

QUEENS OF THE ZINE SCENE: BEST LINES

by M.L. Fraser

Some of the best lines come from random writings. These are lines that you think about for days and wonder if they don't somehow matter in the real screenplay of your life. Here is the latest review of zines and the best lines that came out of them. Some are funny, some cathartic, and some just plain thought-provoking or "yeah, I've been there." Enjoy, and remember to promote these women.

Blue Ink Tornadoes (*issue is undated, but contains some pieces dated 2004*)

Stephania Shea returns with a smarter, sharper version of the voice she first presented in her fledgling zine *Escape Philosophy* (reviewed in *Feminist Collections*, vol. 25, no. 2, Winter 2004). Still a teenager, still trying to find her way, she is now using herself as the focal point for exploration. And that is what makes this zine terrific. Stephania's budding feminism is a joy to behold as she remarks on teenage homosexuality and on her painful coming of age, as she finally has permission to read her father's poetry, realizing that it well could have been her own writing. She is still using friends' pieces in her zine, although not as much, and always in keeping with the theme. A great piece on cutting is here, as well as very raw thoughts on being the child of a mentally ill person. It is still a teen zine, and still worth the read. Go Stephania Go. Keep writing. If this is any indication of your direction in the world, we are lucky to have you here with us. Best Line: a journal entry to her physically present mentally ill dad, reading, "bye. I love you. Call me. I'll write."

Stephania Shea, P.O. Box 2135, Leicester, NC 28748; email: prettip0is0n@yahoo.com (note the zeros in the username). No price listed.

Chainbreaker: nos. 1, 2, 3 (*undated, but all before Hurricane Katrina*)

A zine dedicated to all things bicycle. Shelly gives a great history of the bike in this zine, as well as a brief recounting of women's fashion and how the bicycle changed it. She gushes eloquent in the first issue about how bicycles can save America and the world if we would all just get them and hop on. It would be preachy, except she is so charming about it that you kind of get where she is coming

from and can't help but think that the subculture she is describing there in New Orleans is a cool one. I especially like the fact that she talks about the collective where she repairs bikes and collaborates with other bike folk, and that there is a "women only" clinic twice a month at the collective.

Issue 2 talks about Shelly's trip to India and Ireland and how she thinks that bikes really can change the world, and that the world can change bikes. It is an interesting perspective, and it remarks upon the ideas of global feminism in a new way. Bike friends who have taken trips and seen various forms of livelihoods produced by bikes write many of the articles in this issue. The idea of bikes being an economy and a conscious choice made by Americans as a political statement (transportation and oil) is presented in a fresh way and is written intelligently. A review of a book written in 1895 by a female bicycle enthusiast adds a feminist note, and it made me want to go out and get a copy to see what that first girl biker had to say.

The third issue is a compilation of stories and opinions from other bike mechanics. The opinions are insightful, especially the one from "Mary Christmas," entitled "The girl at the bike shop: A tale of biceps, bitterness and grease." It remarks on the sexism that seems to be inherent in any sport that requires machinery of any sort. Ethan, to whom Shelly refers quite a lot in Issues 1 and 2, hilariously recounts a race he staged, and provides the best line: "This isn't so bad, . . . lying here, on this parking lot. Maybe I will just stay." We have all felt that way, either literally or emotionally.

I really like this zine. It offers clarity and candor about the bike world — a world I was aware of, given that I have so many friends who love bikes, but had not really considered until Shelley brought things to light.

