

IAN BARNARD

QUEERZINES AND THE FRAGMENTATION OF ART, COMMUNITY, IDENTITY, AND POLITICS

In this article I make some observations on a fairly recent publishing phenomenon in the US: queer fan magazines.¹ I begin by characterizing the zines and then suggest their implications in the realms of art and politics, and in theoretical and material articulations and enactments of notions like community and identity.

The values embodied by the form, content, and production ethos of these zines contest the hegemonic publishing paradigms and political ideologies of not only the mainstream heterosexual press but of most of the newspapers, magazines, and books contributing toward the current boom in lesbian and gay publishing as well. Zines rage against the conservatism, classism, sexism, and racism of the gay (publishing) establishment; lesbian zines take issue with certain fem-

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inist orthodoxies; and zines directed toward people with AIDS challenge the conventional AIDS wisdom of both official politicians and community organizations.

Examining the inscription of gender in the queerzines shows that their conflicted imbrication in identity politics and gender binaries aligns them with recent intellectual and activist work done under the rubric *queer* that also undermines a liberal pluralist conception of sexual identity. Similarly, the politics of the zines, especially insofar as they might disavow binary understandings of community and identity, and even of politics itself, radically reconfigure hegemonic conceptions of politics precisely in that disavowal and/or critique of politics as usual.

I want to say, here, a word about intent—of my own and of the zines. Of course, one can never ascertain the intent of a text or of the authors of that text. Furthermore, the *meaning* of a text might contradict its *intent*: readers find meaning slipping away from or even undermining intent as often as they construct meaning as fulfilling that intent. So rather than searching for an elusive intent or an illusory match or disjunction between intent and meaning in the zines, I look at some of the *effects* that the zines can be said to produce, given the contexts in which the zines are assembled and consumed. My reading of the zines, then, is as much a critique of straight and gay social orthodoxies generated by a homo/hetero binary in a liberal late-capitalist state, as it is an attempt to create a politically empowering narrative of subculture and an assertion of the zines' particular meanings.

QUEER VALUES

One of the problems with defining these queerzines is that their uniqueness—and their appeal—lies exactly in the ways that they resist dominant and conventionalized categorizations and genres, and in the vast differences between individual zines. Any attempt to delineate their features will thus necessarily be reductive and inadequate, particularly as it deploys a discourse to describe texts whose agendas and/or results seem precisely to oppose and usurp that discourse. I

hope, though, that the cumulative effect of my multiple zines throughout this essay will enhance the reader's of their nature—and of their elusiveness.

I can best describe these queerzines as guerrilla publica appeared in the late 1980s; today some publish regularly don't; in addition, some have been circulating for some new ones are constantly being produced as others fail to me the high turnover rate doesn't represent failure, since unpredictability, inconsistency, and instability of the zine: as shaping their productive political potentiality, a poet will be elaborating in the course of this essay.² The zine enraged, frequently sexy, in many cases hysterically funny savvy. Their major modes include personal catharsis, parody, the outraged, the outrageous, the militant, the parodic the mock-serious, the deadly serious, and the mock-serious serious.³ They seldom run commercial advertisements and not for profit. They can be purchased in some stores, but acquired through subscription, word of mouth, exchanging cash in the mail to the respective zine editors. Mail newsletters to friends, and in some cases continue to be only a handful of copies of each issue, while others nation- and even worldwide and have spawned commerce and profits.⁴ Some are the creation of one individual, while produced by several editors and contributors.

Although zines can be found in heterogeneous disc communities, and many of my comments apply to other the queer ones embody a particularly undisciplined relation array of hegemonic institutions and to the periphery institutions rely on for survival. The queerzines are opposed they also undermine traditional notions of binary opposition the *het*-gemony enforced by most establishment that assume the universality of heterosexuality; the zines challenge this homophobia by representing—indeed, queer subjectivities. But these queerzines also position the opposition to mainstream lesbian and gay publishing in se

hope, though, that the cumulative effect of my multiple depictions of the zines throughout this essay will enhance the reader's appreciation of their nature—and of their elusiveness.

