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Embodied DIY: Feminist and Queer Zines in a Transglobal World

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WE @RE THE P!NK REVOLUTIXN: THE BREAKTHROUGH OF QUEER AND FEMINIST FANZINES, AS PLACES OF RESISTANCE

Paula **GUERRA** and Laura **LÓPEZ**

*Vem que o amor não é o tempo
Nem é o tempo que o faz
Vem que o amor é o momento
Em que eu me dou
Em que te dás*

*Come that love is not the time
And it isn't time who makes it
Come that love is a moment
In where I give myself
Where you give yourself*

(António Variações, 'Canção do Engate'
[Pick-up Song], Dar & Receber, 1984).

Queer is a concept that has manifested itself with greater intensity in recent academic studies. In fact, not only in academic studies, but also in the media, artistic and performative fields. Examples of this are *Fado Bicha*¹, in Portugal, *Rico Dalasam*² in Brasil or *Sam Smith*³ in the United States of America. In fact, bridging with the above excerpt, it has not been time that has built it, but rather the multiplicity of relationships and interactions that have taken place in that same time, and in different spaces (Guerra, 2017), somewhat similar to what has been happening with the feminist movements. As Danielle Giffort (2011) tells us, feminist organisations have been an important site of mobilisation, in the sense that they address a variety of issues and topics that have been assumed as determinants. Furthermore, the author also states that cultural productions are a fundamental element in raising awareness about these themes such as feminism and queer, in terms of praxis and ethos. In this sense, the

fanzines, as a cultural production, are fundamental for us to understand these questions. Not only the fanzines but also the *seventh art*, as we can take as an example the film *Moonlight* (2016).⁴ In both, colours and images are a central element, in the sense that they are at the heart of the narrative, they are what provoke feelings and reflection.

Teresa Lauretis (1991) was one of the first scholars to use the concept and to initiate queer theory, followed by other emblematic names such as Judith Butler (1996). In fact, we realise that an effort has been made on the part of gender studies to include the concept queer in their approaches. However, it still does not have a full definition associated with it, perhaps due to frequent social changes and geographic, political, and economic constraints. Also, the relationship between the queer concept and ecofeminism has not been the object of a deep analysis, and with this Special Issue we also intend

to give more visibility to these connections, because the similarities between the violence of patriarchy against women and queer or non-binary gender individuals, along with the violence against nature have been noticed in recent times. What we want to affirm is that this relationship has evolved and given rise to enriched and revolutionary concepts, which are based on a logic of struggle for all life on the planet. There is, in fact, a confluence of struggles that, at the outset, would be distant from each other, but which have come together because they have the same enemy.

According to Maria Katharina Wiedlack (2015), the concept of queer in contemporary times goes beyond its initial designation, in the sense that it denotes activist forms and practices, whether of movements such as feminism or the defence of LGBTQI+ rights. From a political point of view, we can argue that the concept of queer emerged within an activist landscape and within specific political discourses in the 1990s. Basically, it was a term/concept intended to account for ideological oppositions or modes of intervention aimed at denouncing oppressive and stigmatising policies, behaviours and attitudes. Somewhat along the lines of what Kevin Dunn and Summer Farnsworth (2012) tell us regarding the Riot Grrrl Press, queer and feminist fanzines emerged from an individual frustration towards the misconstruction that mainstream media was doing around their messages and claims. Since then DIY

has emerged as a weapon to combat these conceptions. It asserted itself as a weapon and a revolt, and it gained proportions never seen before, especially where alternative media were concerned. This is how the revolution began.

The handmade fanzines made by Riot Grrrl Press complemented the messages that were conveyed through the musical contributions of the Riot Grrrl movement, i.e. the songs about sexual freedom, feminism, patriarchy, resistance and social and political movements, were – often – accompanied by the production and distribution of independent fanzines. Such practice acquired gigantic dimensions, mainly when the producers and the consumers of these fanzines realized the potentiality of this communication format. Then, what used to be associated to a musical production, started to have specific contours, while it got its independence and, in the meanwhile new themes, producers, ways of distribution and creation appeared.

If we rely on Griffney's (2009) contributions, we will understand that the term queer designates everything that is strange and non-normative, which is in line with its genesis and consolidation as a form of resistance (Dhaenens, 2014). As a matter of fact, going back to the origins of fanzines and their connections with the Riot Grrrl movement⁵, we can gauge that this very concept was what best characterizes these practices at the time. Moreover, when we think either about the issue of fanzines, feminism or the use of the queer concept, we want, in fact, to refer

¹ Duo composed of Lila Fadista and João Caçador who use fado as a form of subversion and experimentation, but also as a rebellion against the socially imposed concepts, dynamics and structures that oppress the queer and LGBTQIA+ community. For more information: <https://www.facebook.com/fadobicha/>

² He is a Brazilian singer, songwriter, and rapper, gay and a representative for the LGBTQIA+ community in queer rap. Dalasam is an acronym for '*Disponho Armas Libertárias a Sonhos Antes Mutilados*' ('I Arrange Libertarian Weapons to Previously Mutilated Dreams'). For more information: <https://twitter.com/ricodalasam>

