpit hair to the female model in a perfume billboard. The last square shows the woman—the culture jammer—sitting again happily in her apartment drinking coffee. *We are Warriors* includes this graffiti-inspiring poem:

Manifesta of a grrrl with a marker
I am a rebel-grrrl-rouser
I am a grrrl-style theorist
I am reclaiming my space.
I am a graffiti artist-scribbler
I am a heartfelt revolutionary
I use my graffiti-action style art/theory to reclaim "public" space for grrrls and women.
I am subverting an image of dominance.

Little Words zine includes a story by the creator of *The Bathroom Activist (TBA)*. TBA

asserts that when it comes to bathrooms, corporations have gained too much control.

TBA promotes hanging controversial art in bathrooms, replacing stall ads with posters for menstrual health groups, “hanging petitions next to the hand towels so the guests can sign!” Zines are a medium for promoting space reclaiming activities.

The Environment: Food is a Feminist Issue

The zine creators are also influenced by and express interest and passion in environmental issues. The zine creators briefly touch on many environmental issues. *Letters from the war years* contextualizes the war in Iraq in a context of increased smog, global warming, West Nile virus and other environmental catastrophes. *Poutine Press* includes a variety of articles on environmental issues such as: factory farming, selective logging, composting, and water conservation. However, when it comes to the environment, feminist zinesters are primarily concerned with food security.

Cooking is a stable, universal social activity. Food preparation, the cutting, boiling, frying and mashing of foods is in itself not highly ideological. However, cooking has been articulated as a female activity in many specific ways. Feminist zinesters, through handwritten recipes and discussions of cooking are actively rearticulating women’s relationship with food. In her textual analysis of post WW 2 cookbooks, Jessamyn Neuhaus analyzed how cooking was articulated as an activity in which women could entrap and secure a man, and therefore security. The cookbooks she studied reinforced gendered ideologies of food by describing the perfectly masculine meat dishes to serve up to men, as compared to the dainty and delicate fancy sandwiches to serve to your girlfriends. Neuhaus (1999) states, “[i]n these texts, women were to Jell-O salad as men were to meat. Women required dainty, decorative food and men required hearty

meals that stuck to their ribs” (10). Women’s relationship to cooking was articulated through ideologies of romance, gendered relationships towards food consumption, and the cult of domesticity. In a contemporary setting, the articulation of women and cooking maintains some aspects of the post WW2 era. The feminized nature of contemporary cookbooks and the cooking focus of mainstream women’s magazines continue to enforce that cooking is a female activity largely to please men.

However, this connection between women’s cooking and an oppressive cult of domesticity is flexible. In the zines, the connection between women and cooking is being actively rearticulated. The recipes in the zines are offered in a new context which recognizes the many interconnecting ways in which food, consumption and preparation is a feminist issue.¹³ Firstly, in feminist zines, the political and patriarchal implications of eating meat are apparent. The over consumption of meat in the West entrenches the meat-is-masculine-and-therefore-powerful patriarchal metaphor (Adams 1992). Carol Adams (1992) writes that eating meat, which requires more energy and resources to produce, is both a mythological and practical index of social hierarchies including gender, race and class. In *52%*, Krishna Mercer writes,

I have come to connect and understand the relationship between vegetarianism and feminism. Enter *The Sexual Politics of Meat...* Carol Adams’ concern lies in the interrelation of male dominance and meat eating. She believes, as do I, that to rebuke meat and dairy is to displace an aspect of male dominance while deconstructing the ways in which female and non-human oppressions are linked.

The recipes in the zines are almost exclusively vegetarian, with a few fish recipes, and many vegan recipes such as recipes for vegan peanut butter cookies, and vegan chocolate cake. While cooking meat was previously articulated as a necessary element of securing a man, it is now articulated as an oppressive activity which further entrenches inequalities

¹³ See Appendix 3: Feminist Zine Pirate #2: Food is a Feminist Issue

in society. The over consumption of meat reinforces global resource consumption inequalities. While largely embracing vegetarianism, feminist zine recipes reflect an eco-feminist understanding. “[e]cofeminists argue for a paradigmatic shift in patriarchal science, knowledge and technology, to a sustainable global economy, together with an end to capitalism and its inherent dichotomies” (Humm 1989:73). To these ends, feminist recipes advocate local, organic produce, while at the same time embracing international cuisine. According to Bloodroot, a feminist restaurant, “feminist food is seasonal. We use what’s close at hand, what is most fresh and local and therefore least expensive and least preserved” (Bloodroot: 2004). One’s choice of cuisine can also be political. The zine, “Poutine Press”, prints recipes from the “Axis of Evil Cookbook” with the commentary, “do you think the invasion of Iraq is a Croc...Pot? So did the authors of the Axis of Evil Cookbook, who seek to provide cultural understanding and respect through sharing recipes and knowledge from Iraq, Afghanistan, and Korea” (2004).

The style of the writing of the recipes in the zines is also a rearticulation of women’s relationship to cooking. Neuhaus (1999) explains that when the mass production of cookbooks began after WW1, they, “contained exact measurements, ingredient lists, and exercised an impersonal authoritative voice” (3). Cookbooks were largely produced by food or appliance companies marketing their goods. Women’s knowledge of food preparation was undercut by the companies’ authority. A dictated, prescribed relationship to cooking, meat preparation, and baking ‘beau-catching’ cookies alienates women from an activity which isn’t necessarily oppressive. Cooking, in fact is an important part of women’s social history, and is what I have termed our ‘gynoculinary heritage’: the undervalued artistic genius women have historically invested in food. The

recipes in the zines show a reverence for women's ability to create sensuous and artistic meals, while not reinscribing that this is naturally what women can do, or what women are limited to doing. "Back to your Roots Soup", "Mom's Homemade Chilli (sic)", "Baba Luba's Brown Bread" are all recipes in zines that celebrate women's gynoculinary heritage that are written in personal, conversation tones, often hand-written with illustrations, because, as noted in *Discharge*, "hand written recipes are the yummiest".

The relationship between women and cooking has largely been articulated through cookbooks and mainstream culture as a relationship mediated by strong gendered ideologies of female domestic labor for male consumption. Recipes in feminist zines rearticulate this relationship by connecting women to cooking through ecofeminist ideologies of global sustainability, including an emphasis on vegetarianism. Women's relationship to cooking is also rearticulated as a celebration of women's social history as culinary artists, rather than dismissed as women's dismal history of drudgery.

We're Pop Culture Babies

Zines initially emerged as a means for popular culture consumers to become active in the productions that they loved or loathed. Zines originated in the punk and science fictions scenes as fanzines. Stephen Duncombe (1997) explains that zines marked a resurgence of participatory culture, "writers use zines to make *demands* upon consumer culture" (108). Zines, in their participatory style, resist culture industries which exclude the majority and assume the passivity of popular culture consumers. The assumption of passivity in popular culture consumption is particularly true for women. Douglas (1994) writes that women stand "at the intersection of another major cultural contradiction: the war between what academics call the 'producer' ethos and the 'consumer ethos'" (18).

The style and function of zines demonstrates an active engagement with culture, while, the content of zines demonstrates a consistent ambivalence, a love it/shove it¹⁴ attitude towards popular culture.

Today's culture is a 'culture of celebrity'. It makes sense that within this context, third-wave feminism as 'celebrity feminism' would have third-wave sheroes like Xena the Warrior Princess, Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Carrie Bradshaw. Jennifer Pozner (2003) explains that in the early 1990s, the media declared that contemporary feminism was "a whole lot of stylish fluff". Why? Because contemporary pop culture is overrun with 'images of grown single women as frazzles, self-indulgent drivel like *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1998)" (33). Pozner (2003) continues to state that, "clearly the mainstream media —not the women's movement— heralded these mass-marketed, pop-culture prima donnas as post feminist poster girls. Equating the movement with the media is ludicrous" (34).

Susan Douglas (1994) explains that,

most women take for granted their relationships with the mass media. They assume they are the only ones who love and hate Vogue at the same time...contrary to media stereotypes, such contradictions and ambivalence are also at the heart of what it means to be a feminist (20).

In a society where so much meaning is created through the media, feminist evaluations of pop culture representations of women do become a part of feminist practice.¹⁵ Heywood and Drake (1997) explain,

third-wave feminists are well aware of the power of representations to promote or contest domination...we take critical engagement with popular culture as a key to political struggles. Besides, we're pop-culture babies; we want some pleasure with our analysis (51).

¹⁴ Love it/ Shove it is the name of a *Bitch* magazine column.

¹⁵ The third-wave feminist zine turned magazine, *Bitch* is a "feminist response to pop culture" while another popular zine turned magazine, *BUST*, has a regular emphasis on pop culture and feminism.

They continue, “we take pop culture as just one pedagogical site that materializes our struggles with some of the ways power works” (1997: 52).¹⁶

Love it!

Fandom of music, in particular punk music, is expressed through personal narratives, music reviews and interviews with bands. In these writings it is possible to understand how women are both actively engaging in popular culture and how popular culture can be a source of cultural capital. Emmy Pantin, in *Brown*, writes about how one punkstress diminished her feelings of invisibility in mainstream culture. She writes,

People used to tell me all the time that I looked like Polystyrene of the X-ray Spex. When I finally did see a picture of her, I understood immediately. I didn't look anything like her. But she was one of the very few brown girls that anybody ever heard of from the 1970s punk rock explosion. I identify with her, but I do not look like her.

In *This is my blood*, Gabriela writes about how punk music inspired her,

I started listening to punk music a few years ago, and Spitboy stood out as a band I listened to over and over through the years. As a young girl getting into punk and the values of that community, Spitboy was absolutely amazing to me. They sang fierce, loud, thrashing songs about women's rights, abuse, race...they screamed about how it felt to be afraid as a woman sometimes, how important it was to take control over our bodies.

Similarly, in *Discharge*, Andrea Mossman writes about how she found attending the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival powerful. She writes,

It is a very empowering and rejuvenating experience to see that there is an attainable alternative to 'normal' society. Because each woman attending is an integral part of the whole festival experience, each leaves with the tools and ambition to recreate its atmosphere of tranquility and acceptance wherever she goes.

¹⁶ See Appendix 4: Feminist Zine Pirate #3: Love it/ Shove it

Seeing themselves reflected in alternative scenes, or hearing resonating sentiments sung, provides tools with which to resist mainstream conceptions of femininity.

Stephen Duncombe explains that one of the roles or purposes of zines is to make more personal, the impersonal, celebrity world. In *Lickety Split*, the zinesters get personal with the music scene as they interview the bands *Pony Up*, *Wolf Parade*, and *Holy Moly*. *Musk Gland Sally* interviews guitarist Guy Picciotto of the band *Fugazi* and *52%* includes an interview with the songstress Julie Doiran.

Zinesters also write about more mainstream popular culture in their zines. *Pussywillow*, a zine on menstruation, includes an excerpt from Judy Blume's "Are you there God? It's Me, Margaret." Judy Blume, a popular and somewhat controversial novelist for young women provides a lot of cultural capital for girls and young women through her novels that talk about the taboo subjects of menstruation, masturbation, and sexualities. Some zinesters simply include lists in their zines of what they have been listening to, reading, or watching lately. *Matilda* is listening to: Holly Golightly, Cat Power, The Maynards, Neil Young. Jess, creator of *Slightly More Than Soundbites* has been listening to: the Blow, Erase Errata, Kinnie Starr and Lily Frost, while Maria of *Tune Out #12* has been listening to Le Tigre, The Hollies, and Hanson and has been watching Buffy, Saved! and Spider Man. Zinesters demonstrate an ability to tease out the valuable elements of popular culture.

Shove it!

Third-wave feminists were raised in a climate with increased corporate control. In this context, Naomi Klein (2000) explains that, "[I]t makes a good deal of sense that high school kids would have a more realistic grasp of the absurdities of branded life. They,

after all, are the ones who grew up sold” (61). For this reason issues of corporate monopolization —meaning the increased and exclusive White, male control of our economies, medical systems and culture industries— are salient with third-wave feminists. For this reason feminist zinesters also scream a “Shove It!” to corporate consumer culture through more straightforward articles and images deconstructing the ways in which consumer culture objectifies women, particularly by focusing on their bodies.

In *Discharge*, a contributor draws a t-shirt that has a picture of a dog on it with ‘good dog’ written underneath. She writes that this is an “actual t-shirt marketed toward 9-14 year old GIRLS” that was found at a local mall. *Beating Around the Bush: the boobular issue*, reprints an excerpt from *Bust* which had brought to light a new British innovation: titpillows, pillowcases shaped like a pair of breasts designed to make the dream of the inventor, “to sleep between a pair of breasts every night,” a reality. In *Red Alert #2*, one page shows an image of a woman, sober faced, ripping up a glossy, women’s magazine; the accompanying text reads: “My Body Isn’t An Object For Your Corporate Marketing. DON’T TELL ME HOW I SHOULD BE” (capitals hers).

Many of the zines write articles critiquing mainstream women’s media. Melanie Ferris in 52% writes with distain of women’s magazines: “the message that wommin get is that we must achieve prettiness. We must be a certain size, we must not have any blemish or scars on our silky white skin, and we must conform to the beauty industry’s idea of perfection”. In *The Fence*, Cheryl Dobinson offers a critique of one of the progressive women’s magazines, *Bust*. She criticizes their lack of bisexual inclusiveness in their article on life for single gay women. In *Poutine Press*, Toast, after critiquing the

'pop star' and consumer culture targeted at teens writes, "I, as a teen, am not a consumer whore. I refuse to cave to this idea that in order to be accepted, you need to be beautiful and fit a certain stereotype".

Feminist zines are also a conduit for promoting other forms of feminist cultural production. In *Red Alert #4*, Angela Davis is quoted as saying: "Progressive art can assist people to learn not only about the objective forces at work in the society in which they live, but also about the ...social character of their interior lives. Ultimately, it can propel people towards social emancipation." Feminist art is expressed in the works of original art in all of the zines. Poetry and other forms of narrative are also frequent modes of expression in feminist zines.

