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Author(s): Alison Piepmeier

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# WHY ZINES MATTER: MATERIALITY AND THE CREATION OF EMBODIED COMMUNITY

Alison Piepmeier

This is no substitute for envelopes marked with your location, sheets of stationery with your script scratching across parallel lines, feeling the back of the paper and an embossed pattern in the shape of every character formed (because maybe, like me, you press down with your pen, every letter a deliberate creation), the smell of your house on the paper itself.

—Marissa Falco,  
*Red-Hooded Sweatshirt #3* (1999)

I became aware of the significance of the materiality of zines through my teaching. Every time I teach a class about zines, a significant percentage of the students begin making their own. Many of them have never heard of zines, but when I bring in a pile for them to flip through and take home, they become inspired. This doesn't happen if I require them to read a published anthology of zines such as *A Girl's Guide to Taking Over the World*; getting their hands on actual zines is necessary to ignite this creative urge. They read the long-running zine *The East Village Inky* and express surprise and delight at the informality, the quirky portraits of zine creator Ayun Halliday and her family nestled in winding lines of handwritten narrative. They are fascinated with the different-sized pages (some a long, skinny 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> by 11 inches, some an almost square 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> by 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> inches) in *Free to Fight: The Self-Defense Project* and with the combination of collage art, comics, and scrawled stories on notebook paper. They gravitate toward zines that are visibly different from magazines and other mainstream publications, either by virtue of size or hand-colored drawings or their sheer unprofessional appearance. Many of them

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seem to feel personally invited to enter into the zine discourse, as is evidenced by the fact that they begin creating zines of their own. I have at least a dozen zines created by students who have taken my classes in the last two years.

In an age of electronic media, when the future of the book itself is often called into question, and when the visual and textual landscape is dominated by an increasingly voracious culture industry, zines—paper documents, usually made by hand, without any financial incentive—endure.<sup>1</sup> Zines are quirky, individualized booklets filled with diatribes, reworkings of pop culture iconography, and all variety of personal and political narratives. According to Stephen Duncombe, the author of the only book-length scholarly study of zines, they are “scruffy, homemade little pamphlets. Little publications filled with rantings of high weirdness and exploding with chaotic design.”<sup>2</sup> Because zines are ephemeral underground publications, it is impossible to determine how many are in circulation, but one scholar estimated 50,000 in 1997, and overflowing stocks at zine distributor Microcosm Press and bookstores like Quimby’s in Chicago and Reading Frenzy in Portland testify to their prevalence today.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, they seem to instigate a kind of gift culture: little eddies of artifacts and detritus accrue around zines, circulating between zine readers and creators. Zines instigate intimate, affectionate connections between their creators and readers, not just communities but *embodied* communities that are made possible by the materiality of the zine medium. My students have been inspired to become part of the zine community because of physical encounters with actual zines, not by reading anthologized zines. In a world where more and more of us spend all day at our computers, zines reconnect us to our bodies and to other human beings.

I begin this essay with close readings of zines as visual and sculptural media. We cannot understand zines or the zine medium—cannot understand the community they create or why they continue to be created—without examining the physical form, the materiality, of zines. This is a necessary first step. For this reason I examine four zines—*I'm So Fucking Beautiful*, *Fragments of Friendship*, *The East Village Inky*, and *No Better Voice*—with attention to particular aspects of the medium each zine illustrates. When studying a body of material as diverse, changing, and elusive as zines, it is nearly impossible to make many claims about representativeness. In this sense, then, these four zines are case studies without being models; they are examples rather than representatives, and my readings of them offer hints and possibilities, showing the layers of meaning that become visible when we move beyond the written word to the artifact itself.

The community of zines does not demand homogeneity or perceived sameness; instead, zine communities are more like what philosopher Iris Marion Young describes as “the ideal of city life,” characterized by

variety, social differentiation without exclusion, and a heterogeneous public.<sup>4</sup> These four zines—created from the early 1990s through today—are all by women, and they address different topics emerging from the gendered spaces of their creators' lives. Three—*I'm So Fucking Beautiful*, *The East Village Inky*, and *No Better Voice*—have been widely circulated, and *The East Village Inky* and *No Better Voice* are both long-running. *Fragments of Friendship* is a one-off zine. Although all are easily identifiable within the zine medium, they have different aesthetic profiles and therefore allow for an examination of varying ways in which the visual and sculptural elements of zines can function. While these four zines deploy certain material elements—glitter, for instance—which are gendered, they illustrate a range of features of materiality, some of which are gendered and some of which are not, that produce embodied community.<sup>5</sup> By mobilizing particular human qualities, including vulnerability, affection, and pleasure, these zines leverage their materiality into a kind of surrogate physical interaction and offer mechanisms for creating meaningful relationships. The essay concludes with a theoretical analysis of the nature of the embodied community created by zines.