I can best describe these queerzines as guerrilla publications that first appeared in the late 1980s; today some publish regularly while others don't; in addition, some have been circulating for some time, while new ones are constantly being produced as others fail to reappear. For me the high turnover rate doesn't represent failure, since I see the unpredictability, inconsistency, and instability of the zines' production as shaping their productive political potentiality, a potentiality that I will be elaborating in the course of this essay.² The zines are often enraged, frequently sexy, in many cases hysterically funny, always very savvy. Their major modes include personal catharsis, public pornography, the outraged, the outrageous, the militant, the parodic, the campy, the mock-serious, the deadly serious, and the mock-serious-as-deadly-serious.³ They seldom run commercial advertisements and are usually not for profit. They can be purchased in some stores, but are usually acquired through subscription, word of mouth, exchange, or by sending cash in the mail to the respective zine editors. Many began as newsletters to friends, and in some cases continue to be distributed as only a handful of copies of each issue, while others are popular nation- and even worldwide and have spawned commercial products and profits.⁴ Some are the creation of one individual, while others are produced by several editors and contributors.

Although zines can be found in heterogeneous disciplines and communities, and many of my comments apply to other zines, too, the queer ones embody a particularly undisciplined relation both to an array of hegemonic institutions and to the peripheries that these institutions rely on for survival. The queerzines are oppositional, yet they also undermine traditional notions of binary opposition. They oppose the *het*-gemony enforced by most establishment periodicals that assume the universality of heterosexuality; the zines insistently challenge this homophobia by representing—indeed, flaunting—queer subjectivities. But these queerzines also position themselves in opposition to mainstream lesbian and gay publishing in several ways.

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First, the zines look different than their glossier, more polished and professionalized mainstream counterparts like, in the case of lesbian and gay publications, gay newspapers in big cities and national magazines such as *The Advocate*, *Curve* (formerly *Deneuve*), *10 Percent*, *Genre*, and *Out*. Zines are usually photocopied and hand stapled. Often the supplies are stolen and the manuscript illegitimately photocopied at someone's place of work. Since the zines are relatively easy and cheap to produce, a wider range of people can create a zine than can produce a glossy magazine requiring high overhead and a large paid staff. The zines embody and articulate a democratization of art-making and consumption, of cultural production, and of information dispersal and retrieval. Those who do not have or do not desire to have the financial wherewithal or corporate sensibility to enter the world of professional publishing can make their voices heard in zines. Many zine creators are relatively young, and even if their work were to be published by a big-name publisher they would not have the control over it that they do in a zine context. Because there often are overlaps of tasks in zine production, as is common with other small press enterprises, zine producers are also less alienated from their productions than many other types of writers, editors, cover designers, etc. The anonymous authors of an article in the zine *HOMOhure* comment, by way of zine citation, on this wide accessibility to zine production and also on the special talents and perseverance of those who actually produce a zine:

Les Simpson, editor of *My Comrade/Sister*, once said that in America any moron can do a zine. . . . As others have pointed out, anyone can take glue stick and scissors in hand to put together a zine in a matter of hours (as some apparently do). What is noteworthy is that while anybody can, very few do and those few don't do it for very long.⁵

The zines' cheap production values can be thought of as an important component of their ideological agendas and effects. Rather than indicating laziness or ineptness on the part of their creators, or signaling an unfortunate but necessary drawback to the zine ethos, the shoddy look may be seen as materializing the political differences

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between the zines and many other kinds of publication differences arise from and inform an oppositional relationomic modes of cultural production and consumption bourgeois ethics that encode these modes. For instance, zine *BIMBOX* advertises itself as "free to those who expressing its contempt for the capitalist ethos inherent dox procedures of publication and distribution emphasize mainstream straight and lesbian and gay writing that has porate legitimacy.⁶ This contempt is underscored not on denunciations of capitalist values found in some zines ar in other forums by well-known zine publishers but also work of zine distribution that usually circumvents agei lishing houses. Furthermore, some zine editors encourage send them other zines rather than money in exchange for thus making zine collection, aesthetic appreciation, re ment, and political commitment, rather than material prof d'être for zine distribution. Zine production often enact capitalist logic, since, as I have already indicated, indivi participate in many, sometimes all, the steps of zine pr distribution and therefore maintain a sense of intimate cor whole product.