Third-wave feminist zine writings showcase a desire and ability to understand the contexts which shape their contemporary location. Second-wave feminism, academia, larger social movements and popular culture are all composite of the orders of discourse available to them. Zinesters respond to and glean from these discourses for the purpose of creating constant re-articulations of what it means to be female, and feminist, in contemporary Canada.

Chapter 6: Our Bodies, Our Selves

I avoid looking down at my body, not so much because it's shameful or immodest but because I don't want to look at something that determines me so completely – Julia, *Blur: Issue 1*.

This body, this vessel of my spirit, this divine tool of my existence, this temple of my soul that I am addicted to personalizing... This body speaks of the history that I was born into and the nonconformist, dissenter, freethinker, strong spirit, and eccentric that I am. This body, that I am learning to love more and more each day. This body, is mine.- Nadiya Shah, *Pussy Pen*

According to Germaine Greer (2000), “a woman’s body is the battlefield where she fights for liberation. It is through her body that oppression works, reifying her, sexualizing her, victimizing her, disabling her.” (135). The body is a site of both empowerment and resistance. In this Chapter I explore how third-wave feminist zinesters continue to reclaim their bodies through the areas of body image, health, and violence against women.

From Teen Spirit to Body Anarchy

Puberty is that horrid time when everyone smells, has become crueler, and no one knows what to do with their awkward new bodies. While in childhood, gender performances dictated playground games and Sunday school clothes, in puberty the stakes are significantly raised. For young women hair, breasts, and fat all become daily reminders of a performance not yet mastered. Self-body loathing for women begins at puberty and extends through menopause. Women’s body insecurities are a huge industry. Naomi Wolf (1991), in her seminal *The Beauty Myth* argues that beauty, expressed through body modification and control is a form of capital for women. She writes, “the

beauty myth tells a story: the quality called ‘beauty’ objectively and universally exists. Women must want to embody it and men must want to possess women who embody it” (12). This myth is reiterated through various beauty industries: cosmetic surgery, eating disorders and dieting are all reflections of the insidiousness of the myth. Feminist zines, the creations of women a decade or so past puberty, revisit this awkward time, and with their acquired wisdom and confidence find the ability to rearticulate their personal relationships with their bodies. Hair, breasts and fat are all indicators of femininity that are controlled and sold within a society that upholds women’s bodies as marketable currency.

Hair

For women, managing hair is a central aspect of the performance of femininity. Feminist zinesters often define their decision to throw away the razors as a key aspect of their feminist becomings. Erin Lois O’Reilly, in *She Breathes #2: An Honest Mistake*, writes about her early leg-shaving experiences, culminating in her final toss of the razor. She starts by describing going swimming in grade six and feeling then the onus to shave her legs, which she did in the bathroom sink with a little soap and water. Finally, at sixteen she concluded that she preferred herself hairy,

I like the hair under my arms, on my legs, on my cunt and everywhere else. I have no desire to cut it off with razors, melt it away with creams or otherwise get rid of it. I think it’s very fucked up that I’ve been removing hair since I was eleven and I find it even more fucked up that I am by no means alone on this. I believe that everyone should do what they want with their own body. If shaving is what you want, that’s great....For me, I know what I want. No more shaving. My body is damn sexy as it is.

“*Huh?*” a zine with the subtitle, “on identity and armpit hair” includes a cartoon that details the creator’s experiences growing out her armpit hair, an act inspired by her friend

Patchouli Julie. One square of the cartoon states, “I watched it, starting from stubble. I’d never let it grow out before, I was amazed. The longer I knew Patchouli, the longer my pit hair grew. I began to realize what kind of power I had there, under my arms”. In another cartoon, entitled “Shit Disturber”, she writes, “so you can begin to understand, then, that I’m the type that gets off on holding on to the ceiling rail on crowded buses in the summer” defiantly flaunting her hairy armpits. *We Are Warriors* includes “A true story” about a woman’s transformation from silky smooth, to hairy once more, in the end she found that “she was sexy and wonderful and free”. Finally, in *Queer Zine Morphodite*, the author writes a narrative entitled, “Women in a Barber Shop”. In this narrative the author writes about breaking into the “boys club” which is the barber shop, when she demands the regular price for a boy cut. In zines feminists actively rearticulate the meaning of women’s hair.

Breasts

According to mainstream society, *Playboy* magazine and *Cosmopolitan*, a good breast is sizeable and perky, a biological contradiction and as Germaine Greer (2000) states, “to demand so much is already to demand too much” (57). These breast expectations are an aspect of the ‘beauty myth’ that has become even more insidiously demonstrated by the steadily increasing number of breast surgeries. Between 1994 and 2001, the number of breast augmentations among teens under eighteen increased 562% (Quart 2003: 115), making unnaturally large and pert breasts increasingly the norm. Naomi Wolf (1991) explains that even the breast implant surgery has become eroticized, “in a woman-fearing era, the thought of scientists cutting open, invading, and artificially reconstructing the breasts of women appears to be emerging as the ultimate erotic

triumph” (246). In this context, the mythical “bra-burning” of the 1970s, has taken on new and more significant resonance, as women’s breasts have taken on increased symbolic importance.

Feminist zines focus on celebrating natural breast sizes, shapes, idiosyncrasies and breast health. *Discharge* includes a cartoon, “Gazongas” which has drawings of various types of breasts: “some are perky, some are sweet, some go dancing in the street, some are phony, some are real, some are garnished for extra appeal, some are tiny, and some are a fright, but no two are the same from left to right”. *Beating Around the Bush: The Boobular Issue* is dedicated to breast issues. This issue includes: cartoon D.I.Y breast exam instructions, a breast word crossword, articles from breast cancer survivors, and articles on breast reduction surgery, nipple clamps, binding, and how to find the perfectly fitting bra. This issue explores the ways in which breasts gain importance of mythical proportions in mainstream media. This zine also explores the actual importance of breasts to women, their health and breast feeding. Michelle Balaban writes,

Thinking about breasts weighs us down, regardless of cup size, bra size, lump size or tissue size. From smaller than As to triple Ds, their existence on our chests creates a heaving, stagnant weight that pulls us down as we push them up....In a society where our breasts are so important to us, we feel this weight everywhere we go. And what, if anything can be done? We need to understand this force pulling us down.

The weight of burgeoning breasts on young women can be a source of agony as they try to come to terms with what is perceived as a central aspect of their femininity. Embracing and celebrating a diversity of breast sizes, shapes and irregularities is one response to the monotony of unnaturally large, pert breasts.

Pretty, Porky and Pissed Off

Pretty, Porky and Pissed Off (PPP) is a fat-activist feminist group based out of Toronto. Fed up with the tyranny of slenderness in Western society, PPP, through performances, music and dance celebrate their fat selves and attempt to re-articulate fat by stating, “of course you look fat in those pants, and damn fine too!” (PPP: 2005) They define themselves as:

a force of large and in charge women dedicated to expanding public awareness and acceptance about fat issues. We are sexy and we have pot bellies. Our brand of fat activism is about everyBODY. People come in all different sizes. One person's chubby is another person's chunky is another person's skinny is another person's svelte is another person's huge. From XXL to Super Size, we want to spread the word that everyBODY is a good body (PPP: 2005).

“The tyranny of slenderness”, as coined by Kim Chernin (1981) is a female ideal that has been well documented as a source of systemic body insecurities for women (Bordo 1989, Wolf 1991, Chernin 1981, 1985). Feminist zines as counter-hegemonic texts actively critique the insidiousness of the slender ideal and the pervasiveness of fat phobia as exemplified in this Radical Cheerleaders chant reprinted in *52%*,

You're not my ideal/ your hips don't set the score/ cuz sticks and stones/ ain't what I'm striving for/ flippin' thru vogue/ what a bore. Ladeez please ladeez/ let's eat more...I will take up space/ and love my size/ cuz fat and fabulous/ is on the rise.

The Fence includes an “XL Rant” in which Cheryl Dobinson expresses her dismay at being a 145 pound woman buying XL clothes. *52%* includes an article, “Big tits and how the fashion industry sucks!” in which the author writes,

Womyn come in so many different shapes and sizes. Fashion industry, why can't you freakin' understand. Think how you could increase your profits by making

clothes that actually fit womyn...I dare you to try and control this baby!
XXXXXXXXXXXXXL all the way!

A Little Something For Your Body and Mind actively rejects fat phobia, including art work depicting large women with the caption, “Empower Your Body: love your beauty, love your size”. Another image of a large woman includes the caption, “being queer isn’t easy- that doesn’t mean I want to be straight. Being fat isn’t easy- that doesn’t mean I want to be skinny.” This zine actively promotes readers to “riot not diet”. One contributor writes, “If I wasn’t fat, I couldn’t give my friends warm, full hugs. If I wasn’t fat, my cat would have less softness to cuddle up against. If I wasn’t fat I still would have problems (i.e. being slim would not solve all my problems)”. One contributor to *Blur* (Issue 2); in her article entitled “Fat” writes,

Several people figure that once they are skinny they will be happy and all will be well. I am writing in *blur* today to tell you that this is not true. I wanted to announce to those people who still might not know: **happiness is not found in beauty, or a size 3, but *inside of oneself*** (*Blur*: Issue 2).

At any given time 70% of women and 35% of men are dieting (NEDIC: 2005). There are 38,000 women with anorexia and 114,000 women with bulimia in Canada (Healthy Ontario: 2005). In a recent survey, “Canadian children in grade three and four say they’d rather lose a parent, get cancer, or live through nuclear war than be fat” (Women Today: 2005). Within this toxically fat phobic context, feminist zines are one medium in which women’s relationship with fat is positive. Instead of obsessing over the ways this fat can be shed, zapped and melted away, feminist zinesters insist that it can just be.

In puberty, body hair emerges in indiscriminate places, breasts grow and are either hidden under oversized clothes, or stuffed into training bras, and most dismayingly

young female bodies become curvier with additional fat. Learning to deal with these bodily changes involves a careful and conclusive understanding of female performativity including shaving, bras, and for many the beginning of a life of failed dieting. Feminist zines are re-articulating these aspects of femininity learned at puberty by rewriting scripts for how female body hair, breasts and fat can be embraced. While mainstream media constantly tells women that they are not good enough, with articles entitled, “30 Beauty Boosters,” “How to have a Bathtub Booty,” and “What’s Sexy this Second” (*Cosmopolitan* Oct.2004), feminist zines know that “there is nothing wrong with women’s bodies. It is our body image that needs improving” (*A Little Something For Your Body (and Mind)*).

Health

In 1970 the Boston Women’s Health Collective published a health resource book for and by women, *Our Bodies Our Selves*. The 1960s and 1970s also saw the legalization of the birth control pill and abortion. At this time, women realized that power struggles were battled over their bodies and that most female processes from birth to menstruation to menopause were framed by patriarchal medical institutions and cultural norms. While access to abortion and developments in birth control has improved in the last thirty years, feminists continue to challenge restrictive and patriarchal understandings of women’s health. A patriarchal society that deems women’s bodies as innately flawed creates medical institutions designed to cure female ‘ills’ like menstruation, while simultaneously engraining in women collective feelings of body insecurity.

The D.I.Y Gynecologist

In her book, *Cunt*, Inga Muscio (2000) attempts to write a “reconciliation with the word and the anatomical jewel” (5). Muscio tacitly examines the connections between the negative connotations of the word and the shame with which women view their bodies. She (2000) writes,

cunts are not important to women because they are the very fount of our power, genius and beauty. Rather, cunts are important to men because they generate profits and episodes of ejaculation, and represent the precise point of vulnerability for keeping women divided and thus, conquered (7).

Reclaiming gynecology is one way that feminist zinesters are reclaiming their cuncipotence.¹⁷ *Let it be known* includes “Yoni Language: An Alphabetical Listing” of different linguistic and cultural terms for the vagina. This zine also includes an article entitled “cunt,” which delineates the historic power embodied by this word. In an editorial to *Discharge*, Karen writes of her coming to accept her vaginal discharge, and in the process her cunt and herself. She writes:

Though I may have tried to abandon it in an attempt to fit moulds and to gain approval, my discharge never stopped and was never silenced. It constantly reminded me that I was a woman and that I can't abandon or silence that. Its subtle waves spoke volumes to me on cyclic co-existence of beginnings, endings, creation and destruction. I started to listen. My discharge set for me a standard in persistence and I embraced it.

Feminist articulations of women's health and gynecology resist how this most intimate and personal aspect of women's lives is colonized by male, cold sciences. In *Red Alert* #2, an anonymous contributor writes an article, “Black bed with cold metal thigness” in which she writes of her alienating experiences at a gynecologist,

¹⁷ “Cunctipotent: all powerful (i.e. having cunt-power)” Walker, Barbara *The Women's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* cited in *Let it be known*.

I feel raped by healthcare. I still twitch as I remember the coldness, the sense of all my cells freezing instantly. I feel raped by healthcare for not speaking to me, not explaining the process, not treating me as an interactive sentient being instead of just an object.

New Moon includes an article of a similar tone entitled, “Dr. Rippington”. In this article the author writes of a painful colposcopy and questions its necessity, “is the clipping and burning the cervix area safe and necessary? Are these questions being asked in the medical academia? When can womyn stop being experimented on and butchered by the medical institution?”

With intellectual and embodied understanding that the traditional medical system is not designed for them, women, through women’s health organizations and zines, are disseminating their own health information. *Hot Pants*, a zine of “D.I.Y. Gynecology” is a resource booklet of STD remedies and cures for gynecological problems such as yeast infections and candida. *Red Alert* and *Beating Around Bush* include information on giving yourself a breast exam. Gynecology is rearticulated in feminist zines.

Merry Menses!