### **Semiotics of Concrete Forms in *I'm So Fucking Beautiful***

Nomy Lamm's zine *I'm So Fucking Beautiful* documents her frustration with being a large woman in a culture that derides fat, and her creation of what she later began calling "a big fat revolution."<sup>6</sup> Lamm produced three issues of the zine in 1991, when she was seventeen years old, and distributed these issues at local band concerts as well as through the mail. The zine combines handwriting and drawings, collage art, and typewritten narratives, and its existence as a visual and sculptural artifact or artwork is a significant component of its meaning. Issue 2½ is filled with rants about fat oppression. The narrative voice propels the zine, offering sarcastic commentary on Lamm's friends: "YEAH everyone knows that when there's something sizeist, nomy's the one to tell. nomy's the one who will do something about it. ask nomy what to do. or just sit around and wait to see what nomy will do."<sup>7</sup> As the zine progresses, the voice becomes progressively angrier, until Lamm writes, "this fukin dumbass boy is in my apartment with my roommate and he tells her that to him FAT SYMBOLIZES WEALTH AND AMERICAN GREED.... this is a boy who i would have considered my friendly acquaintance. THIS IS IN MY OWN FUCKING APARTMENT"<sup>8</sup> (Figure 1). Lamm's tone is fierce and unapologetic; she emphasizes her anger and her ironic disbelief through her use of profanity and phrases that are fully capitalized. This woman is infuriated.

Many literary scholars would stop at this level of analysis, considering the narrative alone as constitutive of the meaning of this zine.

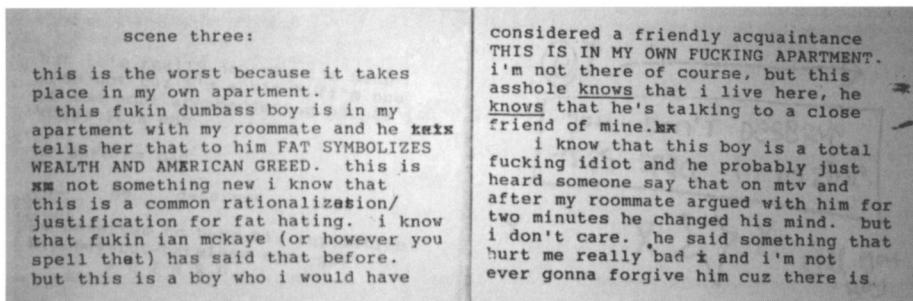


Figure 1. Text from the zine *I'm So Fucking Beautiful*, issue 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  (courtesy of Nomy Lamm).

What attention to the visual elements of this zine reveals is the inadequacy of a text-based approach to a visual medium. *I'm So Fucking Beautiful* is interspersed with hand-drawn images, and four of the seven address an emotion other than anger, such as the drawing of a large woman's naked torso with a heart in the center (Figure 2). Framed within the heart is the word "OPEN," and the heart is surrounded by lines that radiate out into the torso, each ending in an "x." The lines suggest stitches, as though the heart is sutured into the body, or perhaps they represent something emerging from the open heart. Imposed on the soft, realistic body, the x's seem harsh, and they contrast with the iconic, almost girlish heart-shape. The female body, drawn with minimalist lines hinting at folds of flesh, is vulnerable in its nudity, and the heart is vulnerable as well, with "OPEN" functioning both as a description and a command.

What's more, issue 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  is quite small—not quite 3 by 4 inches, just slightly larger than a business card. It is a zine about fat acceptance, a zine that demands that the world make room for large bodies, and yet it is tiny, smaller not only than most mainstream publications but also than all other issues of her zine. Not only the imagery but the form—the scale of the zine—is in tension with the content, and this tension adds another layer of meaning to the zine. Clearly the materiality of Lamm's zine contributes to its meaning; not merely the means of transmission of information, the physical imagery and interface of the zine help to shape a reader's experience and understanding. As print culture scholars recognize, a document's content is not in any easy way separable from its material existence. In their seminal print culture study *Reading Books*, critics Moylan and Stiles explain, "Clearly, when we read books, we really read *books*—that is, we read the physicality or materiality of the book as well as and in relation to the text itself. Literacy, then, may be said to include not only textual competence but material competence, an ability to read the semiotics of the concrete forms that embody, shape, and condition the meanings of texts. Bindings, illustrations, paper, typeface, layout, advertise-