Shelly, 621 North Rendon, New Orleans, LA 70119. (Note: This was a pre-hurricane address, but it's all we have. We hope Shelly and the messengers, along with their bikes, are all okay. If this is the end of an era, we are saddened; this zine is a wonderful piece of history.) Stamps, \$2, or "ten tootsie pop girl bikers." Also available through distros, e.g., <http://www.lastgasp.com/>, <http://www.microcosmpublishing.com/>, <http://papertrail.zinetastic.com/>

Honeypot: *no.3 (Love me, Love my Elephant; undated)*

Okay, I LOVE this zine. It is exactly cool. The cover has a hand-pulled woodblock print of an Elephant-man graphic, by a friend of the author, that is just amazing. An essay about self-acceptance based on the author's one-legged cat is remarkably touching. This girl is very smart and a good writer. She doesn't use much of the blatant humor that is often seen in the zine crowd, but the wryness with which she approaches most subjects is tender and human, making her work all the more real. In this issue there is an interesting interview with the famous bondage model Elkie Cooper, who puts the Betty Paige in Betty Paige. Cooper makes some expected remarks (i.e., questioning who is exploiting whom) and then offers up some insight into technology and pornography. Because it is a zine, there is only so much that can be said, but what *is* said is interesting. I also like the commentary applauding Kate Winslet, who grew appalled and then threw a hissy upon finding out that she had been reduced by 30 pounds via airbrush. Nicely done. Many of the topics in this zine and on "Honey's" website concern the topic of sex and how our culture approaches it. There's some stuff that has been said before, but mostly it is good, and marvelously presented. Definite get. Best line: "Self-medication is better than the other kind."

This issue: \$1.00, plus .50 for postage. Other issues: see website. "I accept cash, checks, money orders, stamps, or trades for intelligent, well-produced zines or other DIY pieces. E-mail me your trade offers!" Melissa Kirk, P.O. Box 5605, Berkeley, CA 94705-0605. Email:

honey_b_temple@yahoo.com; website: **http://www.honeybtemple.com**.

Indigo: *nos. 14 (undated) & 15 (Autumn 2003)*

Michelle Aiello has outdone herself. These little perzines are so honest they make your teeth hurt. Michelle is very forthcoming with what happens to her and how people affect her. But the stories she tells are not maudlin or "poor me." They are just what they are, and she does not embellish for emotional reaction. She is almost minimalist in the telling, yet the tale is complete. Interesting accounts: the time she was arrested and thrown in jail for credit card theft, and the story of her six-year relationship with a boy with DID (Dissociative Identity Disorder, also known as Multiple Personality Disorder, or MPD). Very cool art is included, and this is one area that is not completely created by "Mish," as she calls herself. The only other non-Mish pieces in the zine are a couple of poems by Freddy and Sarah, and they are outstanding; each of these puts up a good fight in the con-

test for "best line." Terrific "every issue" entries include a listing of lyrics misheard (by herself and friends) and a soundtrack that she would play if she could while you are reading her zine. Her only mistake is to replicate textbook information about ADD in Issue 14. Other than this, reading these two issues was a delightful way to peek into someone else's pain for an hour or so. The voyeurs among us will find their new hero in Mish. Best line: "Why, if I am so young, do I feel as if my life has passed me by?"

No price listed. Michelle Aiello, P.O. Box 180143, Chicago, IL 60618. Email: **pinup1950@yahoo.com**.

Leeking Ink: *no. 28 (January 2004)*

Davida Gypsy Breier's perzine is quirky and more on the literary side of things. She is a highly skilled craftster, and I can easily see why she won the "Best Zine in Baltimore" award (given by a local paper). The story about the death of her beloved dog Sophie is great. What's nice about this is that Davida does not tear-jerk; she simply tells the story with love for her friend. Anyone who has had a pet cannot help but sniffle at this one. There are several other entries that are like this, but not all of them are.

My only issue with this zine is that it gets tedious. Sometimes a zine is something to read while passing the time in a bus station or while waiting for a friend coming to meet you for coffee. This one is an involved process, and halfway through one or two of the pieces I found myself not caring about the outcome, especially in the one about the fictitious movie. Then, in others, I found myself very engaged and fascinated by the writing process that Davida goes through. This zine is hit-or-miss, because emotional commitment is required to really get into each entry (and sometimes you just don't feel like it), while at the same time, Davida is a fine, fine writer (always a treat). She was clearly not the happiest person when she wrote this issue, and she complains of always feeling this way, but this is what zines are for, to help us work out our stuff. So, the jury (me) says there's a lot of value in this zine. Don't expect fluff, and don't expect to get through it in one sitting. Definitely a good read. Best line: "And all of this is helping me live longer, exactly how?" Great question.