War is menstruation envy- bathroom graffiti, Victoria B.C

“Crimson tide... aunt flow... red roses...on the rag... the gift... hunt for red October... end of sentence” (*Little Words*), whatever the euphemism, menstruation is a female process that has generated much cultural folklore, medical intervention, and, in Western society shame. Terms like ‘the curse’ and ‘the beast’ clearly demonstrate the dread with which women are supposed to view menstruation. A current magazine advertisement for Playtex Deodorant tampons features a smiling woman surrounded by

men in a bar, with a baby in the corner and the text, “pads don’t just feel like diapers”, insinuating that women must be protected from their own noxious odours; fortunately, “Playtex Deodorant Tampons eliminate odor”. Shaming menstruation shames women, and denies them the ability to if not celebrate, at least accept the natural functions of their bodies. Gloria Steinem has stated that if men menstruated, “men would brag about how long and how much. Young boys would talk about it as the envied beginning of manhood. Gifts, religious ceremonies, family stag parties would mark the day” (in 52%). Feminist zinesters are very passionate about re-articulating cultural attitudes towards menstruation. Eleven zines discussed menstruation while five zines were exclusively about menstruation: *Red Alert #2*, *#4*, *Pussywillow*, *New Moon*, and *This Is Your Blood*. These zines were also written by and included information about menstrual activist groups: *Blood Sisters* (Montreal), *Pussy Protectors* (Ottawa), and *The Scarlet Tide Brigade* (Vancouver). The menstrual activism in feminist zines explores the shame connected to menstruation in mainstream culture and the health and environmental dangers associated with disposable, toxic menstrual products.

Both *Red Alert #2* and *Subversity University* deconstruct mainstream menstrual product advertisements. In *Subversity University*, Maeve writes, “menstruation has been vilified to such a degree that even a noise associated with a product associated with it has such humiliating connotations that it has to be eliminated, silenced, and permanently removed from the cultural landscape (wasteland?) of modern femininity”. In *Red Alert #2*, a contributor writes about how Tampax commercials are making a concerted effort to represent more multicultural diversity in their commercials. The writer comments that,

It is interesting and important to note that through the representation of diversity, there is a certain claim that such advertisements are making progressive politics.

However, what has always been, and still remains at the background of this landscape of liberalist representations of race and gender, is that these products are suppose to 'protect' women- all sorts of women- from their interior bodily secretions, and maintain their discrete and clean exterior appearance. This line of thinking points back to the taboo of menstruation and the idea that women's bodies are somehow polluted and need to be cleansed, hidden and protected.

For the zinesters, menstruation is also rearticulated as a process to be celebrated and revered. Learning to accept, and even love this womanly process is a personal and feminist transformative act. Krishna Mercer in *52%* writes, "I've learned to love my period through some sort of cool grrrl metamorphosis empowerment groove I'm in." *Discharge* includes "32 ways to declare 'merry menses'" including: "meditate, dance wildly, be creative, have orgasms, watch the moon, sleep more, read, do nothing, do whatever turns you on...wear red, eat red foods...long, hot, perfumed soaks in the bath are great. Clary Sage and Rose oils are lovely". *Pussywillow* also includes a list of "ways to celebrate your menstruating self" which "a class of grade 8 girls came up with these ideas during our first ever workshop". The list includes, "listen to female music (ani), dye your hair, write in red pen, dress-up/ dress down, drink champagne with orange juice". *New Moon* includes an article, "Reclaiming Your Moon" which describes moon time rituals that effectively counteract the culturally imposed menstrual shame. The authors write, "in order to grow, and reclaim our moontime we must release what is no longer needed for our development as goddesses. It is time to release all the negative feelings you have been programmed to feel about your moontime." Menstrual shame is also subverted through personal narratives, art, and poetry. Mirroring the menstrual blood art of the seventies, feminist zinesters use creative expression as a way of unshaming their cycles. *Red Flag* by Judy Chicago is reprinted in *Pussywillow*, while the centerfold of

Discharge is a colour-photocopy from a children's book of the various possible colours of menstrual blood with the text, "sometimes menstrual blood is pink, sometimes it's scarlet, sometimes it's purple-black or reddish-brown". A narrative poem in *Pussywillow* describes one woman's transformation from an adolescent girl caught bleeding and unprepared in middle school to a menstrual activist,

oh yes, she thinks back to grade eight now, as her womb wrings and squeezes,
thinks back to that day and to the shame which she was so sure no amount of cold
water or stain remover would ever erase,
and she laments that the fuck-you attitude she needed then
was so difficult to cultivate

In Western society, menstruation is not only shameful, it is also dangerous to women's health. Because of the shame associated with women's natural functions, menstrual products are bleached white with toxic chemicals to make the process less 'dirty'. Feminist zines explain how mainstream tampons and pads are filled with harmful chemicals that lead to toxic shock syndrome and other health problems. *Pussywillow* writes that "dioxin (bleach derivative) found in chlorine-bleached tampons are linked to uterine cancer, endometriosis and can also cause vaginal lacerations". They also write that, "fibres in conventional tampons allow harmful bacteria to thrive. Fibres also become embedded in vaginal walls causing inflammation and infection". In *Discharge*, Deirdre McGahern writes that "on top of absorbing menstrual fluid, tampons absorb over 85% of the fluids naturally present in women's bodies that are necessary for cleansing and regulating". The harmful effects of dioxins and rayons in tampons are also explained in *Red Alert's* article, "the truth about tampons" and *New Moon's* "bleeding".

There are 1.5 billion used sanitary pads dumped in landfill sites in Canada each year (Armstrong and Scott: 1992). In her first ten years of menstruating, Keri Whitehead

calculated that she had used 2400 tampons, “that’s 2400 bleached, chemically-treated, plastic-backed, individually wrapped pollution creators that I sent to the sewer or directly into a landfill” (*This is my blood*). Distressingly “used plastic tampon applicators wash up by the thousand on coastal beaches every year” (*Red Alert #2*). For the zinesters, the environmental impact of commercial menstrual products is a grave concern.

Feminist zines often include information on environmentally friendly alternatives such as the Keeper and washable, cloth pads. The Keeper is:

a soft, reusable, natural rubber menstrual cup. It’s a great alternative to disposable tampons and pads. It’s worn internally, inserted with your very own fingers. It sits below the cervix and collects your flow for about 6 hours. To empty the Keeper you give it a little squeeze and pull it out, empty the business into the toilet, wash in warm water or wipe clean with a paper towel and reinsert it. (*Red Alert #2*).

In 52%, Krishna Mercer, in a personal narrative of her menstrual history extols the many economic, health, and environmental benefits of the Keeper, “I wrote this because I really think the Keeper is the coolest, healthiest, safest, best invention for womyn everywhere”. *Discharge* includes an article, “My Cup Runneth Over...” which includes, with photos, the multiple appealing aspects of the Keeper. In this article, Vicki Weafer summarizes the advantages of the Keeper, “manufactured by a woman; three month money-back guarantee; product’s life expectancy is at least 10 years; no chlorine is used in its manufacture; made of soft gum rubber; trees are tapped, not cut down; over 97% satisfaction.”

Hand-sewn, re-usable, washable pads are another safe and environmentally friendly alternative to mainstream menstrual products. *Discharge*, *Red Alert #2* and *#4* 52%, and *New Moon* all include patterns and D.I.Y instructions for creating your own cloth menstrual pads. *Red Alert #4* writes, “getting your period can actually be a cool

thing. Making your own pads can even be a lot of fun! You can get together with your girl friends, hang out, listen to music and sew a pile of them in one afternoon". *Pussywillow* includes an article on using sea sponges as menstrual products. The zines also include an assortment of D.I.Y cramp salves, including a foot massage to alleviate cramps and a menstrual massage for two (*Pussywillow*), a cramp salve (*This is My Blood*), and dietary and herbal remedies for excessive flow, painful periods and P.M.S (*Hot Pants*). The zines also provide a variety of resources on menstruation including where to buy alternative menstrual products, and which books and films discuss menstruation.

According to contemporary advertising complexes, menstruation is a problem for women; dirty, shameful, secretive. Women in zines re-articulate this understanding of menstruation by declaring that not only is it natural, it should be a celebrated aspect of women's lives, a times to "celebrate being a Goddess, have some chocolate, draw, paint, make some pads" (*New Moon*).

Abortion: A Language of Ellipses

"My Body Is Not Your Battleground" - popular pro-choice slogan

While abortion was legalized in Canada in 1969, the law was with many restrictions continuing to limit women's access to abortion. In 1970 an "Abortion Caravan" traveled across the country from Vancouver to Parliament Hill in Ottawa demanding improved access to abortion. The Caravan culminated in a disruption in the House of Commons when 30 women chained themselves in the galleries of the house (Rebick: 2005). In 2003, fewer than 20% of Canadian hospitals provide abortion services, with P.E.I and Nunavut offering no abortion services at all (Paraskevas 2003: 9).

Treehugger, in *Beating Around the Bush*, writes that “the language of abortions is the language of ellipses...so much left unsaid, unvoiced endings left up to the reader or the listener to figure out”. Feminist zines offer a space for these ellipses to be filled. Through personal narratives, the complex emotions surrounding abortion are expressed, while through the dissemination of information, questions about different types of abortion and abortion services are answered.

Abortion is still highly stigmatized. The stigma of abortion demands that women are either silent about their experiences or speak very self-defensively. Recently Jennifer Baumgartner and Planned Parenthood launched a campaign which included t-shirts that had printed on them, “I had an abortion”: an attempt to de-stigmatize abortion (Hyman 2005). Within a climate of continued shame and silence surrounding abortion, the personal narratives in zines are an opportunity for women to both talk about their experiences and explore their complex emotions regarding their abortions. In *This Is Me Using My Choice*, a zine which is “an anthology of women’s abortion stories”, Gabriela writes that she respects the history of the fight for abortion rights, and relentlessly supports the right for women to make this choice. However,

knowing this, and also knowing that I regret my abortion on my own terms, I am having a really hard time carefully articulating how I feel. So I’m trying to look at my story through a narrow window, looking only at my own abortion and not spilling any of my story on other women.

Gabriela writes that she understands how, by instinctively responding to the shame associated with abortion, many women articulate the experience as ‘liberating.’ She did not feel that, however, within a feminist dialogue on abortion, her feelings are equally valid. Gabriela writes,

I am writing because I want other women to write, because no woman should feel her story unwelcome for any reason. All of our stories make up this history. My story, encompassing my reasons for being pro choice and yet feeling shitty about my own abortion, is a valid story, but only a drop in the bucket of millions of women's stories that should not be silenced not by anyone and not by us.

In another narrative in the same anthology a "now happy mother of two, by choice" writes about her abortion and concludes, "I was convinced that I did the right thing and that I didn't have to have regrets. And I didn't." In *This is my Blood*, a woman writes without regret but with sadness about her abortion,

I cry when I think of my mother. I think of the connection we have and how her blood nourished and fed me. So my little girl, why can I not do the same for you? It is just not the time. I crave my monthly blood and I know you are just not meant to be.

"Epitaphic Gratitude" by Danielle Arsenault is one poetic exploration of abortion,

Dear child,
You're mothered me. Quietly
Teaching me to reach
Inside, to feel
The life exerting,
Asserting, emerging
Within this vacant womb.
Your short life
Delivering me
To this weathered cabin
In the woods, where
Glowing warmth and amber
Light, lead me
Gracefully
Home.

While personal narratives and poetry can be seen as facilitating personal healing, feminist zines also discuss abortion openly in order to spread more specific information about abortion. In *Red Alert #2*, one woman writes about her negative experience having a medical abortion. She writes, "a vacuum aspiration abortion is a traumatic procedure,

not only when you undergo it, but also afterwards...words like ‘cramps’ and ‘discomfort’ had nothing in common with the wrenching, shooting pains I felt.” The author tells us that she wrote this article not to feed the fodder of anti-choice activists but so that “women will have more options in both ‘conventional’ and ‘alternative’ medicine.” A personal narrative in *This is me using my choice*, details one woman’s experience with herbal emmenagogues (abortion). *Hot Pants* is replete with instructions for d.i.y abortions, which they refer to as “amenorrhea” to fix an “absence of menses”. *Red Alert #4* includes information on post-abortion coping by writing that “it is never too late to work it through. Even if your abortion happened 20 or 40 years ago, it is still possible to re-live those events and bring yourself to a point of acceptance”. *This is me using my choice* includes both articles supporting herbal abortions, and an article from a herbalist extolling medical abortions, giving readers access to multiple perspectives. *This Is My Blood* includes a map of Canada depicting the abortion services available in the various provinces and territories.

The long and continuous debate surrounding abortion exemplifies how women’s bodies are situated in Western culture as political battlegrounds. The zine discussions of abortion return this political discussion to women’s actual experiences. Despite having abortion legalized for over three decades, women who have had abortions are still silenced and forced to be defensive. Writing personal narratives and poetry in zines allows women to write their true and conflicting feelings about their abortions. The abortion narratives also connect personal experiences to broader communities as women write to tell other women what abortions feel like, how types of abortions vary, and how to give themselves their own abortions.

The Western medical system is based on a male subject. Women and women's natural processes are seen as necessarily disordered; as women are medicalized disproportionately to men (Clarke: 2000). In zines, women are taking their health into their own capable hands. Reclaiming women's health means discarding misogynist understandings of menstruation as debris, women as wombs, and women's bodies as deficient versions of men's. Feminist zines clearly articulate how menstruation, gynecology and abortion are understood in a context that views women's bodies as capable, strong and beautiful.

No Means No: Violence against Women; Testimonies and Activism

A woman stands, lips pursed, shot gun in hand with her three small children cowering behind her. She is standing in front of a run down building inscribed with the words, "No means NO", "One step closer and I'll blow your balls off" and "fear, as instinct is one of our weapons but I don't want to own it anymore. Let's give it to men" (*Let it be known #3*). This drawing is one of many reactions feminist zinesters have to violence against women. Eighteen zines in this sample included personal narratives about violence against women, statistics, womanifestos, advice and resource information.