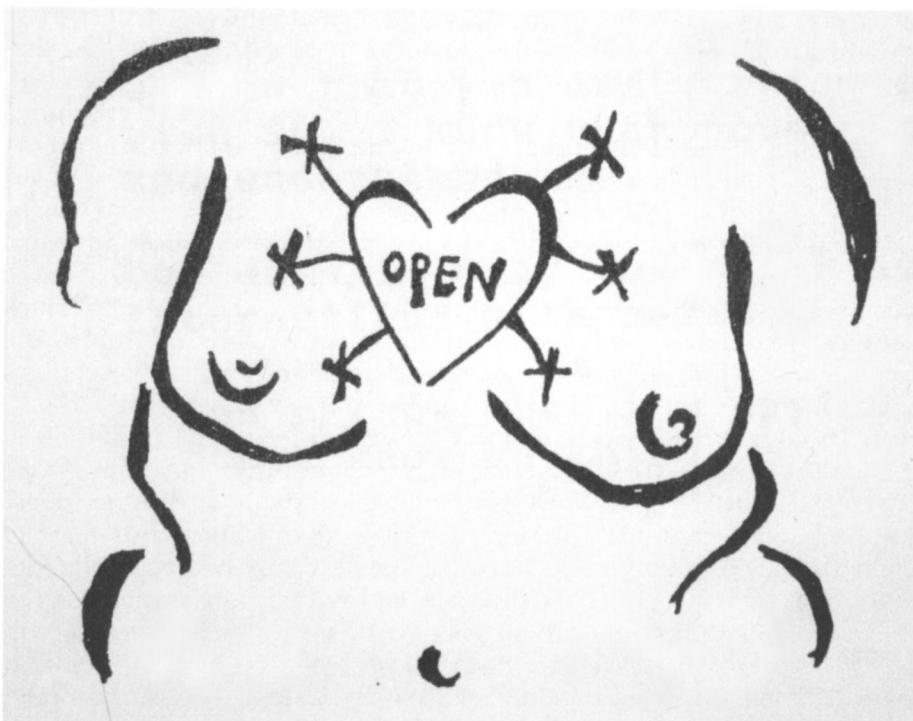


Figure 2. Image from *I'm So Fucking Beautiful*, issue 2<sup>1/2</sup> (courtesy of Nomy Lamm).

ments, scholarly introductions, promotional blurbs—all function as parts of a semiotic system, parts of the total meaning of a text.”<sup>9</sup>

In other words, while scholars—particularly literary scholars—are often content to assess the words on the page, the page itself also makes the text’s meaning. This is true with small details as well as broad marketplace structures: typographers know that the shape and style of letters affect the reading experience, and even the most casual reader can understand the promotional semiotics of books in a bookstore—distinguishing, for instance, between mystery novels and classic texts by the cover art, shape and weight, and other silent but significant factors. Zine creators like Lamm are often savvy manipulators of the semiotics of concrete forms.

Lamm deploys the visual and spatial properties of her medium in deliberate ways. Although she presents herself as powerful, a woman not to be messed with, her zine’s visual components and its form suggest vulnerability. The narrative harangues from the palm of the reader’s hand, a furious message that is so delicate it could easily be crumpled and discarded. The zine’s form dramatizes the difficulty of demanding fat acceptance in a society overrun with images of small, nonthreatening womanhood. Although literary scholars “have tended

to idealize books as ‘mere’ texts—disembodied mental constructs transcending materiality, culture, and history,” Lamm’s zine is neither disembodied nor transcendent.<sup>10</sup> Instead, it is emphatically material, consciously designed so that the medium lets the reader see Lamm’s struggle, her conflicted feelings of rage and shame. The zine is an art object as well as a literary text.

Print culture scholars and art scholars have created useful vocabularies for analyzing the sculptural and textual convergence that zines enact. However, neither set of scholars has devoted much attention to zines because they are what art theorist Gregory Sholette terms “Dark Matter,” work that functions outside of and is therefore invisible to the established art world and to academic scholarship.<sup>11</sup> Few scholars have sought out the self-created artifacts of a seventeen-year-old girl, even though thousands read *I’m So Fucking Beautiful*, and tens of thousands are invested in the larger zine community of which *I’m So Fucking Beautiful* is part.<sup>12</sup> Even among critics who do discuss zines, few have analyzed zines’ materiality as a significant component of their cultural functioning. In part, this neglect may be due to the fact that some critics who study zines do so by analyzing anthologies of zines.<sup>13</sup> While published anthologies may be more easily attained than actual zines—particularly for those who are accustomed to functioning in academic interchange rather than the zine underground—relying on an anthology means completely missing the sculptural and visual elements that a zine like *I’m So Fucking Beautiful* deploys. Published anthologies also remove zines from their normal channels of distribution, and these distribution methods, too, as I will discuss, are part of the zines’ meaning.

### **Paper vs. electronic media and *Fragments of Friendship***

We can begin to see the ways that the concrete form of a zine connects creator and reader in the zine *Fragments of Friendship*.<sup>14</sup> Vikki Law created this zine out of a year’s worth of email correspondence between herself and her friend, fellow zine creator China Martens. It adheres to a fairly standard zine format: codex, digest size, with a tan cardstock cover featuring a plain, printed title. The zine has no images, just email messages printed on paper, physically cut and glued onto other sheets of paper, and then photocopied (Figure 3). This would not have been a zine that particularly caught my attention except for the content: Law created no new material for the zine, but simply made already existing email correspondence into this material object. She explained, “I don’t remember why I actually put it together. It might’ve been one of the days that we were just feeling down, and I put it together and sent it to [Martens], and it brightened her day up. Being like, ‘Look! You know, we got through all these things.’”<sup>15</sup> She

