

ZINE AND HEARD (FOR THE THIRD TIME)

by M. L. Fraser

This issue of the column is sort of a “kitchen sink,” an arbitrary collection that doesn’t focus on any one type of zine — appropriate, since one of the pubs I review is even **called** *Kitchen Sink*. As a result, there are political and personal zines as well as newsletters here. The commonality is that all of them focus on feminism in some form. A few of the zinesters sent more than one issue so we could get an overall sense of the publication, and I am so glad they did. With more than one issue, a sense of the woman behind the art often emerges, and this is very often the voice that otherwise does not get noticed. Also included is a zine that was reviewed in a previous column — Jackie Joice’s *Yellow Three* — this time Numbers 5 and 6, which are interesting yet consistent.

Keep sending them in, grrrls, and tell your friends.

Cutlass: nos. 8 & 9

I was mailed these by Janice, who had heard somewhere about me (or maybe I requested them, I dunno). They came in true zine-grrrl style, in a used envelope with a used piece of binder paper over the old address. Scrawled across the back of the binder paper was my name and address in lime-green marker. I salivated.

I wasn’t wrong about Number 8. This thing rocks. Janice writes with honesty and compassion about life as a girl, life as a grrrl, and life as a “bi-gurl.” There are a couple of great short writings about the inevitable, yet necessary, powerless rage that we feel when we protest injustice and about the revenge fantasies of the alienated. Political commentary includes out-loud musing on the fundraising attempts for the victims of 9/11. The world ended, yet we fundraise because the former sin of consumerism didn’t end. The communications of zinestresses are addressed here. Sometimes a zine is used to continue a conversation started by another zine. This is commonly called “zine com-

muning.” Particularly of interest to me is an ongoing commune discussing the struggle many of us tomboy punk feminists go through between the feminine and the humane. Are we selling out our punk roots because we need to be gentle? Eventually, but not without pain, we come to a place where we discover that the girlie girls are powerful too, just in a different way.

Also in Number 8 are two pieces that I loved: a ten-page memoir of the hell that is a high-school reunion, and a very raw and touching account of abuse, told by Janice’s mother. In the latter we get a portrait of Janice at age four that is consistent with the pirate gurl we see today. I wish I could get *my* mother to write her story of my childhood. It was a very cool excerpt. Get this issue.

But pass on Number 9. It hurts me to say that this issue just isn’t very good. It’s a mish-mash of old journal entries in no particular order, and if there is a unifying theme I sure didn’t see it. Megabummer, since Janice writes so well. Even so, there are little gems here and there, like, “junkie waitress, how I love you so,” and “blind contours were always my best bet for self entertainment.” In short, this girl knows what she’s doing, but had an off-issue with Number 9. Go for 8 instead.

Cutlass Publishing, Janice Flux, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1607. \$2 an issue.

Feminesto: A Creative ‘Zine: April 2003

The University of Wisconsin-Madison Campus Women’s Center puts this zine out monthly. It is some good fun, with feminism interspersed here and there, but it’s not a political read at all, although a few of the contributions come close. One of the great pieces in this issue is the poem “Chicago,” by Kanjana Thepboriruk. Raw, yet clever, it reproaches us for thinking we have learned about “ethnicity” because we have noticed a (faceless) person who seems to be from another culture. Very good. Sarah Teirney also pipes in with a wonderful free verse entitled “we were fallen women.” Excellent.

I'm sorry the entire zine wasn't better edited, as I think it would have been much stronger if it had been. We see here a collaboration of statements with no real ownership of the production. And this is what *Feminesto* is, right down to the banal contribution called "Attack of the Feminists!?" — which has nothing original to say about either attacks or feminism. It seems to be annoyed at the all-inclusiveness that some feminisms have resorted to. Well, yeah, this is kind of the irritant du jour in feminist circles. I think much more could have been done here, and I am sorry that it wasn't. And a recipe for Pan-Fried Noodles?? (Only 630 calories). Whatever.

Some engaging, seemingly ongoing columns are "Chickrock" ("a monthly guide to essential women-centered albums") and "Sister Sez," an advice column. And according to the in-zine quiz, I found out I am the candy Skittles. Good to know. Also good to know that this is a monthly collaboration. The frequency of publication allows for some sugar smacks along with the protein. There are some really great writings, as said above. It is good to pick up and search through, but don't take it seriously as astute politics or fringe feminism. Perhaps an editor with a direction in mind will aid this zine, as it has potential.