Violence against women became a feminist issue in the mid 1970s when feminists began to discuss this "danger" side of women's sexuality (Hamilton 1996: 66). At this time issues such as domestic violence and sexual harassment were named and the battered women's movement of the 1970s first connected violence against women to patriarchal oppression (Schmidt 1995: 59). In 2005, violence against women continues to be a prominent feminist issue. A 2000 report from compiled police data reported that 51% of Canadian women had been victims of at least one act of physical or sexual

violence since the age of 16. This report also stated that from April 1, 1999 to March 31, 2000 57,182 women and 39,177 children were admitted to women's shelters, and in a 1999 general survey 64% of women "reported feeling somewhat or very worried while waiting for or using public transportation alone after dark, more than double the proportion of 29% men." (Status of Women Canada: 2005).

In this context, feminist zinesters are continuing to define, expose and resist violence against women. In *Let it be known* (2002:3), they include an article on defining consent. They write that "a recent focus group conducted by Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW) in Vancouver, B.C., Canada found that approximately 85% of its participants did not know what consent was". They continue to define verbal, implied, and nonverbal consent. In *We Are Warriors* they cite that, "46% of Ugandan women, 60% of Tanzanian women, 42% of Kenyan women, and 40% of Zambian women report regular physical abuse". *Let it be known* (2002:3) also includes a reprint of a "Warning to Women" posted in Vancouver by the police which warned women not to walk alone at night because a woman had been sexually assaulted in the area. The zinesters comment, "obviously the police are not protecting us". Finally, in *Unpoetic Arsenic*, the satirical "After-Rape game" demonstrates the immense pain of recovery and healing. At the Start "you're raped" then on various squares of the board game are various possible situations: "you're pregnant with the rapist's baby, go to start", "have no self-respect, sleep with most of the hockey team, go back seven", "drop out of high school, miss a turn". Feminist zines actively comment on the prevalence of violence against women in our society through earnest dialogue, satire, and statistics.

Feminists have long understood the importance of disclosure when it comes to violence against women. Narrating one's experience is paramount both to the healing process and to ensuring that the problems of violence against women are understood publicly. Jennie, editor of the zine, *8 Queer Women on Violence and Healing* (2004), writes in her editorial, "I made this zine because I needed to talk about and think thru (sic) (confront?) the abuse I've known in the last few years...the sharing of our stories brings us together and holds us up". Personal narratives about experiencing abuse and the abuse of friends are written with anger and a sense of urgency. They are also written as platforms for the writers' activism, exemplifying how the reflection of personal experiences is directly related to political action. In 52%, rlm writes about the murder of her childhood friend. In her narrative she discusses her friend, Melissa Pajkowski, their childhood, the abusive relationship Melissa was in, Melissa's murder and the subsequent court hearings. She concludes with,

Pretty angry eh? Well anger is healthy and productive! It will fuel my activism into the next decade. The murder of my friend Melissa Pajkowski and so many other women in this country every year fuels my anger. Femicide is on the rise, and as it rises my activism will only increase....We will not be silenced!

Jordan Watters (2004), in *Poutine Press*, similarly grounds her activism in her personal experiences of violence. In the introduction to an article that cites statistics and discusses the extent of violence against women in Canada, she writes, "[m]aking the personal political requires me to start with myself: I survived rape. As a result, I learned some hard lessons and sad truths. I learned that a woman can scream 'rape' at the top of her lungs and no one will come" (10). Similarly, in *Red Alert #4*, to preface a list of "questions for boys about sex" the contributor writes,

I'm a girl and I'm a sexual abuse survivor. I came up with these questions as part of a healing process for me in dealing with being abused by boys, but also cuz I really think a helluva lot more boys need to be thinking more about their sexual relationships with women.

Family violence is a theme amongst the personal narratives, often expressed through poetry. In *Avoid Strange Men #3*, Captain Snowdon in a coming-out poem written to her father writes, "maybe it's YOUR fault, dad, for touching me in a way that just didn't feel right" (38). Erin Lois O'Reilly in *She Breathes* writes in a poem, "Thank You Cressida" of her experiences in an institution, "(T)he staff there said a lot of things to me. They told me I'm too smart and that's the problem. I read too much. I think too much. And that's the problem. Not the fact that my grandfather assaulted me" In *Queer Zine Morphodite* the writer discusses the domestic violence she witnessed as a child. She writes,

THIS MUST STOP! I will no longer be silent, I will no longer protect the secret because it doesn't protect me! I heard the yelling, I saw the blood and that time the police came, it took me a quarter century to realize it was about attempted murder. I remember talk about a pillow but I didn't put it together that my dad tried to suffocate my mother until I was 27.

The writings on violence against women exemplify the connections between personal narratives and political action. Many anti-violence initiatives are promoted in zines. *Slightly More Than Soundbites* outlines a project of the Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC) of Ottawa. SASC understands the importance of discussing personal experiences of violence, and in this initiative asks for stories of violence to put in a compilation. Zinesters also write about their experiences in 'Take Back the Night' marches and December 6 vigils. Maeve (2004), in *Subversity University* writes of December 6 that "this day is not only a day to remember, it is a call to arms, a day where

we have to be aware of the atrocities that occur in our society and how we can fight them”. Allyson (2001), in *Can U See Yr Self*, writes about taking part in a ‘Take Back the Night’ march at York University, shortly after a rapist had been identified as at large in the area. For Allyson, TBTN is an empowering experience,

So this party of 11 marches around campus, and I’m shouting and carrying on. Hoping that someone I know sees me. ...we took over parkdale, we took back the streets- for one night. One street, for an hour- but that’s something. If all it did was fill hundreds of womyn with pride and a feeling of sisterhood that was enough.

Discharge includes a brief history of “Take Back the Night”, and contacts for the local womyn’s action group hosting the event. *Avoid Strange Men* (2002), includes recruitment for “Project Respect”, an initiative that “promotes the right to sexuality without violence” (6). “Project Respect” is an outreach program that offers training in theater, video camera operation, public speaking, and event planning, all to promote stopping sexual violence.

The zines include detailed information on how to identify abuse in a friend, how and where to find help, and the characteristics of different kinds of abuse such as verbal, emotional and physical abuse. One zine, *Some Stuff You Should Know*, is a zine created by the Transition House Association of Nova Scotia (THANS). This zine includes a personal narrative, a map of transition houses in Nova Scotia and a list of numbers to call. It also includes two lists, “how to recognize the beginnings of abuse” and “am I being abused”. *Poutine Press* (2004: 5) includes a page entitled, “Where to go for Help: what to do if you are raped or sexually assaulted”. It includes phone numbers, local campus resources, and the proper police and hospital procedures. In the same vein *Let it be known* (2002: 3), includes a page, “when it happens to someone you care about” with advice on how to be a supportive friend when someone has been abused. In these zines the creators

move beyond personal narratives to offer concrete community based advice and services to their readers.

In their dialogues surrounding violence against women, the zinesters make clear tacit connections between personal experiences, political implications and political action. While the dialogue includes many transformative, healing personal narratives, the zinesters disseminate information about support groups, anti-violence activist groups and activities. In this situation, personal narratives are coupled with concrete anti-violence activism. Involvement in 'Take Back the Night', SASC, and WAVAW are evident in various articles and calls to action. The zines also serve as resources as they are filled with information on transition houses, how to identify abuse, how to help a friend, and emergency phone numbers.

While the subject of violence against women is heavy, the activism in feminist zines signals a more hopeful future. In *Let it be known* (2002:3), they document women around the world who have successfully resisted violence against women:

Peruvian and Chilean women surrounded a batterer's house, banging pots and pans, while he attacked, until he was shamed into stopping...One group routinely caught rapists, shaved them, and dyed their heads bright colours...University women posted an 'official notice' of a 10pm curfew of men living in residence after a spate of attacks on campus.

The dialogue surrounding violence against women in feminist zines inspires hope, as demonstrated in a poem by Chelsea in *Avoid Strange Men* (2003:3). In this poem the narrator is told by a stranger that her friend's body has been found, "ravaged and torn", but the friend returns:

and you brushed by the shock of the stranger on our front porch and said

hey honey I've had a long day mind running me a bath?

and I smiled wide and said **told ya she'd come back**
told ya us womyn are learning to fight
gonna defend ourselves from your wrath and take back the night
the womyn's revolution is near!
and we shut the door
and left that stranger trembling on our front porch in fear.

Chapter 7: Define and Empower

Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged- Audre Lorde (1981)

Rise up! crush sexism, crush racism, crush homophobia. Crush oppression. All oppression. Rip it to shreds. Throw your voice at them. Don't let them win." Erin Lois O'Reilly in *She Breathes #1: My Cunt is On Fire*

Third-wave feminisms emphasize how multiple positions affect personal realities and social structures. Harris (2001) describes third-wave feminism as follows:

I would argue that young women are much more attentive to diversity and to the need for feminisms that are grounded in multiplicity... They acknowledge differences within and between groups of people, understand racism, homophobia and sexism as interconnected, acknowledge shift and flux in definitions and identities, and uphold self-inscriptive meanings as opposed to assigned labels (16).

Sarah Boonin (2003) similarly highlights the key issues of third-wave feminism to be, "pro-gender equality, pro-choice, pro-LGBT rights, pro-civil rights and affirmative action, pro-environment, pro-nonviolence, antidiscrimination, and pro-labor" (147). The cognizant recognition of the various factors affecting identity and social realities stems from a movement beginning in second-wave feminism. It was in the second wave that feminists began to see their focus on sexism as limited. They began to realize that to liberate women, it was necessary to understand women's whole situations, which included acknowledging oppressions based on sexual orientation, race, age, and ability. During the second wave in Canada, many women's organizations emerged as a consequence of this revelation. The "Other Woman" lesbian magazine (1972), Older Woman's Network (OWN,1979), Disabled Women's Network (DAWN, 1985), the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women (1986) all emerged to

fill a void that was felt in Canadian mainstream feminism (Pierson 1993). Third-wave feminist writing contributes to filling in this void by consistently focusing on the intersections of gender, race, sexualities, class and ability in order to fully capture the experiences of women. Vivien Labarton and Dawn Lundy Martin (2004) state, “to demand that people focus on one area of concern without recognizing the inter-connection of multiple issues would be to demand a level of self-abnegation that does not mirror the way these issues are experienced in our daily lives” (xxvi).

Zine feminism corresponds with these larger third-wave feminist characteristics. The zinesters specifically address the multiple factors of their subjectivities. Sarah, in *Halfbreeds, Homos and other Heroes*, includes a diagram entitled, “take a look at your privilege,” in which she draws crossing lines labeled by gender, class, ability, sexuality, global location and an axis of race which she points to and writes, “I am both privileged and oppressed by this axis I teeter along. It’s important to recognize our sites of privilege, not just our sites of oppression. Acknowledging your privilege prevents you from shrinking the responsibility to act”. In a similar diagram in *Huh?* called “The Go-Arounds,” Jess explores the various aspects of her identity as: vegetarian, Jewish, woman, feminist, middle class, white. As expressions and explorations of their individual subjectivities, the dialogue is limited to individuals’ experiences. However, often coupled with personal exploration are discussions of political action. *We are Warriors*, a compilation anti-oppression zine defines anti-oppression as: “exposing hierarchies in society and breaking them down.” In this Chapter, I explore how issues of sexual orientations, race, ability and age are understood as central to women’s identity formation processes and feminist practices. While feminist zinesters explore from their individual

perspectives the effects of a world rife with sexism, homophobia, racism, classism, and ableism they are enacting Audre Lorde's (1981) demand that "divide and conquer, in our world, must become define and empower" (100).

Sexualities

Adrienne Rich (1980) writes that traditionally men have attempted, in all ways possible, to control women's sexual pleasure. She states that this has occurred:

by means of clitoridectomy and infibulation; chastity belts; punishment, including death, for female adultery; punishment, including death, for lesbian sexuality; psychoanalytic denial of the clitoris; strictures against masturbation; denial of material and postmenopausal sensuality; unnecessary hysterectomy; pseudolesbian images in media and literature; closing of archives and destruction of documents relating to lesbian existence

Reclaiming and redefining female sexuality is central to third-wave feminism. This involves celebrating female sexuality, embracing the continuum of sexual orientations, and engaging in anti-homophobia activism.

Antiquated taboos surrounding female masturbation, kink and alternative sexual practices are challenged in feminist zines as women talk candidly and with humour about their actual sexual experiences and preferences. While second-wave feminisms revealed the sexism apparent in many heterosexual relationships, third-wave feminists with this cognizance in their back pockets are prepared to deconstruct oppressive heterosexuality, while enjoying any sexuality they choose. Chris Daley (2002), in writing on her preference for being spanked writes, "because feminism equipped me to cultivate equality in relationships with men, I can flirt with the no-no of submission without reinforcing double standards or inviting sexual exploitation" (135). The effects of the

Barnard Conference in 1982 which began the exploration of the pleasure of female sexuality are evident in the feminist zine writings. Dialogue surrounding sexuality in feminist zines opens up the possibilities to explore and embrace multiple sexualities.

Firstly, and most loudly, female sexuality is celebrated as joyous and exhilarating. Zine writings on masturbation, sex toys, sex parties and pornography are all ways in which female sexuality is embraced. Cheryl Dobinson, the editor of *The Fence* defines her zine as:

feminist and anti-oppressive. Also, sex positive (what the heck does that mean? This can include being pro-celibacy or pro-monogamy, pro saying no when you don't want to have sex, it means being positive about making various informed sexual choices and it may not equal having lots of sex indiscriminately. It values the variety of ways people can express themselves sexually- from s/m, polyamory and group sex to vanilla, monogamy, masturbation, celibacy and more...).

Female masturbation is one taboo that is consistently and enthusiastically challenged. In *This Is My Blood*, Aunika writes an article, "Apprenticeship" in which she writes of a woman who is a 'masturbation master' and her inspiration. She writes, "she told me that she does elaborate strip teases by herself. I start squirming thinking about her in her knee high fuck-me boots". *Pussy Pen's* centerfold cartoon, "I love Pussy" includes a cartoon celebrating female masturbation. In *She Breathes #1: My Cunt Is On Fire* Erin writes a personal narrative, entitled, "Getting Myself Off" detailing her experiences with masturbation, starting with touching herself as a young child, and experimenting with cybersex as a twelve-year old. She includes a discussion of the taboos surrounding women and masturbation writing, "masturbation was always a big secret of mine. I have always loved doing it but it was always something that I struggled with. As a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, sexual pleasure seemed disgusting and wrong". She continues to

connect masturbation to broader power dynamics by stating, “so many girls are afraid of their own bodies. They see their cunts as dirty and shameful. Every time I make myself come, that is a revolutionary act. It’s a big fuck you to everyone who tried to deny me the pleasure of my own body”.