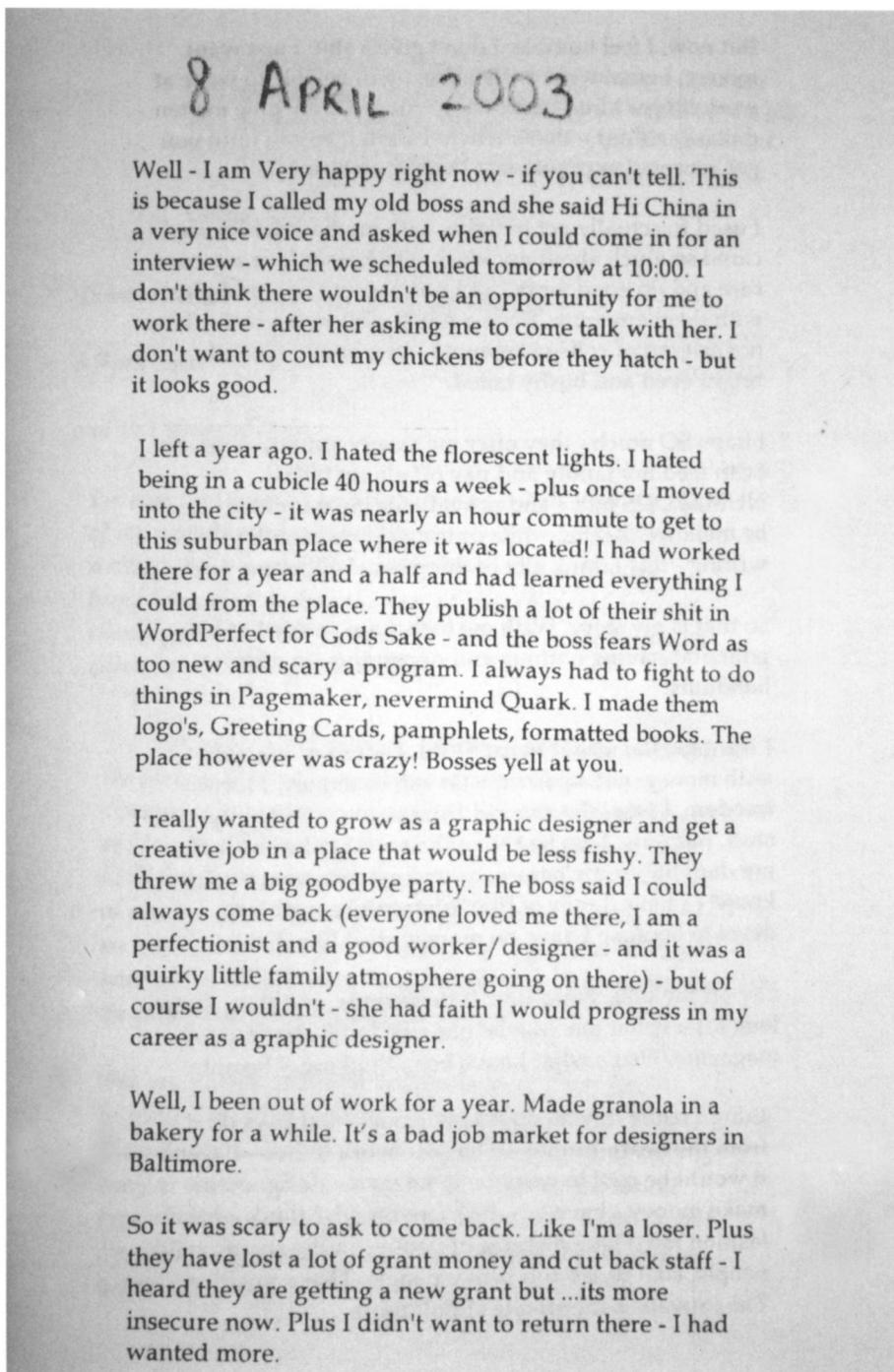


Figure 3. Text from the zine *Fragments of Friendship* (courtesy of Victoria Law and China Martens).

was clear about the fact that this was a “one-off” zine, made primarily for Martens herself; she did not intend to sell or widely distribute it but meant it as an artifact that would both encourage her friend and also document a year of their friendship. Somehow the emails themselves were deficient, and she was not inspired to archive the emails using digital means, such as a CD or Web site. Instead, she chose paper.

*Fragments of Friendship* makes explicit an idea that many zine creators allude and adhere to, the notion that paper is better suited for facilitating human connection than electronic media. In the epigraph to this article, zine creator Marissa Falco identifies a letter as a site of physical interaction. In describing “feeling the back of the paper and an embossed pattern in the shape of every character formed,” she figures paper as connecting two bodies, so that the fingers of one person respond to the traces of the handwriting of the other. A piece of paper bears the marks of the body that created it as well as carrying other sensory information (“the smell of your house on the paper itself”) to the reader. The paper, then, is a nexus, a technology that mediates the connections not just of “people” but of bodies. Paper facilitates affection.

As electronic media multiply, some critics have predicted not only the death of the zine but the death of the book as well—the death of paper media. Starting as early as the 1980s, observers of the zine community began forecasting the rise of the e-zine, and in the years since then scholars and commentators have contended that the internet has superseded paper zines—or will do so soon.<sup>16</sup> In recent years blogs have proliferated, and this is the latest electronic medium to become conflated with the zine.<sup>17</sup> And yet zines are still being made, in great numbers. The repeated linking—even conflation—of zines and electronic media, particularly blogs, both in mainstream discourses and academic studies, reveals a lack of awareness of the significance of zines’ visual and material embodiment.