"Issues are published roughly twice a year." \$2.00, or "stamps, or a fair trade." Davida Gypsy Breier. P.O. Box 963, Havre de Grace, MD 21078. Email: **davida@leekinginc.com**; website: **http://www.leekinginc.com**. (Davida is also the source for the collaborative review zine *Xerography Debt*.)

Quantify: no. 5 (December 2003)

This is one of the best-written zines I have ever seen. Lauren is an educated, thoughtful individual who remarks succinctly on identity issues and gives examples of how we unconsciously attribute characteristics and capabilities to others. Lauren does not fit neatly into any social category, and she has a good time messing with all her alter egos and other people's perceptions. Luckily, we get to come along for the ride. She has a great conversation about Judy Chicago's "The Dinner Party," in which she points out the racism, classism, and all-around shortsightedness that is so heavily institutionalized in even the greatest of feminist icons. An excerpt from a novel she began furthers both discussions of socially institutionalized ideas of identity. My only gripe with this zine, and it is a small gripe, is that Lauren's language and use of formal academic theory might alienate the less-well-read. And this is an interesting line for any zinestress to walk, as intelligence and thoughtful insight need to shine through. If the academic is who you are, and the voice is authentic (and Lauren's is), then those who might be isolated from your writing might simply just not be ready for it yet. This is never comfortable for any writer, as we all want to reach our audience, but the line is about voice not getting read. I think Lauren walks the line pretty well. She does err on the side of educated intellectual, and yet I am willing to read anything she has to say. Best line: "Welcome to the world of angry cullid folk."

\$1.00 plus 2 stamps. No unsolicited trades. There is now an Issue 6 (see <http://www.theyellowperil.com/merch.htm>). Lauren Martin, P.O. box 150318, Brooklyn, NY 11215. Website: <http://www.theyellowperil.com>.

Sister Friend: nos. 10, 12, 14, 15, & 16 (undated)

Yay. We got sent five issues of *Sister Friend*. Each one has a delightful and unique cover that always depicts the two sisters who are friends (oh, I get it) in a wonderfully arty style. Taken as a series, these issues are an interesting way to tell the story of these two women. J.J. is the younger

sister who seems to go through unsuitable men like they are water. At least, this is according to her older sister, so we need to take the truth of that with a grain of salt. Leslie teaches writing and English as an adjunct professor at a local university in Illinois. She rants about, justifies, and exploits her job in writing this zine. I understand this — I would do the same in my zine (oh, wait, I already do) — and I think she does it well.

Taken one by one, the five different issues are "quickies" that, like the namesake, are fast and unsatisfying. Taken together, they tell a linear story, from a slightly quirky viewpoint, about two young feminist women who are just trying to get through their lives. One goes to grad school, and then stops going. The same one is going to get married, and then at the last minute she doesn't, so we get the party favors on the cover of the next issue (in this case, a seed packet of daisies with the names of J.J. and the now-defunct Paul on them). The other bullies her sister into finishing the zine every month (probably just as irritating as it is productive). That same one is married and has a child, but, oddly, never talks about this. I would like this zine much more than I do now if the annoying interviews with each other went away, and if the issues were a little more spread out. I think doing that would make each issue stand on its own a bit more, since I think the voice here is interesting. These sisters are people I like very much, and I am engaged with most of what they say. Get several issues together and you will be, too. Best line: "If I am made in God's image, then God has a fat ass."

No price listed, but trading apparently goes on. J.J. or Leslie, P.O. Box 4539, Fairview Heights, IL 62208.

[M.L. Fraser teaches psychology and women's studies at a community college in Northern California. She does not own tractors, skis, or other people's baggage. She does own dancing shoes, cats, and a surfboard, all of which she plays with on a regular basis.]