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Embodied DIY: Feminist and Queer Zines in a Transglobal World

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PEAKS AND FANZINES. FUSES FOR A REBELLION

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(special issue editors)

There is a sadness in this world, for we are ignorant of many things. Yes, we are ignorant of many beautiful things — things like the truth. So sadness, in our ignorance, is very real. The tears are real. What is this thing called a tear? There are even tiny ducts — tear ducts — to produce these tears should the sadness occur. Then the day when the sadness comes — then we ask: 'Will this sadness which makes me cry — will this sadness that makes me cry my heart out — will it ever end?' The answer, of course, is yes. One day the sadness will end.

*Twin Peaks, Log Lady,
Episode 3 'Rest in Pain',
Season 1, 1990.*



Writing about fanzines nowadays, at this very moment, makes us feel as if we were inside an episode of *Twin Peaks*. A universe involves and captures us, even after we know its story and its ending. In this same universe, we found a series of figures, characters, eccentric stories that inhabit the cities and imaginary spaces, just like in fanzines. As in the series, in fanzines we have the possibility to unveil mysteries.

And why did we establish this connection? Firstly, we consider that both fanzines and the television series *Twin Peaks* are a landmark of postmodern texts and productions (Albanese, 2012); secondly, in our understanding, they are both characterized by complex narratives that are not always appreciated or taken into account (Mittell, 2006) due to their complexity or exposition/presentation mode. They are both capable of producing countless hidden stories from various points of view, even those that are often overlooked. Focusing on the first reason - the fact that they are a landmark of post-modern texts - we assess that fanzines are an interpretative lens on the world, but also on individuals and their interactions, similarly to what happened with the series in the 1990s. With its premiere, the series soon became a popular culture phenomenon, becoming unparalleled for its narrative and storytelling construction. In fact, the series was itself an interpretive lens on society at that time, making it known that every individual has a hidden face. In Laura Palmer's case, it was drugs and sexual abuse. In fact, both the fanzines and the series are not only an interpretive lens on the real world, but also on imaginary universes. From a sociological and cultural studies point of view, both show us that there is much more beyond what the eye sees. There are more interactions, causes, consequences, perceptions, and meanings. Thus, according to Jameson (1984),

postmodernism is a deconstruction of symbolic expressions. It implies a rupture with the past and breaks with previous meanings. And it has the city as its stage.

In this sense, we have resorted to the contributions of Appadurai (1996), when he says that the contemporary self is a kind of warehouse of multiple cultural scenarios, which means that each individual recreates a story from his own images and references. In fact, artists and creators of fanzines often fit into these categories since their experiences are given a different guise. The socially attributed meanings are often put into question and others are attributed. We can even say that they are re-appropriated with the intention of passing a message of resistance (Guerra & Quintela, 2016) and affirmation. Making once again the connection with the *Twin Peaks* series, it is also possible to mention that - both in the series and in most of the fanzines - the individual subject disappears, which makes the pastiche to emerge in a marked way. But what does the emergence of pastiche mean? It represents the emergence of a narrative that follows the logic of a parody or an imitation. It is almost as if the individual puts on a mask that hides his personality or transforms it. Thus, fanzines can also be associated with historicism, that is, a cannibalisation of the past. They are identical copies of realities that never existed, or at least not in the same way, as in *Twin Peaks*.