Coupled with delightful and somewhat political discussions of masturbation are frequent analyses, ratings, and reviews of sex toys and sex parties. *Beating Around the Bush* includes reviews of strap-ons, Ben Wa balls and the ‘kegelmeiser’. In this zine, Michelle Balaban’s article, “Filling the Closet” is an account of the growth of Michelle’s sex toy closet, from her first vibrator named Julian to her latest acquisition Rabbit Pearl Genevieve. *S/he’s Got Labe Issue 8* is a zine dedicated exclusively to sex toys and masturbation. This issue includes a ‘Sex Toy Quiz’ in which contributors include their first sex toy, favourite current sex toy, and most overrated sex toy. There is also an interview with ‘shy girl’ about her experiences at a sex party.

Pornography as a representation of female sexuality is rearticulated on a few occasions in feminist zines. Viewing pornography as a sex-positive pro-woman medium is not a new feminist perspective. However, it is a perspective that has historically been ignored in mainstream understandings of feminism. Katinka Hooijer (2002) writes, “pro-sex feminists promote bad-girl sex, the kind without love and commitment with or without partners, definitely with porn, the kind that guarantees no strings attached grrrl powered orgasms” (275). This pro-porn feminist perspective is echoed in a few feminist zines. The *Queer Women’s Diversity Zine* includes an ad for the *Suicide Girls* which is a feminist porn website. *Lickety Split* includes multiple pornographic images. The often gender-bending pornography in this zine, created almost exclusively by women,

challenges standard notions of sexuality represented in pornography. Erotica is another form through which discourses of sexuality are rearticulated. *Lickety Split, S/he's Got Labe* and *the Fence* all include original erotica. Replacing attitudes of female sexuality as repressed with female sexuality as celebratory is a frequent rearticulation.

Discovering, exploring, naming one's sexual and gender identities can be overwhelming. The textual explorations of various sexualities in zines contributes to ending the symbolic annihilation of various sexualities in mainstream society. Lesbian, femme, bi and transgendered identities are all explored in feminist zines.

Coming out stories are common narratives in feminist zines. In *Huesbook*, a contributor writes of her coming out, "I came out when I was 14 years old and my girlfriend was the same age. We were sure we were the only ones on earth that felt that way." In the *Queer Women's Diversity Zine*, "D" writes, beside a photo of a young girl, "this is how old I was when I had my first crush. She was three years older than me and during church I used to watch her and dream...I developed crushes on my other playmates and we would play house while stealing kisses". Kythryne Aisling, in *The Fence (2003)*, writes of the development of her sexual identity, "when I was 14, I discovered girls. When I was 17, I realized that I liked boys too. When I was 20, I decided I didn't give a damn about gender. When I was 23, I found out that it didn't really matter anyway". In a similar expression of sexual discovery, Allison in *Can U See Yr Self*, writes, "when I was 13, I had crushes on boys. And dreams of fucking girls. When I was 15, I told my best friend over ice cream that I thought I could be bisexual...Now, I'm 20, I identify as unabashedly queer".

Coming out to parents is a frequented theme in these coming out narratives. In *The Fence* (2003: 3), Jasmine Prasad writes,

I remember when I decided to tell my mom that I'm bisexual. I couldn't bring myself to talk to her in person about it, so I wrote her a letter...She called me later that week, and kind of beat around the bush about saying the word bisexual. She told me when she was done the letter she laughed and said that she was just happy that I wasn't telling her that I was pregnant or something.

Allison includes in her zine her 'coming out to her parents' letter. In this heartfelt, personal letter she writes, "This is about my happiness, not your pain. I'm sorry you feel I have hurt you. I'm sorry you are hurt, that was never intention. What I want is your support". Sarah, in her zine, *Halfbreeds, Homos and other Heroes*, includes a dialogue, "trying to explain my sexuality to my mom". In this dialogue, Sarah attempts to explain her queerness and her transgendered friends to her mother. Later in her zine she writes, "some reasons I have problems trying to explain my sexuality to my mom...as you may have picked up on, there are NO WORDS other than the all-encompassing 'queer' to talk about the people who have had or are having relationships with trans folk". Finally, in *Avoid Strange Men* (2003:3), Captain Snowdon tries to explain her sexuality to her dad, "so dad, still hoping I'll grow out of it/ get over it/ move on/ are you wondering how I got this way? Well it wasn't that Michigan festival made me gay..." Central to gay becomings for many gay women, is coming out to parents, a process documented in feminist zines.

One identity that is rearticulated is the femme identity. The zine, *Femme Vitale* is produced by the Vancouver based Femme Affinity Group (FAG). Working against misconceptions of femininity within the gay community,

FAG is an ongoing reclamation of femininity on our terms. We have found that learning to love femme involved unraveling personal and societal myths that surround and confound femininity. We say that ‘femme’ can mean powerful, creative, outspoken and impactful.

They argue that within the gay community, ‘femme’ has been used as an insult and femmes have been seen as queers trying to ‘pass’ in the straight world. The re-articulations of femme in feminist zines demand that femme as an identity stance be recognized. Jess Carfagnini (2004), in *Femme Vitale* writes that

femmes deal with a lot of bullshit from straight men, society in general, other lesbians and yes, sometimes even butches. We live in a patriarchal society that devalues femininity in all its shapes and forms, unless it’s under men’s control and then it becomes a product to be bought and sold (27).

The reclamation of ‘femme’ is what Jeannine Delombard (1995) has coined, “femmenism”. Third-wave feminists and “femmenists” are critically and deliberately deciding how to articulate their ‘femme’ identities. For Delombard (1995),

being a femme means that I take pride in wearing just the right shade of lipstick, drawing the perfect black line above my eyelashes, keeping my legs smooth, and smelling good. Being a femmenist means knowing I am just as attractive when I don’t wear makeup, shave or put on perfume (30).

Erin Lois O’Reilly, in *She Breathes #1: My Cunt is On Fire*, also claims her femme identity: “I am femme. Take no shit kick ass femme. Don’t fuck with me. I am pretty and oh so fuckable...Femme is performance. I’m not femme cuz I was born with a cunt. I’m femme cuz I wanna be femme. I dress it up.” By articulating and owning their femme performance, femmes are resisting heterosexist norms of femininity and the femmephobia in the gay community and embracing third-wave femmenism.

Bisexual, transgendered, and intersexed identities are also all represented in the feminist zines. Bisexual women are the focus of the zine, *The Fence*. In this zine, issues particular to bisexual women are explored including not being validated in the gay community, coming out as bi, bisexual health and body image issues. Bi-onic, in *The Fence*, explains succinctly the specific challenges facing bisexuals,

Because we're not "real" queers and our attraction to the same sex is only a phase and we'll just leave for a member of the opposite sex any day and our way of loving is only a period of confusion and when we haven't changed in 5 or 10 or 15 or 20 years we are still just confused and we see personal ads that say "no bisexual" and when we date members of the opposite sex we are holding onto "straight privilege"...and for lots and lots of other reasons, we are part of the bisexual pride movement.

The Fence aims to decrease isolation for bisexual women by creating community. Cheryl Dobinson explains that in her research on bisexual people and health in Ontario, the one major problem she discovered was isolation. In many small communities, LGBT communities, especially LGBT communities inclusive of bisexuals did not exist. She writes,

Right now all I feel I can do is acknowledge that isolation is a major problem many bi people face. I want to keep thinking about it and trying to do what I can to help in whatever small ways I can think of. Such as publishing this zine and sending it all over the damn world to anyone who wants/ needs it.

Transgendered identities and issues are also articulated in feminist zines. *Discharge* challenges gender binaries by including a registration form in which the respondent challenges the M or F question on the form. This piece includes the information that "it is an illegal offence if any person refuses to state their gender on this and any other official documents. Documents will be considered incomplete and will not be processed". *Avoid Strange Men (2002)* includes a poem by a transgendered

individual: “question/ as metis/ as two spirited/ what did my foremothers and fathers/ desire who were two spirited? / did they feel shame? Did they regret their sex? / their gender?” (9). *Queer Zine Morphodite* comments on the confusion and frustration connected to gender identities. In one statement there is a photo of an individual with the heading, “what are You?”, under the photo is the text, “gurl-FAG, gay PUNK-ASS HOMO cHyK biDyke Queer Not a Lesbian pagan AnArchoFeminist, daughter sister cousin boy? Girl? Maybe sometimes...I’m just ME dammit!”. In *Beating Around the Bush*, Buttercup’s article, “My boyfriend has breasts”, explores her relationship with a female-to male transgendered person. She writes, “My boyfriend was born a woman. Biologically, his sex is female. But his gender identity is male. I also see him as that, male, and it angers me when people cannot respect how he chooses to identify”. Sandra Alland’s “Ode to Boys” in *Pussy Pen*, is also a celebration of transgendered people. She writes “it humbles me to watch them....boys on reserves/ in suburbs/ inner-city boys/ struggling to read/ raise kids/ learn love/ brave, sweet boys/ with cocks and cunts and holy trust/ who believe in imagination freedom soul/ boys with tits and scars”.

While exploring personal sexual and gender identities affects personal realities, the zinesters’ discussions of sexuality also demonstrate involvement in anti-oppression activities countering homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. 8 *Queer Women On Violence and Healing* and *Avoid Strange Men* both open for discussion the often silenced issue of domestic violence within gay couples. *Avoid Strange Men* also reveals the homophobia in the Canadian Blood Services. *The Fence* explores both health issues and body image issues particular to bi-sexual women. *The Queer Womyn’s Diversity Zine*,

The Fence and *Avoid Strange Men* all publicize local queer resources and activist activities.

Definitions of female sexuality have traditionally been limited to strict virgin/whore dichotomy. Similarly, in terms of sexual orientation the distinctions between straight women and lesbians have been rigid. Third-wave feminist zine writing is constantly defining and refuting labels of sexuality: butch, femme, fagdyke, slut, prude, ad infinitum. In their iterations of female sexuality, feminist zinesters have taken up the pleasure of female sexuality as a feminist politic with assertions that “every time I orgasm it is a revolutionary act” (*She Breathes #1: My Cunt is on Fire*). At the same time, situated in a context which has yet to embrace their notions of fluid sexuality, feminist zinesters also advocate and participate in political actions to end sexual oppression in greater society.

For the Boys: Rearticulating Masculinities

Third-wave feminisms are becoming more accepting and encouraging of the contributions of feminist men. The third-wave feminist anthologies *Third-wave Agenda* (1997), *The Fire This Time* (2004), *to be real* (1995) and *Turbo Chicks* (2001) all include essays by men. It seems that in part, third-wave feminisms are taking up bell hooks’ (1984) suggestion that, “[W]hen men show a willingness to assume equal responsibility in feminist struggle, performing whatever tasks necessary, women should affirm their revolutionary work by acknowledging them as comrades in struggle” (81). Debate about the relationship between men and feminism has become a serious and earnest topic within academic circles (Shepherd 1998: 173). Susan Faludi’s (1999) *Stiffed* and Rebecca Walker’s (2004) edited, *What Makes a Man: 22 Writers Imagine the Future* are

both examples of contemporary, popular feminist scholarship focusing on men. Despite an increased interest in men and masculinities in academia, in feminist zines men feature very irregularly. In the instances when men and masculinity are discussed in feminist zines, it is done in the following ways: there is an attitude that teaching men about their behavior is a necessary form of feminist activity; there is some discussion of the ways in which men are also oppressed by gender schemas; discussions of masculinity in terms of transgendered identities are evident and finally, contrary to the stereotypical man-hating image of feminists, men are discussed simply as objects of affection.

Bell hooks (1984) writes that, “[i]ndividuals committed to feminist revolution must address ways that men can unlearn sexism” (76). In this vein some writings in zines directed towards men are intended to teach men self-reflection. *We are Warriors* includes a lengthy, “Tools for White Guys who are working for social change from a society based on domination”. The first tool is to:

Practice noticing who’s in the room at meetings- how many men, how many women, how many white people, how many people of colour, is it majority heterosexual, are there out queers, what are people’s class backgrounds. Don’t assume to know people, but also work at being more aware.

In a similar tone, *Red Alert #4* includes a list of “some questions for boys about sex...” which include: “have you ever gone down on a girl without asking...have you ever considered the fact that maybe your partner is using body language to tell you something cuz they don’t feel safe enough to talk about it?” *Avoid Strange Men* (2002), includes a dialogue between two men discussing domestic violence. In this article Joshua and Julian grapple with creating dialogue around the issues of domestic violence as men. Joshua (2002) states,

when we first talked about writing this article I was really enthusiastic because I've had the experiences both of being abused and of being abusive in relationships, and I've also been inaccurately accused of abuse. I think that gives me interesting perspectives. Then I panicked that by talking about this openly people would only be able to see me as an abusive guy. This is a hard article to write.

Making men responsible for their implicitness in upholding a gendered hierarchy is one way in which feminist zinesters discuss masculinity.

Within zines, the creators acknowledge how patriarchal gender schemas oppress men who are subjected to hegemonic ideals of masculinity. This is humourously made poignant in a cartoon, "Viking Girl's Dream" in *The Fence (3)*. In this cartoon dream, a girl is visited by Steven Seagal. The narrator comments, "When she told me about this dream, we both laughed and laughed. First of all, Steven Seagal crawled out of her subconscious to represent generic masculinity and that's just funny and sad." In *A Little Something For Your Body (and Mind)* which is a zine focusing on body image, the zinesters comment on media imaging targeted at men, "[m]en are becoming another target for beauty products. Cosmetic and 'beauty' companies are now emphasizing the need for men to dye their hair, pluck their eyebrows and get manicures. It's all about profits- profiting off human insecurities." In *Lickety Split*, Jen Anisef writes a journalistic piece about visiting a male strip club. She explores how the patrons of a male-strip club differ from those at a female-strip club. Male strip clubs are a site of male objectification. She states that while mainstream culture has fully taught us how to objectify women,

we have yet to learn to do this automatically with the male body...But what my strip club studies taught me is that with a bit of practice, I was able to objectify men effortlessly. What I have to ask myself now is if this is something I want to learn.