Zine creators know that the material matters and that, as the title of one article emphasizes, “Zines Are Not Blogs.” *Zine World*, one of the major zine directories, argues, “Zines are different from e-zines, which are ‘zines’ published on the Internet, via personal webpages or email lists. . . . There are significant differences between the two genres, and we choose to retain the distinction. When *Zine World* says ‘zine,’ we mean something on paper. We only review zines.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, this is a point that zinesters make repeatedly.<sup>19</sup> Zines and blogs are both participatory cultural media, spaces in which individuals can become creators rather than simply consumers of culture, and as such they do share similarities. A too-easy comparison of the two media, however, obscures the very element that I am interested in examining: the function of the concrete forms of zines—the function, in the case of *Fragments of Friendship*, of “something on paper.” Even in an already existing relationship, such as that between Law and Martens, paper can offer a differently intimate connection than emails. Law’s decision to create the zine *Fragments of Friendship* speaks to the medium’s ef-

fect on the meaning: the zine had *exactly* the same content as the emails Law and Martens sent each other, but Law created a zine and saw it as something qualitatively different than the emails themselves. As a physical object, *Fragments of Friendship* was a more meaningful artifact of their friendship than their emails and a better means for Law to encourage her friend than electronic media.

Blogs do not connect human bodies in the same way that material artifacts do, and they also do not have the intentional visual components of zines. Zines demand a level of aesthetic decision-making that blogs do not. Sarah Dyer, creator of the *Action Girl Newsletter*, articulates this point particularly clearly:

Your zine is visual, you have to make a choice, whether it's pasting clip art or photos or using Xeroxes of fabric or whatever behind your text, or you've made a decision to just have text on white pages, you've made that choice, but I rarely ever see blogs where people have designed them. Among the people that I know, I think I'm the only person who actually designed their blog. . . . The design element's really been removed from what you would have in the worst zine; even if it's not a good look, it's an aesthetic. And most blogs, their aesthetic is, you know, one of the templates that was available with Word Press or Livejournal.<sup>20</sup>

Blogs are easy to create because they are a ready-made technology, but only bloggers with web design skills can play an active role in designing their pages. Zines, on the other hand, are simpler technology, and because no template exists, each element requires choice and each zine is different. The look of zines, then, is individualized and significant in a way that blogs are not. The necessity of making aesthetic decisions with zines, of selecting paper to be the background, deciding whether to handwrite, typewrite, or word process, is a level of personal involvement that is not as often possible in electronic media. This personal, physical involvement means not only intentionality but also care. This, then, is another reason that Law made the zine for Martens: the physical artifact represented—carried—care that the emails did not. This is true for elaborate visual texts as well as minimalist ones, such as *Fragments of Friendship*. Even Law's sparse visual aesthetic announces the affectionate connection between these two women who are physically distant from one another.

### **Scrappy messiness and *The East Village Inky***

The visual aesthetic of zines can cover a wide spectrum, from neat to messy, from flowery to plain, but most zines do offer evidence of the creator's hand. One *East Village Inky* reader, discussing her love for

the zine, explained, "I like the drawings and the scrappy messiness of the final product (I swear every issue has at least two instances of [Halliday] leaving blank spots where she obviously meant to fill in a word later but forgot)."<sup>21</sup> This reader did not criticize the zine's imperfections; instead, they were among the things that delighted her about the zine. Many zine makers embrace "scrappy messiness," an aesthetic that serves to humanize the creator and the zine. Indeed, this reader spoke so warmly about her admiration for Halliday that it seems clear that the "scrappy messiness" functions, in part, to create a sense of fondness between reader and creator, to create connection. Even when the images do not visually document the zinester's fears or doubts, as is the case with *I'm So Fucking Beautiful*, the messiness of the zine conveys a sense of vulnerability, and therefore a sense of openness and availability for human contact that creates pleasure for the readers.

*The East Village Inky* is a quarter-sized zine, black and white, photocopied, and entirely handwritten and illustrated. It is distributed through mail-order subscriptions as well as through a small number of independent booksellers. The zine's distinctive appearance—pages crammed with handwriting and illustrations, words snaking around pictures, footnotes making their way across the bottom margin of multiple pages—works in tandem with its narrative style. The zine medium allows Halliday a different kind of expression than her books. Although Halliday's narratives of her life as a mother of young children are equally raucous and humorous in, for instance, her book *The Big Rumpus* as they are in *The East Village Inky*, the zine format allows her narratives to operate with a visual energy and fluidity that the linear typescript of a standard book or magazine cannot accommodate.<sup>22</sup>

This chaotic visual energy is apparent on almost any page of the zine. For instance, issue 25 begins, as do most issues of the zine, with a self-portrait of Halliday greeting her readers and introducing the contents of the zine (Figure 4).<sup>23</sup> In this issue she is carrying a bundle of mail. A large, incompletely outlined cartoon conversation bubble takes up most of the page, but the words are not contained within the bubble, which is appropriate as this is a wandering, digressive narrative about the challenges of mailing out this issue of the zine. Even though this commentary to the readers already contains three parenthetical statements, she adds a parenthetical footnote as well as two illustrations of her children offering unrelated statements, and an editorial comment on her own self-portrait ("crazy Patti Smith hair").<sup>24</sup>

A simple reprinting of Halliday's words would be inadequate to convey what is happening on this page. The reader's eyes are forced to move around in different ways than the normal linear print narrative demands. It is unclear what follows what—the chaos of the household she describes is recreated in the wandering sentence structure as well as the visual components of the zine. Halliday shrinks her handwriting to include commentary in the space between an illustration and



Figure 4. Page from *The East Village Inky*, issue 25 (courtesy of Ayun Halliday).

the margin, offering a visual representation of a crowded home and also calling attention to the materiality of the zine itself. Spatial limitations—an inescapable component of the materiality of print culture, in which the page is not an unlimited terrain—become an aesthetic element out of which Halliday creates meaning: she uses the limits of the page to create boundaries that she can fill, and she bumps up against them. Reading the *East Village Inky* offers more than a description of Halliday's full apartment and family life: it gives the reader the sense of actually being invited into this crowded, messy home and family. As with *I'm So Fucking Beautiful*, the zine offers an experience as much as a representation. Her humor, her warmly self-deprecating comments along with her minimalist, energetic sketches of her children go along with the imperfect visuals to create vulnerability, which makes space for affection.