By making other realities known, fanzines have become spaces of freedom, thought and creation, as well as an alternative to conventional media. The focus of this Special Issue is gender and sexual dissidence, and in this sense feminist fanzines (Guerra & Bittencourt, 2018) have become DIY movement communication networks (Kempson, 2015), because they have made possible the emergence of spaces of subjectivities, allowing us to see what lies behind the fanzine. From an analytical point of view, several scholars see feminist and queer

fanzines as texts of resistance (Ferris, 2001; Downes, 2010) while others see them as logics of opposition (Schilt, 2003). Taking what has been said before about fanzines being identical copies of realities that never existed, we can see another characteristic, that of cultural heterogeneity (Zobl, 2009). Now, as in the series, inside the same fanzine, we can have several characters and stories, responsible for the construction of narratives. In fact, the focus of the series was never the discovery of Laura Palmer's murderer, but rather the consequences of that act on the town and community life, and how these same consequences affected the other residents of *Twin Peaks*. Like the series, feminist fanzines have their own atmosphere, which sometimes mixes surreal elements, quirky humour, eccentric characters and stories, and a particular aesthetic. On this point, we must also make a connection with the film *'Wings of Desire'* by Wim Wenders, in the sense that it shows us Berlin before the fall of the Berlin Wall, presenting us with two visions on the same theme, namely that of angels and that of humans. Thus, it is a film that takes us on a path of discovery of individual and collective identities, at a time marked by loneliness, political instability, and insecurity.

Both in the series and in the film, we are facing a formula that is not comparable to other mainstream media. We are facing different ways of saying about an era, about living situations, just like in fanzines. More or less 26 years ago, *Twin Peaks* told the story of how several female characters added something to Laura Palmer's story, but also to the town's history, and this at a time when gender inequalities were not emphatically addressed, in the sense that strong gender stereotypes still persisted (Guerra et. al, 2018). In feminist fanzines the same is true. In these fanzines we find stories of women who add something to the city, to society. There are valuable contributions, about gender inequalities, patriarchy, resistance, and struggle that show us a hidden

face of societies that is often overlooked. Just like the city of *Twin Peaks*. Like secondary gendered stories. Feminist and queer fanzines have contributed to 'oppositional technologies', that is, the use of DIY techniques, which the riot grrrl movement used plenty, from music production, zines, jewelry, clothes, etc. They have allowed the contestation of the dominant representations of women, which, in turn, has allowed them, in addition to the construction of new concepts of femininity, to also explore issues of sexuality, gender, identity, race, sexual orientation and class, especially through manifestos, visual representations, drawings and photographs.

So, with this premise as a motto, next, we will present a set of texts that make up this Special Issue I, *Embodied DIY: Feminist and Queer Zines in a Transglobal World*, all of them focusing on gender and queer identities and their alternative realities. We will present fanzines that add something to the history and narratives of women and LGBTQI+ individuals in contemporary societies with particular attention to the multiply of dissidents around the world and the interconnection that we can make from one article to other. The article that opens this Special Issue I is by Gelen Jeleton and is entitled *'Una Archiva del DIY: una fanzinoteca feminista-cuir'* [A DIY Archive: a feminist queer fanzinoteque] and, in a way, fits into one of the axes of postmodernism, namely in the connection with the past. In fact, the author makes a theoretical approach to the notion of archive within the artistic field, focusing on the evolutions it has undergone, many of them derived from archival representations that have emerged in contemporary societies. This is an article that analyses self-publishing and self-management, with a focus on music and drawing, as a way of understanding a geopolitical place in Latin America, that is, just like in the above-mentioned

series and film, we have other visions about the same context. Thus, it intends to establish a rupture with the classical and institutional notion of archive.

Next, Becca Maree in *"no title at all is better than a title like that!" Incarcerated women, materiality, and the production of truth in zines* takes us to the field of identities, associating them with the physicality of fanzines, presenting them as a possibility to create affective connections. The author analyses the ways in which women prisoners use technologies to produce zines, establishing an analysis of the ways in which they produce and conceptualize their own identities and their structures of marginality or exclusion. The body - as in *Twin Peaks* and *'Wings of Desire'* - is a fundamental element in the construction of narratives, feelings, and connections. It is through the fanzines that the women featured in this article construct their own history, just as David Lynch helped to construct that of Laura Palmer and as Wim Wenders constructed that of angels and humans. Liz Chenevey and her article *'Embodied Care: Exploring Mental Health Zines as Feminist Health Resources'*, falls within the postmodern rupture with previous meanings, as it questions the patriarchal knowledge and experiences associated with healthcare. The meanings that are broken up and molded are various, in the film they are meanings that relate to love connections. The said forbidden and utopian relationships in angels and humans. In the article, they are intimate photo conceptions. Thus, the author focuses on an analysis directed towards the topics of mental health and feminism, even when these were not yet addressed in depth. The author comes to place the emphasis on the questioning of authority, experiences and on marginalized and invisibilized voices, mainly concerning women who, for centuries, have been categorized as crazy, hysterical or melancholic.