³ British singer and songwriter, winner of several prestigious international music awards, such as the Grammy Awards, Golden Globes and BRIT Awards. Recently he assumed to be non-binary, i.e. genderqueer. For more information: <https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/pride/8502750/sam-smith-co-mes-out-non-binary-genderqueer>

⁴ The film was remarkable for the themes it deals with, such as homosexuality, but also ethnicity, racial identity, and life in a problematic social neighbourhood in the United States of America.

to ways of transmitting a message that, if transmitted by mainstream media, would most likely be adulterated to match the standards imposed by a heteronormative society (Dunn & Farnsworth, 2012). In opposition, Julian Wolfreys (2004) mentions that it is a complex concept which aims at breaking with dominant expectations, i.e., criticising normativity and promoting new forms of framing and conceptualisation of the self. Judith Butler (1999) asserts that the concept points to a mental mechanism of identification of an oppressor figure that imposes itself upon the oppressed.

Similar to what happened with other movements, the concept of queer – the very genesis of queer theory – has been moulded over time. In fact, the concept itself was gradually incorporated into capitalist logic, and was used to promote metrosexual beauty products. Its radical and oppositional symbiosis gradually dissipated. Although this was the logic followed by the markets, it seems to us that the same did not happen with academic studies, since the concept has been associated with movements of resistance, of struggle, but also of identity affirmation against the socially imposed normativity. An example of this is Paula Guerra's (2017) approach to António Variações⁶. The impregnation of the queer concept, in the author's approach goes to the encounter of these historical missives. It meets the genesis of the emergence of this concept. This way, we intend to demonstrate that

the queer concept expresses an identity which is historically and socially constructed and, ultimately, implies a resistance to normativity.

Referring again to the approaches of Maria Katharina Wiedlack (2015), the author even speaks of an anti-social queer theory, something that goes towards an analysis along the same lines as the one we intend to make with the fanzines that compose this Special Issue. The anti-social theoretical turn described by the author is based on psychoanalytic approaches to sexuality and gender, stating that these frameworks are anti-communicative, destructive, and even anti-identitarian. Taking up Teresa Lauretis' contributions (1991), the queer theory has assumed itself as a new discursive horizon for thinking about gender identities, as well as about sexual identities, leaving aside the essentialisms of the past.

Queer and feminists' activists such as Nia King⁷ or Mimi Nguyen⁸ are fundamental for us to understand the evolution and the actuality of queer theories, as well as their relations with fanzines. In fact, the concept of queer goes far beyond the countercultural cultural discourses and its relationship with activism. In the wake of the countercultural revolution, other movements and concepts emerge, such as queercore, homocore or dykecore, or even the infamous riot grrrl. When these aspects are associated with a visual and

⁵ The Riot Grrrl movement emerged in the 1990s in the United States of America, with the emergence of women's bands and young people who began to organise themselves around challenging male domination within punk rock. Their main objective was to create their own artistic scene (Bittencourt & Guerra, 2018).

⁶ António Variações was a Portuguese singer-songwriter from the early 1980s. Despite having a short discography, his songs and other productions largely influenced (and continue to influence) Portuguese music. He died young, at the age of 39, but left an artistic legacy. Of his emblematic works we highlight 'Canção de Engate' ('Pick-up Song') or 'É p'ra amanhã' ('It's for tomorrow'), the first from 1982 and the second from 1983. His album *Dar & Receber* (Give & Receive) is, to this day, a reference.

⁷ Queer, activist, journalist, podcaster and zine maker. In her podcast 'We Want the Airwaves', Nia conducts interviews with trans and queer artists, covering topics such as their lives and their work and artistic productions. She has also created several fanzines on topics such as race, self-reflection, and sexuality.

⁸ Nguyen is an Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies and Asian American Studies at the University of Illinois, and she has made zines since 1991, including *Slander* and the compilation zine *Race Riot*. She is a former *Punk Planet* columnist and *Maximumrocknroll* volunteer. She is also co-author of the retired research blog on dress and beauty threadbared. For more informations: <https://gws.illinois.edu/directory/profile/mimin>

written component, as is the case of fanzines, we are faced with political movements whose productions are seen as forms of activism and agency. In fact, queer identities need to be associated with an aesthetic, a style or music of their own. Artistic content that denotes their intervening political character, and it is in this interstice that activist practices are born. In the fanzines that portray queer identities, it is frequent the presence of DIY politics and forms of action, an aspect that drags them even further into the non-academic or non-artistic field. Let us see '*Marcha do orgulho*' [Pride March] (2019) by Fado Bicha as an example:

<i>É dia de vir cá para fora</i>	<i>It's time to come out</i>
<i>Aqui e agora, pôr o pé no mundo</i>	<i>Here and now, to set foot in the world</i>
<i>Tirar a bandeira do armário</i>	<i>Take the flag out of the wardrobe</i>
<i>É comunitário, num clamor rotundo</i>	<i>It's communal, in a roaring clamour</i>
<i>Nem menos nem mais</i>	<i>No less, no more</i>
<i>Direitos iguais</i>	<i>Equal rights</i>
<i>São muitas as cores desta minoria</i>	<i>The colours of this minority are many</i>
<i>Em cada esquina, amigas</i>	<i>On every corner, friends</i>
<i>Novas e antigas</i>	<i>New and old</i>
<i>Mil bichas em euforia</i>	<i>A thousand queers in euphoria</i>
<i>Política na rua</i>	<i>Politics in the street</i>
<i>A minha voz e a tua.</i>	<i>My voice and yours.</i>

(Fado Bicha, '*Marcha do Orgulho*', 2019).

Other authors such as Megan Sharp and Pam Nilan (2015) describe the concept queer as an umbrella term that is used by LGBTQIA+ minorities, while Ruffolo (2009) highlights it as a term that invokes critical thinking towards the body and the dominant culture. In fact, like fanzines, it is a concept that has the ability to cross several times and several spaces. There is an idea of performance that underlies the fanzines, in the sense that they materialize the construction of alternative spaces of struggle and claim against normativity. Better said, against heteronormativity (Wiegman & Wilson, 2015). Thus, the articles that compose this Special Issue II are based on these issues, since they portray themes

such as the body, heteronormativity, as well as showing us the other side of the conceptualisation of queer, namely a practical and empirical part - of sensations and senses - which makes us go a little further in the perception of this concept that has gained momentum in recent times.

The first article in this Special Issue is by Bruna Fernandes, Bárbara Lissa and Rita Rodrigues, entitled '*Uses of the Erotic as Power: A Graphic Analysis of the ChanacomChana newsletter and of the representations of female erotic*'. In this article, the authors analyse the lesbian erotic contents that make up the newsletter *ChanacomChana*. In fact, an analysis is made that focuses on the way women erotically self-represent themselves and, of course, how these contents of the newsletter are produced and disseminated to a group of LGBTQIA+ women. These conceptions aim at a clear rupture with heteronormativity, since they intend to deconstruct the narratives and discourses socially created around the representations and bodies of women.

With article '*Embodied Care: Exploring Mental Health Zines as Feminist Health Resources*', Liz Cheveney tells us about the ways in which the field of women's mental health has also been marked by a set of impositions inherent to a masculinized and patriarchal society. Thus, the author focuses on the fanzines and aims at an analysis in which she describes them as a form of self-care for women, mainly in what concerns their mental health. Through the fanzines, narratives are questioned, but also ways of dealing with and combating mental health problems are sought, assuming that the fanzines assume a pedagogical role.

With the article entitled '*Burn After Reading: Intimate Practices of Queer Zine Making and Archiving, A Collaborative Autoethnography*', El Affeck and Lilith Cooper explore the relationship between the queer concept, fanzines and archival practices, starting from the reflective writing and the method of creating fanzines, as a collaborative method of autoethnographic research. Thus, several questions are made throughout the article that seem to us determinant,

in order to get closer to a better understanding of the queer concept, such as the relations between fanzines and the archival practice, present in a broader ballast of modes and practices of resistance.

For her part, in the article '*Queer Feminist Collaborative Zines: Community Building in Contemporary Australian Zines Culture*', Bianca Mart reflects about the historical relation between fanzines and minority communities, while establishing a bridge with current times. In this way, the author proposes an analysis in which she tries to understand, analyse and reflect about the role that fanzines have, nowadays, in Australia, in the sense of creating and strengthening bonds and a queer and feminist community. Going a little further, the author seeks to explore fanzines as stylistic artefacts and practices that, in essence, reflect and enable a subcultural engagement. In '*Holo-caustic zine 2*', Ondina Pires begins her approach with a love drip, paraphrasing Mr. Spock, '*The sky's the limit*'. In her fanzine we can see an approach to the Judeo-Christian confrontation faced with topics such as motherhood and female sexuality, as well as in relation to other misogynistic dimensions defended by authors such as Nietzsche. With this zine, the author intends to take us to a dimension where we forget the burdens of everyday life. Finally, in '*It's Portuguese, it means sweet melon, and no, it doesn't make sense*', Joana Matias tells us about her path and the ways in which she became deeply involved in the universe of fanzines. The author also talks about her involvement in the communities of fanzine producers, demonstrating ways of living and resistance, which directly oppose the socially imposed patriarchal norms. Still on this point, of patriarchal societies and modes of resistance, we frame here Paula Guerra's article, '*Leitmotiv II*' as a finished example of the story of a woman, Paula Ferreira, and her life journey in Lisbon in the world of comics in the late 1970s. She tells us about what it was like to be a woman and to be different, in the middle of the dictatorial period, as well as giving us a glimpse of the adaptations to a country that

was increasingly cosmopolitan and open to the world, but which, even so, remained stuck to oppressive and unequal ideals and values.

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