Campus Women's Center, Memorial Union, 800 Langdon St., Madison, WI 53706. Email: cwcfeministo@hotmail.com. No price (free?).

Black and Blue: *no.3 (The Art Issue)*

The first thing Linda does is praise Frida Kahlo. Ugh — I think we've had enough Frida worship. Every arty grrrl does it at least once within her zine, and no one seems to address the fact that the woman was living with a man who kicked her downstairs and threw dogs so hard that he broke their backs. (Thanks for that not-so-realistic portrait of Diego, Salma). The zine then moves on to a mini-academic-lecture on surrealism that was hijacked from others (although credited). Sigh. Bore me later. But, wait, the rest is pretty great.

Best things about this zine: (1) The Gallery. This includes a bunch of collage art by friends, some fine art, and some photocopied reprints of paintings. There is even an original mini-print by Christoph Meyer, in photo corners, that can be

framed. Wonderful. (2) Small biographies of Claude Cahun (a transgendered artist who shaved her head and dyed the stubs pink and green in 1919 — Yeah, man!) and Violet Noziere (a woman who killed her father in 1933 because she was tired of being sexually attacked by him — Goodbye, Earl). (3) A great commentary on *Jutapoz*, a supposedly "enlightened" art magazine that is actually sexist and continually (gasp) shuns female artists.

Good stuff, but you might have to wade through a piece or two. Overall, a worth-it read. My advice is to support Linda, who clearly loves art and finds solace in this project of hers. Rock on, Girl. Keep going.

Linda Morris, *Black and Blue Zine*, P.O. Box 547, Santa Barbara, CA 93102. Email: zineblackandblue@hotmail.com. \$2 per issue, or trade.

Caboose: *no.3, December 2002 (The Modular Karaoke Issue)*

Oh dear. No. Unless you are enamored of reading incredibly banal conversations about karaoke, my advice is to avoid this one. It's one long retelling of a conversation (pages and pages and pages) that makes me feel like I'm stuck in a corner with a Trekkie at a cocktail party. There's even a little diagram showing how the five "conversants" know each other — something I'm really not interested in.

So don't get this karaoke issue, but it might be interesting to see what Liz does with another topic. This one may be a fluke.

Liz Saidel, P.O. Box 476802, Chicago, IL 60647. \$2 per issue.

Kitchen Sink: *no.4, August 2003 (The Blue Issue)*

A collective of writers, artists, and political activists in San Francisco has put together this gem of a publication. They focus on "independent art, identity, culture, and politics." While the current issue is not strictly feminist in nature, it is not anti-grrrl at all. It does not focus on gender as an issue, but it nicely assumes equality. Always a good thing. Many of the sections are pop-culture-referential and concentrate on music, art, and short stories. (I

don't like the online "teasers" that only give you part of the story and then tell you to go buy the rag to get the rest. Not cool, guys.)

What I really think is the meat of this mag is the section called "Revolution." In here, political proclamations get hollered, and they are great. There are interviews with Carrie Brownstein and Corin Tucker of Sleater-Kinney, as well as commentary on the "amnesiac nation" that is America, as told from the perspective of other cultures (specifically, this one is about the war on terrorism). NASA also gets called on the carpet as well as exalted in a wonderful push-me-pull-you intellectual monologue about space travel, evolution, and the obscene amounts of money spent on manifest destiny. In another observational piece, Oakland is noted as the next Florida because of punch cards and the California Recall (If you see Jeb Bush...run).

Also worth checking out: film reviews in the section called "Reverse Angle" (lots of grrrl-friendly commentary) and the articles on bras in the section called "Sex, Food & God" (aren't they all one and the same?). *Kitchen Sink* is definitely *Bitch*-worthy. Since both *Bitch Magazine* (see former issues of *FC*) and *Kitchen Sink* run in the same geographic and, I suspect, political circles, this is not surprising. Some good stuff is coming from the California Bay Area.