This creation of affection is part of what characterizes the embodied community of zines. Halliday's readers concur, identifying the structure and aesthetic of *The East Village Inky* as something that appeals to them and creates connection. One reader explains, "The personal quality of the illustrations, the personal content of the narrative, the hand-made ethic, even the size and shape which feel like getting a

letter not a magazine, all contribute to having a specific experience of corresponding with someone.”<sup>25</sup> Another notes, “It’s almost like getting a personal letter from a friend. . . . Also, as much I as get information online, there’s nothing like getting something fun in the mail and holding actual paper. The experience is different and more satisfying.”<sup>26</sup> Another writes, “I definitely feel more connected to someone like Ayun Halliday than I do reading online publications because of this aspect of her writing.”<sup>27</sup> These readers clearly identify zines as a “personal” medium, analogous to a letter from a friend, and the materiality of the zine—the visual style, the size and shape, the fact that it comes in the mail, and that the reader can hold “actual paper”—leads to this personal connection. In fact, every *East Village Inky* reader I interviewed mentioned the personal, intimate quality of the zine—its smallness, the fact that it is messily hand written—as being integral to their enjoyment of it.

Halliday observes that readers are much more willing to attack one another on blogs than they are in the zine world:

The thing about the parenting blogs that I see is like the *nasty* comments they attract and also the nasty comments that just sort of get stirred up between the regular readers, the regular commenters. I think that the medium of the internet lends itself to that, lends itself to people speaking impolitely, off the cuff to strangers, saying things that they would never say to a face of an acquaintance or a stranger or, not say it in those words, you know, without really realizing what the consequences are of saying it.<sup>28</sup>

The hostility that Halliday identifies with blogs—hostility which she has not experienced in her eight years as a zine creator—stems from the disembodied format of electronic media. She points out that people commenting on a blog will write things that “they would never say to the face of an acquaintance or stranger”: the face, the body of another person—even a stranger—makes this kind of hostility untenable. The body humanizes, and zines provide a kind of bodily engagement or a bodily surrogate, that leads to intimacy, connectedness.

Although not all zines are hand-lettered or as extensively illustrated as is *The East Village Inky*, most do emphasize a hand-made quality. For instance, *With Heart in Mouth* is a black-and-white photocopied zine, but the title is written on the cover with red felt-tip marker; this was clearly done on each individual zine by the author or her friends (Figure 5).<sup>29</sup> Jenna Freedman explains that when she released the 2004 edition of her zine *Lower East Side Librarian Winter Solstice Shout-Out*, her friends Lauren Jade Martin and Eleanor Whitney—both zine creators themselves—were immediately drawn to the blue-highlighted hair on the cartoon version of Freedman on the



Figure 5. Cover of *With Heart in Mouth* (courtesy of Anna Whitehead).

front cover. There was something about the fact that her hand had touched every cover that made it meaningful to these readers (Figure 6).<sup>30</sup> One zine creator notes, "The glossier and more professional my zine gets, the less mail I get from readers."<sup>31</sup> The imperfections invite readers into the zine community. Zines typically employ an aesthetic that sets them apart from what Duncombe refers to as the look of "seamless commercial design."<sup>32</sup> The handwriting of the author



Figure 6. Cover of *Lower East Side Librarian Winter Solstice Shout Out*, 2004 edition (courtesy of Jenna Freedman and Davidson Mulkey).

is often incorporated into the zine, as are the rough edges left by scissors and the lines of tape holding pieces of text and imagery to the page. Duncombe explains, "zinesters value the bonds between the zine writer/artist, what he or she is drawing, and the person reading the zine. . . . Instead of emulating the slickness of the commercial mass media . . . the illustrations in zines are more reminiscent of the doodles and sketches in the margins of a personal letter: a style of intimate connection."<sup>33</sup> Most zine creators reject the commercial aesthetic because they reject the ideology of commercial mass media; rather than positioning readers as consumers, as a marketplace, the zine positions them as friends, equals, members of an embodied community who are part of a conversation with the zine maker, and the zine aesthetic plays a crucial role in this positioning.<sup>34</sup>

### **Sculptural elements in *No Better Voice***

Some zines take this a step further, verging toward book art. Issue #25 of *No Better Voice* is a quarter-sized photocopied zine with a cover made from a cereal box spray painted pink and gray.<sup>35</sup> The cover is tied closed with a strand of white yarn so that the reader has to untie it in order to read the zine (Figure 7). The codex format that most zines and books utilize is so familiar that most readers do not consider this structure as a sculptural element, but Jami Thompson, the creator of *No Better Voice*, utilizes codex components deliberately, as a way of making meaning. Unlike electronic media which are in some senses always open, *No Better Voice* can be deliberately and emphatically closed, and by forcing the reader to untie the zine before reading it, *No Better Voice* makes the reader become physically involved. By tying the zine closed, she protects the material inside, and the physical process of opening the zine evokes a sense of secrecy, of being invited to read hidden material such as a diary.