A second and related way in which the zines distinguish themselves is in their creation of a more interactive and partnership between writer/artist and reader than is common national newspapers or magazines. Readers' letters are many zines, but in keeping with the democratic spirit readers are also frequently exhorted to contribute articles; it is not unusual for a subscriber to receive a personal l zine editor after writing to purchase a zine, or even to t visit the editor in person should the reader happen to v tor's home town. Zine editors encourage readers to stat zines and often tell them how to go about producing a z own. Every reader is envisaged as a potential zine produc zine editor also positions her- or himself as a reader. Like British and US punk music, the artist here is not transcend

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I, editor of *My Comrade/Sister*, once said that in America you can do a zine. . . . As others have pointed out, anyone can use a stick and scissors in hand to put together a zine in a zine (as some apparently do). What is noteworthy is that anybody can, very few do and those few don't do it for very

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between the zines and many other kinds of publications. These differences arise from and inform an oppositional relationship to hegemonic modes of cultural production and consumption and to the bourgeois ethics that encode these modes. For instance, the Canadian zine *BIMBOX* advertises itself as "free to those who deserve it," expressing its contempt for the capitalist ethos inherent in the orthodox procedures of publication and distribution employed around mainstream straight and lesbian and gay writing that has attained corporate legitimacy.⁶ This contempt is underscored not only by explicit denunciations of capitalist values found in some zines and articulated in other forums by well-known zine publishers but also by the network of zine distribution that usually circumvents agents and publishing houses. Furthermore, some zine editors encourage readers to send them other zines rather than money in exchange for their zines, thus making zine collection, aesthetic appreciation, reading enjoyment, and political commitment, rather than material profit, the *raison d'être* for zine distribution. Zine production often enacts a counter-capitalist logic, since, as I have already indicated, individuals usually participate in many, sometimes all, the steps of zine production and distribution and therefore maintain a sense of intimate control over the whole product.

A second and related way in which the zines distinguish themselves is in their creation of a more interactive and personal relationship between writer/artist and reader than is commonplace in national newspapers or magazines. Readers' letters are published in many zines, but in keeping with the democratic spirit of the zines, readers are also frequently exhorted to contribute articles. Moreover, it is not unusual for a subscriber to receive a personal letter from a zine editor after writing to purchase a zine, or even to be invited to visit the editor in person should the reader happen to visit the editor's home town. Zine editors encourage readers to start their own zines and often tell them how to go about producing a zine of their own. Every reader is envisaged as a potential zine producer, as every zine editor also positions her- or himself as a reader. Like early 1970s British and US punk music, the artist here is not transcendent, and the

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lines between production and consumption, artist and consumer, are blurred.⁷ Today's mainstream publishing trend toward mass production and alienated readers is further counteracted by the painstaking individuation of some zines. For instance, in the first issue of *Barbra's Psychic Amus*, each copy of the zine had been embellished with individualized finishing touches. Although the zine was black and white, the first pages had been handcolored in pink and yellow. No two copies of the zine had been colored in exactly the same way. I am suggesting that the zines' disregard for orthodox corporate and artistic hierarchies, together with their fuck-you form, be understood as underscoring their camp or raging tone and outrageous content. This is not to say that form itself is semiotically fixed to the extent that a particular form's meaning is universal but rather that, given the publishing context surrounding these zines (i.e., monopoly corporations paying lip service to humanist conceptions of sociality) and the academic institutions that help sell this context (i.e., university literature departments that continue to valorize "literature" with a capital "L"), their form carries a context-specific transgressiveness that produces and is produced by the zines' dissident content (i.e., a content that contests both conservative and liberal appeals to identity politics).

The queerzines' dissemination of the images that are censored from more orthodox lesbian and gay publications constitutes the third significant way in which they deviate from mainstream publications. Queerzines give queers alienated from the lesbian and gay establishment images in their likeness.⁸ They reject a lesbian and gay politics of assimilation (we're just like everyone else, please give us our rights), and instead construct a politicized queer logic of difference.⁹ Zine editor Johnny Noxzema has single-handedly illustrated some ideological conflicts that many queerzines have with mainstream lesbian and gay magazines by way of his fairly regular contributions to the letters section of *The Advocate*, a national gay male magazine that has become even more assimilationist since it began publishing its classified sex section separately and launched its new glossy look in 1992. In a prescient January 1991 letter to *The Advocate* Noxzema wrote,

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You think we're pretty stupid, don't you? You think that your little reports about underground queer "punk" publishing will *THE ADVOCATE* transcendency by association. You think that be fooled by your new slick European look. You think that articles on how eccentric Vaginal Davis is will make us what your generation of misogynist capitalist swine clones an baked numbskull granola feminists over 30 are directly responsible for—segregated bars, sexism, racism, classism, separatism complacency, and a complex network of selfish, over-educated appointed rich people overseeing a vast fake-democratic lesbian gay multinational bureaucracy that dictates how we think, die and fuck.