Laura López in *'Feminist Zines in Print and Beyond: Transnational and Transmedia Relationships On The Move'*, emphasizes technology as a key element in the emergence of publications such as fanzines by women. In fact, the author states in her text that from the point of view of the feminist fanzines, the internet has played a determining role in turning the movement into a transnational network, providing the space for dissemination, for discourses and for experiences. It is an article that speaks of networks and plots, as is verifiable in the series. They are digital threads that cross and tell stories and experiences. In turn, at a time when the Internet was not yet accessible, Paula Guerra, with the article entitled *'Leitmotiv: Forgotten Women in Portuguese Contemporary History I'*, tells us the story of forgotten women in Portuguese contemporary history. Thinking of the series and the film, she relates the story of Paula Ferreira, the first woman to own a comic book shop in Lisbon, Portugal, in the aftermath of the end of a dictatorial period. It tells of a woman who lived between cosmopolitanism and traditionalism. As in *'Wings of Desire'* in which Daniel lived divided between his condition of immortal and his love for Marion. It also tells us about his resistance to the normativity and the hegemonic aesthetics imposed at the time. It is the story of the first woman who made and published a fanzine in Portugal.

BF Saccucci, with *'QueerTheory'*, presents a fanzine about queer theory, which makes us establish a connection with what was said before, in the sense that the author provides us with a narrative based on his own images and references. He tells us about his childhood, marked by drawings and doodles that marked his identity and experience. Kelly McElroy and Korey Jackson, in *'Material Matters: Embodied Community and Embodied Pedagogy'*, focus on the materiality of fanzines, and how they can be understood as a tool for critical pedagogy in education, creating ways to create pleasure, affection and combat vulnerability. By the way, not only the fanzines

and the DIY ethos serve as a pedagogical element, but also the series, the documentaries, the cinema, and the music. They are valuable ways of understanding our surroundings from other perspectives and visions.

Ondina Pires with *'Holo-caustic Zine I'*, shows us the emergence of unusual women in the artistic, scientific, and philosophical fields, but also reveals that they have been forgotten. Thus, the author's artistic production offers us a critique of the present, and her intention is to demonstrate, through different facets, how the society of spectacle and consumption was built. Helen Yeung with *'Recipes for Resistance: Zines as a Medium to Reclaim the Kitchen as a Feminist Space for Asian Migrant Women'*, presents an article that focuses on an analysis of spaces - along with *Twin Peaks* and *'Wings of Desire'*. In fact, this also brings us back to the series mentioned here, in the sense that spaces are central to the development of a narrative. In this way, the author highlights that the kitchen is a central but also paradigmatic element for Asian women, which is often connected to emotions, racial narratives, and identities. It is under this aegis that the article focuses, namely, on the construction of feminist fanzines, as a participatory space, but also as a space of resistance.

Also, Raquel Silva in *'Taking CuntRoll: A Zinester Testimony'*, tells us about the importance of space. She tells us about how her personal experience, lived in Madeira, an island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and how these experiences marked her. Thus, we get a glimpse of her identity construction process and, essentially, how this led her to the production of a fanzine.

Why am I me and why not you? Why am I here and why not there? When did the time begin and when does space end? (Wim Wenders, 1987, *'Wings of Desire'*).

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