Lickety Split also challenges hegemonic standards of masculinity through photographs of untraditional forms of masculinity. Feminists in these texts know that just as women learn to be women, men learn to be men.

Men are potential comrades in struggle, they are lovers, friends and they are also victims of strict gender binaries. Because zines are largely composed of very personal writings of the creator's lives, men often serve as the romantic interests in texts. Despite men's lack of flexibility within a gendered system, they still hold a dominant position within this system, harboring economic, political, and cultural advantages. This is what R.W. Connell calls the 'patriarchal dividend' for men (1998: 226). Despite men's important role in women's lives, and their positions as possible allies, feminist zines are not a space for writing about the delights or troubles of men.

Race:

In the 1980s a number of women of colour feminist texts were published. *This Bridge Called My Back* edited by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua (1983), *Sister Outsider* by Audre Lorde (1984), *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens* by Alice Walker (1983) and *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* by Patricia Hill Collins (1990) are all texts that opened up what was seen as a white movement. Third-wave feminists propel and build upon the understandings of the race/ gender intersection. Kayann Short (1997) writes, "[s]ome feminists of colour use the term 'the third-wave' to identify a new feminism that is led by and has grown out of the challenge to white feminism posited by women of colour" (in Heywood and Drake: 8). Amanda Lotz (2003) echoes that sentiment by arguing that one of the central forms of

third-wave feminism is the feminism of women of colour. Lotz (2003) defines “this perspective as women-of-colour feminism because of the centrality of race and ethnicity to this theoretical perspective and the use of this identifier in other scholarship” (4). At the same time Springer (2002) argues that “the third-wave” is a term coined by Barbara Smith, founder of Kitchen Table, Women of Colour Press and editor of *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (1983) (1063). Ruth Frankenberg’s (1993) *The Social Construction of Whiteness: White Women, Race Matters* propelled feminist discussions of race into a critique of how whiteness is considered racially neutral.

In zines, the need and desire to create more inclusive feminism is apparent. Erin Lois O’Reilly in *She Breathes #2: An Honest Mistake* succinctly declares,

I don’t want feminism that is just about white women and white women’s issues. I want feminism where white women don’t do all the talking. Where women of colour are heard. I want feminism that acknowledges the impact that racism has had on feminism. I want feminism that doesn’t pretend that all women have it the same.

O’Reilly’s feminism is in part realized in the inclusion of women of colour feminist references and continual writings by and about women of colour found in feminist zines. Seventeen out of the seventy zines spoke explicitly about issues surrounding race. Within the discussions of race, just as in sexualities, there is an emphasis on personal narratives and self-reflection. There is significant dialogue referencing second-wave women of colour feminists. Issues of racism in mainstream culture and within feminism and other social movements are discussed. Finally, the limits of this discussion of race within the feminist zines are examined.

There are many personal narratives in which women are self-reflexive of their racialized identities. In *Third Space*, Sharmeen Khan (2004) writes an article entitled,

“Confessions of a paki with the courage to heal”. In this article she discusses how her sexuality is shaped by her racialized identity. She writes, “I sit down and think about sexuality, relationships, anecdotes of brown legs wrapped around white hips...There is the sad humour of internalized racism playing out in every scenario, every flirtation and every possibility” (13). In *Homos, Heroes, and Halfbreeds*, Sarah writes about growing up with instilled pride of being half-native, while the aspects of her half-whiteness were rarely discussed. In conclusion she writes,

my identity as a person of mixed blood will always be in flux, in transition. Because I am, essentially, an embodiment of colonization and as relations between settler people and Aboriginal people shift, so too does my understanding of myself as a mixed-blood person.

In a similar vein, the creator of *Vagina Dentata* delineates her racialized identity from childhood experiences of being called a ‘paki’, and from being annihilated in mainstream press. She states that, “the issues are reality and identity. In reality, I am not white. Part of my reality is that I am a brown-skinned Canadian of Trinidadian descent. This part of my identity is never reinforced by the media images around me”. Noemi Martinez in *Letters From the War Years* writes self-reflectively of her racialized identity when, as she is riding a bicycle with, “cranky brown queer girl against the war”, a boy says to her, “you’re not really brown you know”. She responds in her writing, “I coulda said a lot of things like ‘yes I am’ or ‘brownner than you’ or ‘I’m the same colour as women in Iraq who are dying right now’”. While feminist zines are conduits and soapboxes for burgeoning feminist identities, zines are also outlets for exploring racialized identities.

In the third-wave feminist zines that discuss race there is an overwhelming reverence for the work of second-wave women of colour feminists. Book reviews, lists of

inspiring women, quotations, and discussions of women of colour feminist history are all forms of credence given to second-wave women of colour feminists. Venus in *Vagina Dentata* cites Marlene Nourbese Philip, bell hooks, and Paule Marshall as authors of “books she likes”. Emmy, in *Brown* cites bell hooks, Toni Morrison, Erica Lopez, and Frida Kahlo as “brown girls” she identifies with. *Red Alert #4* includes a quotation of Angela Davis and a poem of Assata Shakur. The literature and insights of second-wave women of colour feminists is keenly present in these third-wave zine writings.

Feminist zines contribute to anti-racist practices through the inclusion of images and words of women of colour, creating a media which does not participate in the continued silencing of women of colour. *Red Alert #4* includes an image of a Black woman with the accompanying text, “If you’re dissing the sisters you ain’t fighting the power”. On the same page is the assertion, “it is imperative to our struggle that we build a strong Black women’s movement. It is imperative that we, as Black women, talk about the experiences that shaped us.” *Revolution Girl Style* includes numerous images of Black women. One image is of three 1960s Black women with beehive hairstyles. The accompanying text reads, “headroom never goes out of style”. *52%* includes a poem by Melda Potts (2002) entitled, “Honey These Hips” which is in celebration of Black women. She writes,

Honey these hips...
been broken
Replaced
Examined
Supported and Healed
From careless falls and slower agility
From desires of what they used to do
Battling the reality of what they no longer do
Honey these hips...
Are on loan to us black women...

treat them well (9).

Through images, articles and words of and by women of colour, feminist zines combat the invisibility of women of colour in mainstream media.

Feminist zines also actively critique racism in mainstream society and in social movements. *We are Warriors* critiques the whiteness of mainstream history in an image of white men with the caption “history’s winners”. Venus, in *Vagina Dentata*, explores the symbolic annihilation of non-white women in mainstream magazines and television. She writes, “I am writing this mainly because I am sick and tired. Tired of the bullshit. Tired of the invisibility. I am writing this cuz I am sick of white women...I am sick of turning on my TV and seeing their beautiful/ugly faces smiling back at me”. *Manifest and Destiny*, a zine focusing on reproduction, discusses how non-white reproduction is discursively created in mainstream media to be deviant, “taboo, weird and design anxieties around it”. Sarah, in *Homos, Heroes, and Halfbreeds* addresses the racism in the appropriation of Native art, especially through tattooing.

Racism within feminism and other social movements was a more frequent topic than racism in mainstream society. While these zinesters credit the work and tradition of second-wave women of colour feminists. They are also critical of a largely white privileged feminist history, and continued white privilege within contemporary feminism. Sarah writes of her disappointing experience studying women’s studies at university,

What I often encountered was the same old white, self-righteous, mainstream feminists who were spouting slogans about sisterhood. Now there were some amazing professors and a number of really awesome allies and more people who were also excluded by mainstream feminist understandings of what it means to be a woman, but generally, I was not supported in this environment. I did not feel like a sister. (*Homos, Heroes, and Halfbreeds*)

The zine, *Little Words* includes detailed instructions for facilitating an anti-racist workshop for feminist organizations. The workshop is “designed for white feminists to break down their own white privilege and the racism embedded in the organizations, spaces in which they work”. *Avoid Strange Men* includes a lengthy letter from the Queer Women of Colour group to the Victoria Pride Society. The letter argues that at the Pride celebrations queer women of colour were denied the right to speak. They write that, “it is often easier to rationalize away racism than acknowledge it. However, we all need to recognize it before we can begin to reduce internalized and systemic racism, which exists everywhere. The queer community is not immune” (2002: 5). Racism in the anti-war movement is targeted in the zine, *Letters from the war years*. This zine includes “an open letter to activists concerning racism in the anti-war movement”. In this letter the writers state, “the problem of racism in anti-war activism is not new...A new era of activism presents us with the opportunity to come to grips with the issues of race and anti-racism in our movement, instead of continuing to ignore them”. Reflection on white privilege and racialized oppression within feminism and other social movements such as Pride and the anti-war movement, is evident in zines.

Despite the several examples discussed involving race, what is more resounding are the limits of this dialogue. Kirsten Schilt (2003) writes that zines are “largely produced by White people, as they emerged from the predominantly White punk subculture” (75). This is confirmed by the relative minimal dialogue about race. Amongst white zinesters, problematizing whiteness is also seldom discussed, despite the move to problematize whiteness in feminist theory. In fact, discussions of white problematizations of whiteness occur on three occasions. The contributors to *Little Words*, accompany their

anti-racist feminist workshop agenda by stating that their goal is to, “recognize that we as white feminists perpetuate racism in our daily lives and struggles, and how this damages everyone- including white people” (74). A contributor to 52% writes an article about Black history month stating, “I feel that it’s important for us all to remember the contributions which black women have made in the women’s movement...Although I am not a black woman, I have found it to be quite enlightening and enjoyable to read writing by black women”. Finally, Jess in *Huh?* discusses whiteness and Judaism, “I realized I was wrong, my so-called-whiteness had been suspect my entire life”. The discussions about race, racism within feminism, and the experiences of non-White women, and the contributions of women of colour feminists are largely initiated by non-White women. Unfortunately, within third-wave feminist zines, White women still contribute little to discussions about race.

Ability:

Garland Thomson (1994) argues that while autobiographical narratives of women with disabilities are prevalent, disability studies have not become a “major critical subgenre within feminism” (In *We are Warriors*). Considering the lack of discussion surrounding disability as an axis of oppression/ experience within feminist zines, Thomson’s argument appears valid. While many zines briefly mention their desires to create spaces that are inclusive of all abilities, few elaborate on how this can be done. *Little Words* includes a sticker with an image of the wheelchair sign and an obstacle on the ground, the accompanying text declares, “This facility is in-fucking-accessible!” Emmy Pantin, in her zine, *Manifest and Destiny*, writes her theory that many forms of

oppression are based on society's anxieties regarding reproduction. These anxieties privilege white, able-bodied, heterosexuals. She writes,

if your concern is to produce more white babies, you need to make homosexuality sick and unnatural (homosexuals don't reproduce), you need to make the sexuality of coloured folks taboo, weird and design anxieties around it, you need to make sure that the proper type of white babies are born (not disabled, not poor).

Beating Around the Bush also includes a list of resources on sexuality and disability and notes, "we didn't get any writing to us on this subject, but here are some books that may be worth checking out".

Other zines try to more explicitly explore the connections between disability, gender and oppression. The cover art of *The Fence*, features two women, and one man. One of the women is disabled. The artist, T.J. Bryan writes her feelings about representing a disabled woman. She writes,

[a]s one of the dominated, I have a vested interest in bringing to light some of the oppression that goes uncriticued on a daily basis...when I make the choice to not just include, but to centralize a woman with a disability in one of my drawings, I realize I'm taking a risk

She continues to state that, "as is the case with most forms of oppression not linked easily or directly to homophobia and erotophobia, the silence in queer communities around ableism is stunning and difficult to bear". Another zine that directly tackles ableism is *We are Warriors*. In this zine, one of the contributors writes,

it seems to me that the issue of privilege becomes a very emotional thing to talk about because it's so based on one's personal experience. To me, because I'm a deaf rights activist, I find it curious that the issue of ability/ disability rarely comes up in discussions about privilege in America.

The writer notes that unlike race or gender, the privileges accorded to ability are fluid, one's abilities change throughout their life, and likewise their positions of privilege

change. Included in this zine are resources such as information about the journal, *Disability and Society*, and the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies. In *Third Space*, (Nov. 2003) Tanis Doe writes to make disability more visible through citing various famous women with disabilities such as: Frida Kahlo, Wilma ManKiller, Patty Duke, and Harriet Tubman. She does this because, “it’s not hard to ignore or forget the history of disabled women because we haven’t been part of the history-making- we have been silenced, secluded, sterilized, abused, enslaved, euthanized”. Feminist zines represent an effort towards discussing ability and the experiences of women with disabilities.

The Laughing Crone:

The witch, the crone and the spinster all denote that as women age they become pitiful, dangerous and useless. At the same time however, men become more powerful and virile as they age. This is what Susan Sontag (1978) has referred to as the “double standard of aging”. As young women, the zinesters have on their side the Westernized privilege of youth. Younger feminists have been criticized for dismissing the worth of older feminists. Lisa Mesbur (2001) asks, “why is it that in our culture, youth is so powerfully linked to radical thought and activism, while getting older suggests mellowing out, giving up, growing apathetic, conservative, callous, even cruel?” (327) While they are writing from their experiences as young women, within the zines there are articles contributed by older women, and attempts to rearticulate aging and women.