This is a quarterly print and monthly Web publication. My call: the paper pub. \$20 a year (4 issues) or one issue for \$7.95. Send checks, made out to Neighbor Lady Community Arts Project, to *Kitchen Sink Magazine*, Attn: Subscriptions, 5245 College Ave., #301, Oakland, CA 94618. Website: www.kitchensinkmag.com

The Fence: A New Place of Power for Bisexual Women: vols. 1 & 2

Great title. "Sitting on the fence" is an expression that has long been used to bastardize the stepchild of sexuality. Cheryl tries hard to rectify this by addressing all things Bi. The first issue seems to be just a big shout-out to bi-girls everywhere. In many of the pieces there is a bit too much emphasis on the sexually explicit. It feels like an attempt

to shock, and ends up being annoying. Also, much time is spent explaining and justifying the author's own bisexuality. It's almost a plea for understanding rather than a stance. In short, it reads like a newcomer's attempt to make a statement. As valid as that statement is, it could be made more elegantly. I don't recommend Volume 1.

Volume 2, though, is more sophisticated in addressing issues that bisexual women deal with. There is a good little piece examining the word *bisexual* itself. Moreover, the comments about lesbians being disdainful toward the bisexual population are both interesting and resonant. To remark that something is not good enough because the choices are different is to distance the margin for that population. This gets explored brilliantly, and is treated with respect. I think this is difficult to do, and Cheryl does it.

This issue is a lot more playful than Volume 1. It includes pieces like "She Cute," told in the voice of an ethnic sister who is hoping against hope that her crush can be brave enough to be with her. That is a hope for all of us, Bi or not, and this is a beautiful poem. Also fabulous are the genuine remarks about isolation and longing for connection. Also true for all of us, but more true for marginalized populations. Finally, there's a nice little exposé on a bisexual commune toward the back of the zine. Nicely done, Cheryl, and I am looking forward to more issues.

One-year subscription begins fall/winter 2003. Cheryl Dobinson, *The Fence*, #7052-88 Isabella Street, Toronto, ON, M4Y 1N5, Canada. Email: Cjdobins@yorku.ca

Confessions of a Child Beauty Queen

This little thing is a quick and fun read. "Frannywiz" remarks on the former child pageant stars who blew out at ten and are now fat fat fat. She and her pageant buddies friends were what she calls "object raped." There are sad and sometimes bitter observations about children who are forced extensions of frustrated mothers and their "phen-friends" (a reference to the diet pill settlement). In one particularly poignant vignette, she tells of an unexpected and frustrating conversation she had as an adult with her mother. Mom confesses having been molested and then excuses her father's

(frannywiz's grandfather's) behavior in order to convince frannywiz that it had not been sexual abuse. Her argument, like many other women's, was that the man was just pleasuring himself and really liked pretty little girls. It is not an unexpected piece given the overall content of the zine. What is so great about it is that the writing is true to the pain and frustration of mothers who live through daughters and daughters who just want honesty. Franny really makes the clarity and horror of the situation real.

There are a couple of pieces that seem out of place and much too unfinished (e.g., "Happy Jack"), but overall this zine is one to pick up. Frannywiz is a good writer and has some great things to say about the condition of femininity.

Oddly, I cannot tell if this little gem of a booklet is a true zine. It is self-published, themed, and cheaply printed, but there is no price or direct contact info other than this: Reap What You Sow Press, San Francisco, CA. Email:

Frannywiz@earthlink.net

Yellow Three: nos. 5 (*March 2003, Women's History Month*) & 6 (*The Healing Issue*)

Jackie Joice writes in a breezy, "hey kids, lets put on a show" way that makes you root for her. In Issue 5 (on women's history month), she asks you to celebrate a vagina (ANY vagina) and reproduces a great photo of three sisters all dolled up from the 1940s. There are also some more (still too dark) photos from Ghana. And then the disappointment sets in. She has reprinted a previously published piece or two from other sources (for instance, one from the Socialist Labor Party). Maybe I am a purist, but to me zines are self-published, self-written, and "underground-argued." None of this above-ground "mainstream" reproduction for me.

This issue, while still a fun little read, is not true Jackie. It seems as if she is changing directions and maybe moving on. Watching this progression presents dissonance for me. I want Jackie to evolve, because one gets the sense that she is a very cool girl, but I don't want her to lose her zine voice, as it is so great. It is a common problem for many of the writers of bedroom zines. We grow up.