Glued inside the front cover is a photocopied note in the author's handwriting saying, "This is the zine i got the worst review ever for. i think it said something to the effect of 'pointless, vapid, self indulgent' and said the zine was about 'suicide and vomit'."<sup>36</sup> This note highlights the interiority of the zine even further; the vomit reference in particular offers an image of interior material inappropriately made exterior. By publicizing her bad review, Thompson offers evidence for why her zine has a kind of protective shell around it. Its cover acts as a literal and metaphorical layer of protection from unfriendly readers. And yet she glues the review inside the front cover of the zine, incorporating this criticism into the inner body of the zine. In this way, Thompson is claiming and perhaps even flaunting the "inappropriate" intimacy of her zine. By sharing this criticism with the reader who has already untied the zine to read it and who is holding the zine in her or his hands, she brings the reader to her side.<sup>37</sup>

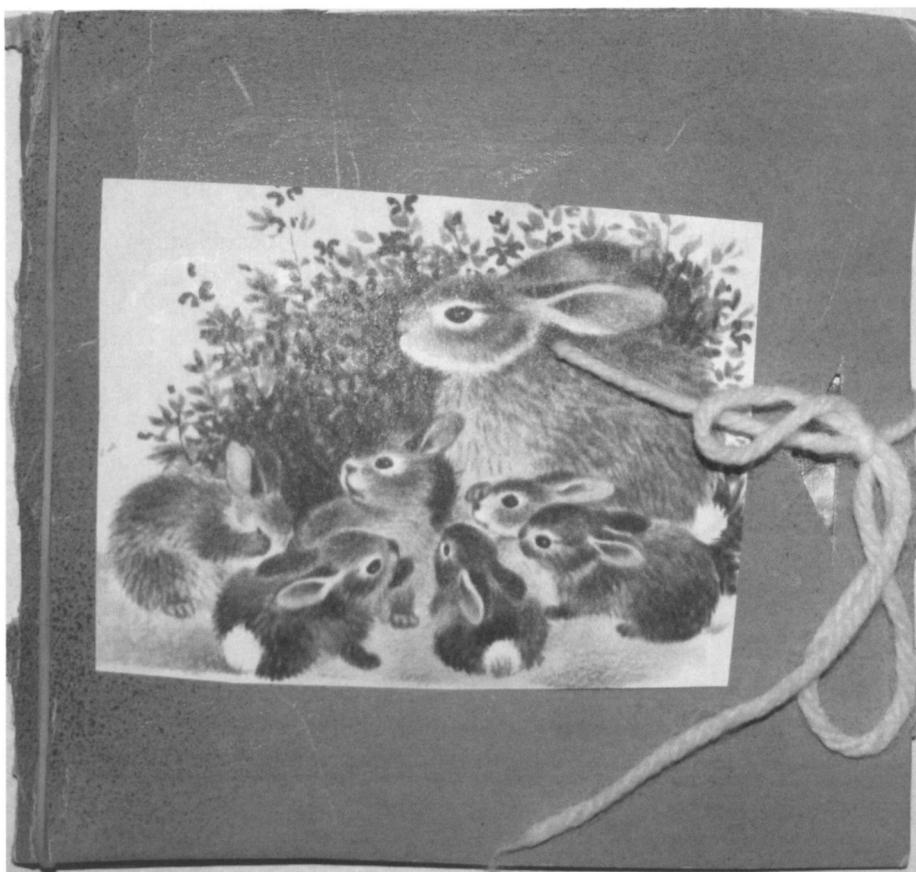


Figure 7. Cover of *No Better Voice*, issue 25 (courtesy of Jami Thompson).

*No Better Voice*, then, creates allegiance through materiality, and through trashy materiality. Zines' trashiness may, in part, explain the reluctance of literary and art scholars to analyze them: zines revel in informality and threaten conventional boundaries. They explicitly reject the standards, methods, and visual vocabulary of mainstream publishing and the art world. Rather than appearing as well-wrought artistic pieces, zines take the form of ephemera, notes passed in class, doodles. In the case of zines like *No Better Voice*, they may actually be constructed of waste materials, old cereal boxes and string. They reject art economies, and they are therefore so (intentionally) low in terms of the hierarchies of printed material that they are below the radar of many academics, but even those who know of them may not consider them as legitimate objects of study.<sup>38</sup> And yet simultaneously zines have a quality of preciousness. *No Better Voice* was visibly made by Thompson's hand, tied by hand. Like a letter or gift from a friend,

their status as handmade physical objects means that they accrue value. They are hard to throw away. This is also what creates allegiance.

Indeed, the zine structure offers a greater sense of intimacy even than other print media. Books can pretend to be a diary or can even be the publication of a diary, but the mechanisms of publication and the formal structures of books make it apparent to most readers that they are not actually privy to someone's confidential information. With zines, however, there are fewer layers of separation between the reader and the creator. The imagined community is less imagined and more embodied. Thompson, the zine creator, is inviting the reader into this intimate world where the reader is untying a yarn bow that Thompson herself tied before mailing the zine. The structure works with the content of *No Better Voice* to give the reader the sense of being brought into a privileged confidence, of being assumed to be trustworthy and of the same mind as the author, and this assumption of trustworthiness helps to make the reader an ally.