You just don't understand, do you? *You* are the enemy, no Helms.¹⁰

The queerzines encompass a wide panoply of dissatisfaction the official voices of lesbian and gay culture and politics and the communities and identities that they have constructed. Noxzema's *Advocate* letter quoted above suggests, the often quite hostile toward their more conservative lesbian counterparts. This is how Noxzema and Rex Boy promoted *BIMBOX*:

You are entering a gay and lesbian-free zone. . . . Effective in ately, *BIMBOX* is at war against lesbians and gays. A war in modern queer boys and queer girls are united against the prethinking and demented self-serving politics of the above-men scum. *BIMBOX* hereby renounces its past use of the term lesbian and/or gay in a positive manner. This is a civil war against the mate evil, and consequently we must identify us and them uncertain terms. . . . So, dear lesbian woman or gay man to perhaps *BIMBOX* has been inappropriately posted. . . . prep pay dearly for the way you and your kind have fucked things

The zine *Scab* illustrates this aggressive stance towards assimilationist lesbians and gay men: the contents of *Scab* 2 are described in for the zine as, "Bitch Nation, anti-William Burroughs, pro-gay with map of gay areas!"¹² To clarify its distance from the conservative lesbian and gay, the Minnesota zine *Holy Titclamps* comes

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For the dissemination of the images that are censored from mainstream lesbian and gay publications constitutes the third sign in which they deviate from mainstream publications. Queers alienated from the lesbian and gay establishments of their likeness.⁸ They reject a lesbian and gay politics of respectability that we're just like everyone else, please give us our rights), and instead construct a politicized queer logic of difference.⁹ Zine editor Noxzema has single-handedly illustrated some ideological differences between many queerzines have with mainstream lesbian and gay publications. In a way of his fairly regular contributions to the letters section of *Advocate*, a national gay male magazine that has become more assimilationist since it began publishing its classified sex ads, Noxzema fully and launched its new glossy look in 1992. In a pre-1991 letter to *The Advocate* Noxzema wrote,

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The zine *Scab* illustrates this aggressive stance towards assimilationist lesbians and gay men: the contents of *Scab 2* are described in a blurb for the zine as, "Bitch Nation, anti-William Burroughs, pro-gaybashing with map of gay areas!"¹² To clarify its distance from the categories *lesbian* and *gay*, the Minnesota zine *Holy Titsclamps* comes stamped

with the instruction "file under 'queer'" on its cover—presumably for the benefit of perplexed bookstore clerks! In *HOMOfuture* 3 the narrator of a piece entitled "Do it! Fuck me now!" expresses an alienation from "gay community" that calls into question even the idea of a "gay community," and of identity politics per se:

I hated my stupid job. I hated my boss, hated my co-workers—that is, almost all of them. Even though I was a faggot, most of the other queers wouldn't even look at me, much less speak to me. They thought I was weird because of the way I dressed, the way I acted. The boss was always telling me to get "a decent haircut and some real clothes." I hated it but I needed the money.¹³

That sexism, racism, and classism is as prevalent in official lesbian and gay culture and politics as in the hegemonic heterosexual establishments is a frequent subject of queerzines. In



What Kind Of Mother Reads *HOMOfuture*

the September–October 1992 issue of the zine *Infected Faggot Perspectives*, Christian Salvador, described as "a short, left-handed, 18 year old, Pilipino, cross-dressing, pimpleless whore who's been entertaining the idea of water-sports; part-time queer activist" writes, "Early this last year I was introduced to west Hollywood—What is it?! It's two blocks of 21 and over white fags who don't even notice the existence of women standing two inches from them, much less a little thing like me. . . . Well, West Hollywood don't look like where and how I'd like to celebrate my queerness."¹⁴

Many queerzines mark their distance from the politics of "positive image" representation-ality championed by their mainstream counterparts by celebrating and advocating the images and ethos of drag and genderfuck in defiance of conservative lesbians and gay men who deny and persecute the transsexuals, effeminate men, drag queens, and dyke

HOMOfuture. Photograph: Mark Huckaboy

daddies who preceded them, enabled their privilege, and live—marginalized—among them. The third issue *HOMOfuture* promotes the zine with a picture captioned of Mother Reads *HOMOfuture*.¹⁵ The mother in question is queen smilingly reading *HOMOfuture* to a child perched (The legend next to the picture reads,