The largest issue concerning aging women discussed in the zines is body image. This is an apt response to a mass media-saturated culture that idolizes teen, firm, fully sculpted pop stars. Feminist zines attempt to jar these cultural ideals. In *We Are Warriors*,

the center photo is that of a woman in her seventies standing, with the help of crutches, completely naked, with sagging breasts and belly. The accompanying text inquires, “why do I make you feel uncomfortable?” In *Beating Around the Bush*, an older woman imparts her wisdom to younger women regarding body image. Jane Fox (2001), a 54 year old woman extols the virtues of going braless and states that “there are some things I have learned about breasts that I would like to pass on to younger women who may be experiencing the same or other kinds of prejudice about their bodies” (40). What she has learned is that breasts and their perkiness do not equate femininity. *The Laughing Crone*, a zine made specifically by and for older women as a “celebration of midlife and beyond” attempts to redefine aspects of aging through art. One collage proclaims, “crow’s feet – who the hell cares, they are only laugh lines”. Finally, in *52%*, there is a letter from a younger woman to an older woman, in which the younger woman tries to convince the older woman not to get cosmetic surgery. The letter (2000) reads, “I was completely surprised the other day when you announced to me that you plan on getting liposuction. I look at you and I think of everything that you’ve been through and I am inspired because I feel that you are such a strong and beautiful person” (6). Age, as a site of oppression or privilege is only peripherally problematized in feminist zines.

Chapter 8: A Theoretical Post Script

Let's reject, disrupt, deconstruct the master narrative (sic). 'cause damn it does not fit' - Avoid Strange Men (1), 2002

Elizabeth Fox Genovese's (1996) book *Feminism Is Not the Story of My Life*, through anecdotal stories, describes how mainstream institutionalized feminism has failed women. However, this book misses, even in its title, a tenet central to third-wave feminisms that is— contemporary feminism is not the story of a life, because it is not a story, a singular narrative or stance. Feminism, as articulated by third-wave zinesters, is a series of multi-textual articulations and multiple, fluctuating feminist identities. Third-wave feminism is defined by its constant contradiction, demonstrated by a lack of consistent platforms, stances, or solid identities. Catherine Orr (1997) writes that “navigating feminisms’ contradictions- historical, cultural, psychological- is a primary theme of third-wave feminism” (31). Similarly, Melissa Klein (1997) writes that “[o]ur politics reflects a postmodern focus on contradiction and duality” (208). Third-wave feminism exists in a political time that is “non-linear, multidirectional and simultaneous” that employs “a conception of narrative as repetition, alternation and oscillation” (Roof in Purvis 2004: 111).

In this interpretive analysis of Canadian third-wave feminist zines, I have explored how zinesters are rearticulating feminism within their particular contexts. This Chapter explores my theoretical observations from a grounded theory approach. Zine feminism represents one form of third-wave feminist representation. It is from this one representation that I am making these observations.

As explored in Chapter 5, third-wave feminists grew up in a different political, social, and economic context than previous generations. Third-wave feminism has also arisen in a particular philosophical era, one shaped by postcolonialism, postmodernism and postfeminism. Deborah Siegel (1997) argues that the use and emphasis on the personal in third-wave texts is a reflection of theory, while the question she poses is the question that has also emerged from this thesis:

Given that postmodernist, poststructuralist, and multiculturalist critiques have shaped the form and the content of third-wave expressions of the personal, I am ultimately interested in the possibilities and limitations of such theoretical analysis for a third-wave praxis (51).

Postmodernism is characterized by the constant deconstruction of metanarratives and the unitary subject and an understanding of power as diffuse. Feminist zines are distinctly postmodern texts. Green and Toarmino (1997) argue that third-wave feminism is marked by its disunity, and zines, as writings of third-wave feminisms are similarly marked by fluidity and variety (xiii). Green and Toarmino (1997) celebrate and embrace feminist zines as a source of understanding third-wave feminisms as they are sites for, “communication, education, community, revolution, celebration, and self-expression” (xiv). Through their style and content feminist zines are engaging with postmodern theory. In *Little Words*, this theoretical engagement is made explicit in a three page collage of words and images, on page one: “I am a function of discourse”, page two “I am not universal” and page three “I am not formed spontaneously through the simple attribution of a discourse to me the individual.” Feminist zines reflect the influence of postmodernism on contemporary feminist production.

This constant expansion of feminist definitions, identities and activities, in its openness and limitless possibilities reflects a focus on multiplicity. While the emphasis on personal articulations is seen by some as limited, apolitical and offering a false sense of resistance, in this Chapter I will explore how third-wave feminist zines demonstrate both the limits and expansive possibilities that have been borne through a postmodern context.

Multiplicity ad infinitum: Exploring Feminist Galaxies

Postmodernism and feminism both seek to create new locations or standpoints for the creation of knowledge. Women, having been previously barred from modern theory, have often found postmodernism an accommodating philosophical perspective. Best and Kellner (1991) explain, “feminists tend to be critical of modern theory because the oppression of women has been sustained and legitimated through the philosophical underpinnings of modern theory and its essentialism, foundationalism, and universalism” (206). Postmodernism critiques the key principles of modernist theory which rely on the existence of a stable, coherent self, reason and its sciences, reason as transcendental and universal, and reason as the source of authority (Flax 1990: 41). Considering that the ‘self’ in modernist theory is a male self, from which reason and authority is derived, Jane Flax argues that “feminist theory more properly belongs in the terrain of postmodern philosophy” (1990: 42).

Central to postmodern theory is the critiquing of ‘grand narratives’¹⁸. Theorists such as Jean-Francois Lyotard argue that grand narratives of legitimation are no longer

¹⁸ ‘Grand narratives’ define a whole system based on a single source of explanation. i.e. Marxism is often seen as a ‘grand narrative’ by postmodernists because it relates everything to capital and commodity production.

credible, instead they argue for theories which are “plural, local and immanent” (Fraser and Nicholson 1990: 21). While the grand narratives of modernism have traditionally been exclusionary, marginalized groups such as women can embrace the postmodern local, plural and immanent theorizing as a means of finally being heard. For this reason, “marginalized groups and individuals have been attracted to postmodern theory to articulate the specificity of their positions and to valorize their differences from other groups and individuals” (Best and Kellner 1991: 205). Some contemporary feminist theory which has focused on recognizing the different unique positions of different women has embraced postmodernism for this reason.

Postmodern feminists critique traditional Western feminism as flawed because it focuses on the unified subject of women. Flax (1993) asserts that “postmodern feminism involves a rejection of any meta-narrative which purports to identify the basis of women’s subordination” (20). Many postmodern feminists see feminism as its own meta-narrative based on false universalities amongst women based on biological similarities (Fraser and Nicholson: 1988). Fraser and Nicholson explain that, “while gender identity gives substance to the idea of sisterhood, it does so at the cost of repressing differences among sisters” (1988: 356). Fraser and Nicholson (1990) argue that feminist theory falsely universalizes factors such as culture and society, and as a consequence serves to repress differences among women. They advocate the Foucauldian method of genealogy: “social theorists would do better first to construct genealogies of the categories of sexuality, reproduction, and mothering before assuming universal significance” (31).

The feminisms produced in third-wave zines deconstruct the perceived ‘master narrative’ of second-wave feminism by embracing the constant contradiction within third-wave feminism. The feminisms represented in this study best exemplify Ann Brook’s (1997) conception of postfeminism¹⁹:

Postfeminism expresses the intersection of feminism with postmodernism, and post-colonialism, and as such represents a dynamic movement capable of challenging modernist, patriarchal and imperialist frameworks. In the process postfeminism facilitates a broad-based, pluralistic conception of the application of feminism, and addressed the demands of marginalized, diasporic and colonized cultures for a non-hegemonic feminism capable of giving voice to local, indigenous, and postcolonial feminisms (4).

Feminist zines resist the seeming ‘master narrative’ of second-wave feminism by brazenly rejecting anything perceived as feminist orthodoxy. Rebecca Walker (1995) states,

the concept of a strictly defined and all-encompassing feminist identity is so prevalent that when I read the section in my talk about all the different things you could do and still be a feminist, like shave your legs every day, get married, be a man, be in the army, whatever, audience members applauded spontaneously” (xxxii).

Restrictive feminist notions of female beauty, relationships with men, humour and sexuality are all aspects of a master feminist narrative that is jarred by third-wave feminism in zines. Third-wave feminists also reject any understanding of a singular feminist stance; solidarity has been replaced with multiplicity ad infinitum. As explored in this thesis, solid perspectives on any feminist issue are rare. Popular culture is loved and loathed, institutions like the medical system and academia are both critiqued and

¹⁹ Unlike popular usages of the term postfeminism, Brooks employs the French definition which, instead of focusing on the irrelevancy of contemporary feminism, sees the application of feminism in a context shaped by many deconstructive philosophies.

embraced, and most importantly second-wave feminism is a source of inspiration and a point of departure.

In the course of embracing postmodernism, feminists embrace the erasure of the subject. The disappearance of the subject is rejoiced in by postmodern feminists, since the 'subject' that is assumedly erased is the male, white, heterosexual subject of the Enlightenment. Postmodernism sees the subject as an "ideological construct" or a "nostalgic effigy" (Rosenau 1992: 44). The postmodern subject is a discursive, continuously unfinished production. Georgina Murray (1997) writes that "postfeminists often argue that the feminist movement should be based on individuals and the individual's needs" (38). The subjects in feminist zines are markedly in constant flux and transformation. As explored in this thesis, the creation of the feminist texts- zines, is largely the constant creation of feminist identities. This is best exemplified by the abundance of personal narratives. Natasha Pinterics (2001) writes,

much of third-wave theory rests upon embracing and utilizing multi-vocality/locality. The use of often divergent personal narratives in anthologies, cyberspace, and zines are indicative of this theoretical basis, and of the third-wave theoretical insistence on taking on feminist politics as they exist as individual, personal levels (16).

Feminism influenced by postmodernism focuses on "politics of difference" rather than "politics of equality" (Brooks 1997:24). As an effort to reject the universalizing of women, feminism of difference focuses on individual identities and subjectivities. The personal, multiple experiences and expressions of individuality are exemplified through the third-wave feminist focus on personalized resistance. Chapter 6: Our Bodies, Our Selves, and Chapter 7, Define and Empower, both explore how third-wave feminists are using gender and claiming their presentations of selves to radical, transgressive ends.

The politics of representation have emerged as one of the central politics of third-wave feminism. This can largely be accounted to the realities that many structural barriers to women's equality have been eradicated in Canada. Canadian third-wave feminists grew up in a different political climate. However, for third-wave feminists the realities of symbolic violence in mainstream culture are pressing. Georgina Murray (1997) states that

Postfeminists argue that misogynist representations stem from adherence to a post-enlightenment, logocentric, philosophical system. Postfeminists see themselves at war with the male-stream logocentrism because logocentrism is the dominant metaphysical form of knowledge in Western thought (40).

Politics of representation and politics of difference are interwoven in third-wave feminist politics and cultural representation— zines. Feminist postmodern criticism opens up categories of women and promotes the production of multiple representations, which is at the heart of third-wave feminist zines.

The Incredible Shrinking Woman

The feminist relationship to modernism and postmodernism is one marked with the characteristic contradiction. Barbara Marshall (1994) explains that feminism has emerged as a modernist project, and

is wedded to the modern by virtue of its rootedness in the space opened up by rights discourse and by the ideals of bourgeois public, but at the same time, its commitment to difference and diversity and its skeptical stance towards reason call forth the postmodern (148).

For some, the dissolution of the subject has led to what DiStefano (1990) has termed the “incredible shrinking woman” (77) as the subject positions women were gaining are dissolved. Despite the fact that modernism is a masculinist legacy, women

and other marginalized groups were emerging as subjects and beginning to have a voice.²⁰ Some argue that in a postmodern context, all voices and stances are dissolved into fragments which can no longer be heard. Kristin Waters (1995) best expresses the feminist concern of the fragmentation of the subject:

Women and persons of colour, the named qualifiers, must be mentioned to signify a switch in the universe of discourse. But according to post-modern theory “woman” cannot be mentioned because we must destabilize the subject. We are fragmented. We cannot exist as a single abstract idea. So men (powerfully and omnipresently implied) are and women are not (289).

Many feminists have reacted strongly to this postmodern de-centering of the subject as an erasing of the voices marginalized groups have finally gained. Nancy Hartsock (1987) voices her concern and suspicion, “Why is it that just at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic?” (In Weedon: 176). Kristin Waters (1996) agrees by stating that, “in post-modern theory agency and subjectivity both take the plunge. From this perspective, postmodernism amounts to a kind of theoretical subterfuge to undermine the newly acquired power of marginalized groups” (285). When the subject is no longer central, the first to be shoved aside are the ones who were the last to gain any voice. Rosenau (1992) explains, “if the subject has no voice, then there is no place in social science for special attention to a woman’s perspective” (52).

De-centering the subject has political implications for feminism. Feminism’s purpose is to expose and then subvert female subordination. Postmodernism, through

²⁰ By uniting around terms such as ‘woman’ or ‘lesbian’, groups began to form voices, the voice of women, a gay liberation voice, which allowed them, as a collective to challenge the traditional modernist ‘subject’.

disallowing subjecthood, and devaluing meta-narratives, doesn't allow women to name themselves female subjects. Nor does postmodernism allow feminists to name patriarchy as the source of male domination, as this would appear totalizing. Denise Thompson explains that "instead of overtly identifying the feminist challenge to male domination as a 'master narrative', 'post-modern' feminism accuses that challenge of 'essentialism' and 'universalism'" (1996: 330). Thus, a central problem with postmodern feminism is that, in de-centering the subject, 'woman' and a 'woman's perspective' is erased.

Third-wave feminism has been criticized for being apolitical, while postmodernism has also been criticized for the lack of analysis it inspires of people's actual material experiences. For example, Toril Moi declares that deconstruction of the binary oppositions of genders is "possible and productive" (1989: 129), but only after women's liberal equality has been established. She states, "as long as patriarchy is dominant, it still remains politically essential for feminists to defend women as women in order to counteract the patriarchal oppression that precisely despises women as women" (1989: 129). Waters also argues that women cannot afford to rid themselves of their recently, and not yet sufficiently established subjecthood. She (1989) states, "to fail to selectively appropriate the powerful theoretical tools of multifaceted modern theories and readapt them for feminist analysis is a self-destructive move" (1996: 296). This position is agreed upon by many feminists who prefer to take the "low road" (Douglas 1996: 417) and strive for concrete change in the daily actualities of women's lives. Susan Bordo argues that postmodern feminism is problematic because in embracing multiple axes of identity, and dissolving a woman-centered stance, feminism disappears; "[h]ow many axes can one include and still preserve analytical focus or argument?" (1990: 139). The

feminist critique of postmodernism argues that women still need a position from which to create their politics, and assert their subjectivities.