Number 6 follows this vein of growing up and moving along with life. The message here is to "rescue yourself." It is not a bad message. However, this reads like a DIY mini-self-help workbook, and um... hmmm. Much of it relies on the idea that the reader has not done this work, most of which is fairly basic. There is also a fabulous interview with Josephina Lopez (the brilliant creative woman behind "Real Women Have Curves") that is worth reading, as well as a powerful poem by Lethia Cobbs that is the testimony of a mother who allowed a molester back into the house with her children. It makes you sad and angry and wishing you didn't understand the mother and what has led her here even though you think she is so very wrong. Unfortunately there's not much else here. Wait for Jackie to regroup and go forward. It should be a rewarding wait.

Number 5 costs \$3; Number 6 is \$1 or postage. Jackie Joice, 1218 E. Broadway, #100, Long Beach, CA 90802. Email: **Jackiejoyce@yahoo.com**

Western North Carolina Woman: vol.2, no.6 (*August 2003: The Y Chromosome*)

Recently I visited my family in the South. While perusing a feminist bookstore in Asheville, North Carolina (yes, they really do have them there), I came across this great paper. I was really pleased to see this thing. Even though it is not strictly a zine, it does meet several of the criteria and is grrrl-friendly. It is written, produced, and distributed by women who are so in love with their work that the publication is joyous. Its writing is not stuffy, it is an "everygirl" rag, and it addresses issues that are not just for the mountain mamas. Asheville has been called the San Francisco of the South, and since surprises like this keep coming up, I get why. The advertisements are not pompous or sexist, and the subject matter is definitely Third Wave. There is much artistic collaboration, and the articles can be self-deprecating while furthering the political agenda at hand. Nicely done, ladies.

Subscribe: \$36 per year (published monthly). WNC Woman, P.O. Box 1332, Mars Hill, NC 28754. Email: **info@wnc-woman.com**

Oops

Below is a letter to Debbie Stoller and Laurie Hentzel of *BUST* magazine. I goofed hard, and I found out when the first "Zine and Heard" (*Feminist Collections* v.23, no.4, Summer 2002, pp.6-10) was picked up by *Counterpoise* and run with the wrong info, and they responded (and rightly so). This is my apology, which was also sent to them.

Hi Deb and Laurie,

Oh man is my face red!! I am a longtime fan AND a longtime subscriber, so when I was asked to write the Zine review in *Feminist Collections* (put out by University of Wisconsin) I naturally began with you guys. Turns out I gave you a whole new story where Laurie was not included at all, I blamed the almost folding of the mag on Marcelle Karp leaving and just...well...was wrong. I went back and reread the issues covering this and see where I got the misconceptions, but you very clearly state the real story, which I obviously screwed up.

So my apologies, ladies (especially to you, Laurie) and please keep doing what you are doing. Please know my intent was to praise fabulous grrrls doing fabulous things.

Mhaire Fraser

If you would like info about *BUST*, here it is again: Published quarterly in Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. \$14.97 a year. *BUST*, P.O. Box 1016, Cooper Station, New York, NY 10276. Website: <http://www.bust.com> Get it get it get it. And no, I am not just saying this because I am trying to cover my screw-up. It's a cool riff, and should be enjoyed.

[M.L. ("Mhaire") Fraser is living in Northern California and teaching Psychology and Women's Studies in the California Community College system. Frightened about the Governor of her state, she is searching for a fulltime academic position elsewhere.]

FEMINIST ZINES WANTED

Calling all zine-making women and grrrls! At its June 2004 conference in Milwaukee, the National Women's Studies Association will for the first time designate an entire exhibit table for a zine display. We're looking for current zines with a feminist edge or outlook, however you might define that.

More information about the conference, which is titled "*Women in the Middle: Borders, Barriers, Intersections*," is available at this website: <http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CWS/nwsa/>

Even if you can't attend the conference, you can have your zine displayed. — For print/paper zines, just send samples (preferably one copy each of two different issues) and full information about how to order or subscribe. We'll display the samples at the conference, where we'll also give interested browsers a handout listing all the zines on display, with contact/order information for each. After the conference, the sample issues will be retained by the University of Wisconsin Libraries, and many will be reviewed in *Feminist Collections*.

If your zine is online only, send us the URL and we'll include information about your e-zine on the handout.

Deadline: April 1, 2004. Send your samples and information (indicating whether or not you'll be attending the conference in person) to JoAnne Lehman, **ATTN: NWSA Zines**, 430 Memorial Library, 728 State St., Madison, WI 53704

Questions? Email jlehman@library.wisc.edu

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