She is the kind of woman who gets more accomplished than most queens do all day (of course, The Mayor never sleeps—queer bashers, bigots and homophobes plotting against us and she is ever vigilant). She knows how to get the job done. She has no time for self help help rags, magazine recipes or craft ideas. She wants defiantly queer reading that is entertaining and educational, not just for herself her children.¹⁵

Here, in a single page, *HOMOfuture* confronts multiple sit-ization: the dragphobia of the racist and classist gay (as with the historical tradition of lesbian butch/fem working-class queers and/or queers of color form a d-ately high percentage of the participants in gay male c-the promise of the "family" as the province of white n- sexuality; coercive stereotypes of female domesticity; a-eties of both the straight and gay establishments abo- sexuality and about intergenerational queer interacti- *HOMOfuture*'s confrontational suggestion that not only m- be queer but that the child might be taught to be queer- do and should recruit). The bisexual zine *Anything That* title suggests, similarly opts for uncompromising m- politeness, assimilation, and sycophancy: rather than a- disprove bi-phobic caricatures by lesbians and gay men- as people who will fuck "anything that moves," the z- and elaborates the pervert stereotype. These bisexuals re- for "acceptance" from others on the terms set out by the- they refuse to imitate these others in order to gain this- they refuse to agree to be accepted and tolerated when

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daddies who preceded them, enabled their privilege, and continue to live—marginalized—among them. The third issue of the zine *HOMOTure* promotes the zine with a picture captioned "What Kind of Mother Reads HOMOTure." The mother in question is a black drag queen smilingly reading *HOMOTure* to a child perched on her knees. The legend next to the picture reads,

She is the kind of woman who gets more accomplished before nine a.m. than most queens do all day (of course, The Mayor of Chicago never sleeps—queer bashers, bigots and homophobes are always plotting against us and she is ever vigilant). She knows how to bring a man to his knees and keep him there. She know what it takes to get the job done. She has no time for self help rags, magazines with recipes or craft ideas. She wants defiantly queer reading material that is entertaining and educational, not just for herself but for all her children.¹⁵

Here, in a single page, *HOMOTure* confronts multiple sites of normalization: the dragphobia of the racist and classist gay establishment (as with the historical tradition of lesbian butch/femme identities, working-class queers and/or queers of color form a disproportionately high percentage of the participants in gay male drag culture); the promise of the "family" as the province of white nuclear heterosexuality; coercive stereotypes of female domesticity; and the anxieties of both the straight and gay establishments about children's sexuality and about intergenerational queer interaction (through *HOMOTure*'s confrontational suggestion that not only might the child be queer but that the child might be taught to be queer—that queers do and should recruit). The bisexual zine *Anything That Moves*, as its title suggests, similarly opts for uncompromising militancy over politeness, assimilation, and sycophancy: rather than attempting to disprove bi-phobic caricatures by lesbians and gay men of bisexuals as people who will fuck "anything that moves," the zine embraces and elaborates the pervert stereotype. These bisexuals refuse to plead for "acceptance" from others on the terms set out by these others, and they refuse to imitate these others in order to gain this acceptance; they refuse to agree to be accepted and tolerated when this accep-

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tance and toleration requires that they disprove negative stereotypes by conforming to others' criteria for appropriate behavior, attitude, and identity.

The lesbian zines contest not only the androcentrism of much gay male culture (and even of some of the male queerzines) but also many feminist orthodoxies around sexuality and a growing monopoly by the newly visible lesbian middle class and assimilationist lesbians of all classes on lesbian media, politics, and images. The San Francisco zine *Dyke Review* proclaims its difference from dominant lesbian and gay discourses on its title page: "FINALLY A DYKE MAGAZINE! Not a politically correct magazine; Not a 'GAY' magazine; not a guppy magazine! Truly, an honest-to-goodness DYKE MAGAZINE!!!" One of the lesbian zines provocatively calls itself *Up Our Butts*, a particularly rich title for readers who have followed the feminist sex wars between the journals *off our backs* and *On Our Backs*, and the lawsuit between the two, and an irreverent jab at the "anti-sex" point of view promoted by *off our backs*.¹⁶ A "personal ad" at the back of the summer 1992 issue of *Dyke Review* challenges intergenerational taboos as *HOMOfure* does, but it also challenges the strain of feminism that would criticize lesbian objectifications and fetishizations of women: "WANTED: Still looking for Dyke mommie to breastfeed me. Heavy eater. respond with breast size and phone #, to Dyke Review, attn: BABY." *Scream Box*, "an L.A. dyke zine committed to experimentation, confrontation, and titillation," includes in its first issue a full page photograph of a butch-looking lesbian in men's clothes with the caption, "Your parents should be happy that you have such a man for a girlfriend." The sexy illustration and its stubborn caption flaunt their disregard for the assimilationist gay men and lesbians who insist on the "femininity" of all lesbians and for the countless personal ads seeking only "feminine" women in major lesbian publications. The back cover of this issue of *Scream Box* counteracts social desexualizations of lesbianism (by men