However, third-wave feminists, in efforts to reject falsely universalizing women, by focusing on the personal still run the risk of marginalizing many women. Georgina Murray (1997) writes that postfeminist texts have become unintelligible “because the ideas are individually based and do not reach the collective concerns of women of colour, working-class women and other marginalized women” (37). Murray (1997) also contends that

Postfeminism’s discourses on difference and diversity are held to obscure structures of domination rather than reveal them (Carby, 1990), and they too often offer a ‘white woman’s narrative and perspective about the appropriation of the notions of difference among women by a white-dominated Women’s Studies discourse’ (Gordon, 1991) (42).

This is true of the zines in this study. By focusing almost exclusively on their own experiences; the zines speak rarely of issues of class, ability, or whiteness, while issues of sexuality and academia are privileged.

Issues of class and the workplace should be pressing for third-wave feminist women. Michelle Sidler (1997) explains, “second-wave feminism did not enter an economic forecast so grim; they had no way of knowing that my generation would need their help to counter the raw force of global profit-driven capitalism” (31). However, the majority of the zinesters are university educated and implicitly of a certain class; this class privilege is rarely acknowledged. Lorie Fuller, in an article in *Let it be known*, discusses the invisible apartheid at her university, Kent State University (KSU), between the university students and the poorly paid housekeeping and maintenance staff. Fuller (2002) notes that her column “speaks to the problem of trying to persuade comfortably

middle-class activist students to care about the people who clean their toilets”. One zine, *72.5 cents* focuses exclusively on the gendered imbalances in the workforce. This zine explores the ‘double-day of labor’ and the feminization of poverty, citing that, “in 1997, 18.3% of women in Canada were living in poverty, while 14.3% of men lived in poverty”. This zine is the only zine that explicitly looks at connections between class and gender.

While fourteen zines discussed the politics of menstruation, only 7 remotely touched on class, showcasing a limitation of focusing on individualized experiences. Similarly, while whiteness as a social construct has been theorized, in the zines, whiteness is rarely problematized. With a heavy focus on individual subjectivities and a ‘politics of difference,’ new limitations emerge.

The Personal is Apolitical

Focusing on personal narratives is also accused of being apolitical when the personal often remains at the level of the personal, without bridging to political action. In zines, the personal narratives are written with definite political intent. Third-wave feminists have a new, empowered understanding of the second-wave feminist axiom, ‘the personal is political’. Second-wave feminists used this expression to explain their new found abilities to connect personal oppressions, largely domestic and interpersonal, to larger systems of oppression. Third-wave feminists take this axiom to denote their personal power to affect change. Dallas Cullen (2000) writes that for third-wave feminists, “the personal is political’ means ‘I self-define as a feminist; feminism is a political stance; therefore any and all of my actions have political import and significance” (2). This understanding of personal politics is certainly shared amongst the

zinesters. Consider Erin Lois O'Reilly whose every orgasm is a revolutionary act (*She Breathes #1: My Cunt is On Fire*) or Jess in *Huh? On Identity and Armpit Hair* who "gets off on holding on to the ceiling rail on crowded buses in the summer" flaunting her unshorn armpits.

While this is definitely an empowered new understanding of personal agency, it can be argued that there are limits to personal politics. Brandi Leigh-Ann Bell (2002) explores the possibility that the overtly personal narratives within zines may lead to a block in feminist praxis:

the focus on the personal may overshadow the political. While some women zine producers use their personal experiences to encourage broad political activity, many producers overwhelmingly focus on the personal and fail to connect those personal experiences with characteristics of larger society (195).

Third-wavers understandings of their own interactional power can be seen as misguided. It is what Bhavnani, Kent, and Twine (1998) refer to as "constrained agency" (576)

in that young women are not agents with total or absolute free will. Although they may represent themselves, and be represented by others, in ways that do not rely on a portrayal of women as vulnerable, their agency is still constrained by such limits as age, class, ethnicity and so on (Cullen 2000:5).

Jennifer Purvis (2004) argues that

the third-wave appears to be part of a much larger debate concerning the effectiveness of postmodernism for feminism, or the fear among some political theorists that has led us, or will lead us, to abandon the politics and utopian thinking of critical theory *en bloc* (105).

As previously stated, focusing on individual acts of resistance is largely related to politics of representation, which is often reduced to, or perceived as a feminist aesthetic and a disproportionate focus on style. This focus on style has been one of the main

criticisms of third-wave feminism. Helene Shugart (2001) reduces third-wave feminism as a Generation X subculture that is largely an aesthetic²¹.

However, a reading the zines which reduces them to style and individual acts of resistance is inaccurate. Amongst the personal narratives, reviews of sex toys and odes to Kathleen Hanna, there is very concrete evidence that third-wave feminists are connecting their personal realities and acts of resistance to broader forms of political activism. In Chapter 5, I explored feminists' participation in activities such as Reclaim the Streets, Radical Cheerleaders, stickering campaigns and street protesting as well as their participation and promotion of alternative environmental menstrual products and more sustainable food is explored. In Chapter 6, while feminists explore their mediated relationships with their bodies, they also extend D.I.Y information on health care and abortion, and document their involvement in community based women's health collectives. Involvement in anti-violence against women campaigns such as Take Back the Night and December 6 vigils is demonstrated, and resources and information on violence against women services is published. Finally, in Chapter 7, while exploring the multiple facets of their identities, the zinesters also include resource information for queer youth, and write on their experiences in the anti-racist anti-war movement.

The writings in zines also connect the personal to broader political implications through their development of community, as explored in Chapter 4. The creation and circulation of zines offer alternative media images of women combating both symbolic annihilation and symbolic violence of women in mainstream media. Focusing on oneself unapologetically as a young woman is a political act in a media culture which

²¹ Two recent books, Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter's *The Rebel Sell* (2004) and Hal Niedviecki's *Hello, I'm Special* (2004) specifically target the limits of counter-culture, and how it is a personal aesthetic rather than political activism.

simultaneously dismisses women's agency and promotes a narrow, one-dimensional female identity. Psychologists and sociologists have well documented that adolescent girls feel a particular attack on their self esteem. Peggy Orenstein (1994) argues that at adolescence girls, disproportionate to boys, do not feel that they are considered creative, intelligent beings, which leads to a "confidence gap". Nancy Gruver (2003) has also documented that between the ages of seven and eighteen girls silence their voices (103). Developing one's own creativity, at the precise time when this creativity and voice is being silenced, can be psychologically revolutionary for girls and young women. Creating texts that focus on the personal in this context can be a courageous and engaging act.

Conclusion

Third-wave feminism, in popular and academic texts, is too often understood as an antagonistic movement resisting second-wave feminism as much as it resists the still persistent oppressions of patriarchy. Third-wave feminisms in zines, influenced by postmodernism, are intent on critiquing master narratives, of which feminism is included. Through destabilizing the subject, and understanding power as diffuse, the resulting feminist cultural productions of zines are replete with personal narratives written from the plural, local, perspectives of individuals with fluctuating identities, presenting contrasting perspectives.

The style and content of zines— postmodern and third-wave— demonstrate some of the limitations and potentials of postmodern philosophies. Focusing on the local, immanent, and personal can be understood as a reflection of postmodernism. In one

reading, focusing on the personal can seem to outweigh political activism, as well as limiting the representations of women by the lack of class and whiteness analysis. However, in other cases, such as in discussions of violence against women, health, the global justice movement and race, personal narratives are tacitly connected to, and inspire continued political activism.

Chapter 9 Conclusion: Beyond the “In Goddess We Trust” Bumper Stickers

The purpose of this study was to explore how third-wave feminists use zines to dialogue with, mediate and resist the pressures and complexities of being female in contemporary Canada. Third-wave feminism principally differs from second-wave feminism because it has arisen in a different cultural context, one shaped and influenced by second-wave feminism and current economic and social realities.

Third-wave feminism has largely been situated and studied solely in relation to second-wave feminism. This has resulted in an amplified perception of generational strife. Generational strife should be instead understood as simultaneous reverence, appreciation and the desire to move forward. In third-wave feminist zines these characteristics of third-wave feminism are represented as third-wave feminist zinesters are both enacting positions first articulated by second-wave feminists and presenting new, innovative understandings of power in contemporary society. The third-wave relationship to second-wave feminism represents a central characteristic of third-wave feminism: contradiction. It is through contradiction that third-wave feminists are demonstrating their theoretical underpinnings. Through unpacking and exploring both feminism and their complex social conditions, third-wave feminists are creating new positions from which to act and live as political beings.

In the 1970s second-wave feminists participated in consciousness-raising (CR) groups. By exploring the realities of their personal conditions, women were able to connect them to broader social structures. Third-wave feminists are engaging in this

notion of personal oppression by actively exploring the conditions of their personal lives through personal narratives published in zines. However, while employing a similar consciousness raising strategy, third-wave feminist personal narratives are markedly different. While second-wave feminists explored how aspects of their personal realities intersect with the results of broader forms of oppression, third-wave feminists are taking this concept further by engaging in a reverse concept that their personal acts and localized forms of expression can have political results.

Third-wave feminists have explored areas of female oppression first explored by second-wave feminists and demonstrated how these issues are still pertinent in the third-wave context. The connections between environmental destruction and women's oppression, the symbolic annihilation and violence towards women in popular culture, global issues of women's oppression, and issues of women's health, and violence against women were all first brought to light by second-wave feminists and continue to be relevant and important issues for third-wave feminists, as explored in Chapters 5 and 6.

Third-wave feminism is markedly centered on "politics of difference". The "identity politics" that emerged in the 1980s have become central to third-wave feminist understandings of power relations. Rather than focusing on universals of female oppression, third-wave feminists focus on specifics by rooting their politics in their own experiences and explicitly drawing out the effects of gender, race, age, ability and class on their experiences as women. The style of third-wave feminist zines also marks both the resistance to some aspects of 'feminist orthodoxy' and to consumer corporate culture. The abundance of humour and fun is a distinct feature of third-wave feminist texts which resists notions that feminism is humourless. While bricolage, detournement, and irony are

all culture jamming tools that effectively jar the bombardment of contemporary consumer culture.

Feminist zines are not the extent of third-wave feminist activism. They are largely expressions and explorations of personal identities. Political activism must, by necessity, begin with personal reflection. By understanding first how the various axes of privilege/oppression affect them personally, feminist zinesters have freedom to act. As Paolo Freire (1970) explains, liberation “can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (33). Feminist zines are a veritable showcase of emerging feminist identities; race, sexuality, age, ability, and gender are all explored as the variables which shape women’s lives. By focusing on their personal identities, women situate themselves within a broader matrix of social power relations.

The connections between personal identities and axes of privilege/ oppression and political action are made tenuously as the zines include reference and resource lists, advice, and information on political actions. This connection is imperative to social change, because, as bell hooks has stated, “it is necessary for feminist activists to stress that the ability to see and describe one’s own reality is a significant step in the long process of self-recovery, but it is only a beginning” (in Lutaneberger 2002: 107).

Canadian third-wave feminism is not widely known or understood in mainstream Canadian culture or Canadian academia. In a recent interview, second-wave Canadian feminist leader Judy Rebick (2005) commented that:

The second-wave of feminism is over. And before I went out on the road (on the book tour), I thought the third-wave hadn't happened yet...But the reaction I'm getting to this book from young women is so strong that it's telling me it's already started. I feel more optimistic that there is emerging a new feminism and it has to be a new feminism because we're in a different world now (In Dakers: D11).

By the 70 plus recent Canadian feminist zines I analyzed in this thesis, Canadian third-wave feminism has not “just started” but is in full swing. In a cultural context shaped by a different set of oppressions, young women still deal largely with violence against women, symbolic violence in the media that is leading to epidemic body dysmorphia in young women, and a global economy that is continually increasing the gap between the rich and the poor, third-wave feminists are articulating feminisms that respond to this context. These feminisms both pay homage to and build from second-wave feminism, and move forward to create cultural productions that while resisting oppression, embrace difference, humour, multiplicity and fun. As a wave, moving forward, while always connected to the past, third-wave feminism is reverent and distinct, while third-wave feminists continue to engage in the multiple struggles of social justice.

In contemporary culture, there are distinct difficulties connected to identifying as feminist. Susan Faludi’s (1991) *Backlash* succinctly demonstrated the anti-feminist era with which third-wave feminists have grown up. Joan Grant-Cummings (2001) articulates that while third-wavers have had the advantage of having feminism as a birthright,

it has been during the last decade that a clear, organized and orchestrated backlash against the feminist movement and feminists has emerged and made itself present. Mixed in with the aggressiveness of the global capitalist economy, it has made a deadly cocktail of anti-feminist forces (310).

Third-wavers have also grown up in an era where equality has been assumed and therefore feminism seen as redundant despite the glaring empirical evidence to the contrary. Canadian third-wave feminist zinesters resist these difficulties and have picked up the torch to work towards greater equality and social justice for all. Laurie Dawson in

Discharge explains that “right now, being a feminist, much like listening to Ace of Base, is not cool”. After defining the indefinable she declares that “[f]eminism as a whole is hard to understand. It is hard to understand because there is no whole, (no common sisterhood), which in turn means that it doesn’t contain any neatly defined boundaries or statements”. Finally, she invokes what I believe to be the ethos of the feminist zinesters in this study, “I believe we need feminism to change things such as sweat-shops, rape, eating disorders, medication-therapy, wife abuse, pollution, poverty. Feminism recognizes these things as social problems that can be resolved. I think that is very cool”.

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