Dyke Review

and women of all sexual orientations) by again embracing the monstrous stereotypes that have been mobilized against women and against lesbians in particular, in its exhortation to potential contributors to the zine: a drawing of a vagina de tatis looms above the word "Submit!" The feminist zine *Ma Woman* confronts another liberal feminist taboo by taking the radical feminist tradition of advocating feminist rage at violence in defiance of hypocritical prescriptions—both for men and by liberal feminists—that women practice pacifism. The cover of the second issue exhorts "GETMADGETEVEN and shows a baton-wielding woman charging a policeman holding a shield in front of himself; inside the zine a picture of George Bush is accompanied by the angry, shocking, and hilarious demand, "save the unborn, kill the living."¹⁷

A series of zines by and for people with AIDS attacks not only federal and local governments' criminally inefficient response to the AIDS crisis in the US but also the bureaucracy and sentimentality of community AIDS organizations. *Pariab News (DPN)* inveighs against the government on the occasion of its first two issues, the first in 1990 declaiming "The blood of 100,000 Americans who have died of AIDS, Mr. President soaking in it!" and the second depicting "Piss Jesse," an allusion to Jesse Helms and other conservative members of Congress. But the target of the third cover chronicling a "Teddy Bear I is not so much politicians and government institutions and as it is community AIDS organizations and the saccharine serenity with which they are associated (some AIDS organizations trade in the clothes of PWAs (People With AIDS), for instance, deodorant clean clothes in a basket topped with a trademark teddy bear). *DPN's* name suggests, it embraces the monstrous negativity associated with the person with AIDS rather than wallowing in sentimentality, much as the other zines appropriate, reverse, and reclaim negativity, and as the word "queer" has recently been reclaimed by some antihomophobic academic and activist circles. *DPN* a

olation requires that they disprove negative stereotypes lying to others' criteria for appropriate behavior, attitude, and orientation. Zines contest not only the androcentrism of much gay and lesbian culture (and even of some of the male queerzines) but also the heteronormativity of the dominant culture and the growing monopoly of visible lesbian middle class and assimilationist lesbians on lesbian media, politics, and images. The San Francisco *Review* proclaims its difference from dominant lesbian courses on its title page: "FINALLY A DYKE MAGAZINE! Finally correct magazine; Not a 'GAY' magazine; not a guppy magazine; an honest-to-goodness DYKE MAGAZINE!!!" One of the zines provocatively calls itself *Up Our Butts*, a particularly popular readers who have followed the feminist sex wars between the journals *off our backs* and *On Our Backs*, and the lawsuit between the two, and an irreverent jab at the "anti-sex" point of view promoted by *off our backs*.¹⁶ A personal ad at the back of the summer 1992 issue of *dyke Review* challenges intergenerational taboos as 'OMoThure does, but it also challenges the strain of feminism that would criticize lesbian objectifications and fetishizations of women: "WANTED: Still looking for Dyke ommie to breastfeed me. Heavy eater. respond with east size and phone #, to Dyke Review, attn: BABY." *Scream Box*, "an L.A. dyke zine committed to experimentation, confrontation, and titillation," includes in its first issue a full page photograph of a butch-looking lesbian in men's clothes with the caption, "Your parents should be happy that you have such a man for a girlfriend." The sexy illustration and its stubborn caption flaunt their disregard for the assimilationist gay men and lesbians who insist on a "femininity" of all lesbians and for the countless personal ads seeking only "feminine" women in major lesbian publications. The back cover of this issue of *Scream Box* interacts social desexualizations of lesbianism (by men

and women of all sexual orientations) by again embracing the monstrous stereotypes that have been mobilized against women and against lesbians in particular, in its exhortation to potential contributors to the zine: a drawing of a vagina dentata looms above the word "Submit!" The feminist zine *Mad Woman* confronts another liberal feminist taboo by taking up the radical feminist tradition of advocating feminist rage and violence in defiance of hypocritical prescriptions—both by men and by liberal feminists—that women practice pacifism. The cover of the second issue exhorts "GETMADGETEVEN!" and shows a baton-wielding woman charging a policeman holding a shield in front of himself; inside the zine a picture of George Bush is accompanied by the angry, shocking, and hilarious demand, "save the unborn, kill the living."¹⁷

A series of zines by and for people with AIDS attacks not only federal and local governments' criminally inefficient response to the AIDS crisis in the US but also the bureaucracy and sentimentality of community AIDS organizations. *Diseased Pariah Neus (DPN)* inveighs against the government on the covers of its first two issues, the first in 1990 declaiming "The blood of over 100,000 Americans who have died of AIDS, Mr. President? You're soaking in it!" and the second depicting "Piss Jesse," an allusion to Andres Serrano's "Piss Christ" photograph that evoked the ire of Jesse Helms and other conservative members of Congress in 1989. But the target of the third cover chronicling a "Teddy Bear Burning" is not so much politicians and government institutions and policies as it is community AIDS organizations and the saccharine sensibility with which they are associated (some AIDS organizations that launder the clothes of PWAs (People With AIDS), for instance, deliver the clean clothes in a basket topped with a trademark teddy bear). As *DPN's* name suggests, it embraces the monstrous negativity associated with the person with AIDS rather than wallowing in sentimentality, much as the other zines appropriate, reverse, and celebrate negativity, and as the word "queer" has recently been reclaimed in some antihomophobic academic and activist circles. *DPN* also repu-



SCREAM BOX
1993 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 100-53
Los Angeles, CA 90046

Scream Box/Justina Faber
Scream Box counteracts social desexualizations of lesbianism by embracing the monstrous stereotypes that have been mobilized against women and against lesbians in particular.

SISTERSERPENTS PRESENT

issue #2
summer 1991**MadWOMAN****GETMADGETEVEN!**

TRUE CONFESSIONS FROM WOMEN WHO LAUGH
IN THE FACE OF
PATRIARCHY
WHILE FIGHTING AGAINST THE HORRORS OF
MISOGYNY

diates and reverses the common assumptions that people with AIDS are not or should not be sexual, and do not or should not have sex. Even "safe sex" brochures produced by and for gay men usually direct their advice only to those who are HIV- or who do not have AIDS. *DPN*, on the other hand, reviews porn films and prints naked HIV+ centerfolds for the pleasure of its HIV+ readers.

But these PWA zines also disparage each other in their rivalry to more effectively represent the variously dispossessed PWA constituencies. For instance, the macabre humor of *DPN* is topped by the far less glossy PWA zine, *Infected Faggot Perspectives*. In a letter in the September-October 1992 issue of *Infected Faggot Perspectives*, a reader praises this zine's perverse aesthetic: "Si, Maricone Pestilente, your 'zine is nauseating and disgusting and violates every tenet of good taste. I've never been so offended in my life. Enclosed is a check for a full set of back issues . . ." The letter writer goes on to refer to *DPN* as *Infected*

Faggot Perspective's "rather more upscale cousin, *Disgusting Pustule Noise*."¹⁸ (What, one wonders, would *Infected Faggot Perspectives* have to say about *POZ*, the glossy, yuppie magazine for people with AIDS that debuted in 1994?)

The zines' penchant for self-criticism is evident in *Scab*, which even takes on the tentative institutionalization of zine culture in its attack on SPEW, the annual zine convention.¹⁹ The publication of the particularly shoddy and cheap looking zine *Monstar: The Bruce Labruce Story*, billed as "The fanzine to end all fanzines (I hope)," can be read as a reaction against the upmarket production values of some recent zines. *Monstar* marks a return to basics, as the fear of mainstreaming, co-optation, and success in its conventional designation leads to the publication of a yet more downscale and illegible zine.²⁰

QUEER C

These queer; an historically recent antecedent publications announcing public art, other and manifest gay self-publ even videos Lesbian Aver The work of cohorts as w queer theory want to discu lesbian femini a complex, co of gender ide gender binari and Queer Na

The first po many of them cogender, gen benefited from recent queer e ory, at least— *bian and gay*) priations; new cultures in the many queers o tifications of g white privilege transgender qt whom gender and easier acce