### **Gifts, pleasure, and embodied community**

In examining these zines, it has become clear to me that their materiality functions not simply as another component of their meaning but also as a means of linking creator and reader, creating a community. Describing her relationship to the readers of *The East Village Inky*, Halliday explains, "I can't remember the last time I got a letter from a friend of mine, but I get these nice newsy letters from people I haven't met. And the time it takes them to mail and to stamp it, and that they have to pay to mail it—you know, it's really great."<sup>39</sup> Halliday's experience speaks to the creation of a zine community; her readers' letters are evidence of a connection, because they are willing to make an effort to send friendly correspondence—on paper—to someone they only know because of reading her zine. This connection is something akin to Benedict Anderson's notion of the national imagined community, of which he says, "it is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."<sup>40</sup> Halliday describes this kind of communion with people she has not met. Like the zine community, Anderson's imagined community is in part realized by reading; however, while Anderson's newspaper reader has the awareness "that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others," zine writers and readers feel community in part because they know that *not* many others are replicating this act.<sup>41</sup> The imagined community of the zine world is intimate rather than extensive, and linked to the body rather than simply to an imagined other.

Zines' materiality creates community because it creates pleasure, affection, allegiance, and vulnerability. As we have seen, these qualities emerge in various ways in the medium itself. The size of *I'm So Fucking Beautiful* and the messy drawings of *The East Village Inky* convey vulnerability. Readers feel affection when they untie the cover of *No Better Voice* or turn the paper pages of *Fragments of Friendship*. Pleasure permeates all the zines. These qualities are especially visible in the reciprocal materiality that zines inspire, such as the paper correspondence of *The East Village Inky* readers. This reciprocal materiality is evidence of the embodied community.

Many critics have asked zine makers why they do what they do: zines are time consuming to produce, and they do not generate any of the commodities that our culture generally values, including money, power, or prestige. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that zines usually cost their creators money; only if a zinester is especially successful will she or he break even. One of the answers that is routinely offered in response to this question is that making a zine is fun. Zine makers will explain the way their awareness of time slips away while they're creating a zine, or how putting together a zine is a "tactile rush."<sup>42</sup> Pleasure, then, is a key component of the zine medium. Pleasure is registered in the artifact itself in various ways. It is one of the causes and consequences of the humanized connections that zines enable. It is one of the most mysterious and important elements of this embodied community.

Zine creators emphasize the pleasures of tactility, what Vikki Law repeatedly refers to as the "physically satisfying" act of producing a paper zine.<sup>43</sup> One woman explains, "I found I enjoyed rubber-cementing the pieces of my zine to their backgrounds, watching the zine become a concrete product before my eyes."<sup>44</sup> Grrrl zine anthologists Taormino and Green note, "A big part of the thrill in making zines is the manual work it takes to put them together. Most zine makers put a lot of effort into paste-up and often zines are full of collage-art. And from the many stickered, starred and sparkle-covered letters we received, we'd say these girls enjoy the physical labor. From our experience, this labor can be cathartic as well as inspiring."<sup>45</sup> In a culture that celebrates ease and immediacy, zine makers are choosing to take part in a process that is deliberately messy, inefficient, and labor-intensive—they are choosing to take part in an art process. Taormino and Green offer a psychological reading of this practice: it is "cathartic as well as inspiring" to girls and women to create zines. In addition, I want to suggest that the physical act of creating a zine locates zine creators in their bodies, which is a site of care and pleasure, and the act of reading does the same thing for the reader, and thus they are brought into an embodied community.

Zines have come into being in a moment when the body is silenced and elided by a culture in which, as zine creator Lynn Peril told an in-

terviewer, many of us “sit all day in front of the computer.” She explained, “I like *physical objects*, I like paper. I like laying out my zine; I like the fact that you can take it with you on the bus or to the gym or to the bathtub.”<sup>46</sup> Her identification of zines as physical objects, on paper, is linked to her bodily interactions with them. She immediately defines zines in terms of her own body—laying them out, reading them in various locations. The pleasure of creating a zine is an embodied pleasure, as Lamm demonstrated when she pantomimed thrusting her fingers hard onto typewriter keys for the satisfaction of feeling them operate: “there’s something about when you feel something really intensely and you’re hitting the keys and it’s like, it’s much more like a visceral experience.”<sup>47</sup> Zines bring their creators and readers away from the digital world and into their own flesh. Indeed, every zine creator I interviewed spoke of the pleasures of zine making, and most linked that pleasure to their bodily engagement with zines.

The pleasures of the zine medium may in part explain the gift economy in which zines operate. People make zines as acts of pleasure and generosity, and they are received this way. *East Village Inky* readers refer to the zine as “a note passed in class or a letter sent to you”<sup>48</sup> or “a little present in the mailbox.”<sup>49</sup> They experience the zine as a gift, and this does not seem to me to be a misinterpretation of the zine exchange. Many zines are given away, as Law gave Martens *Fragments of Friendship*. It is also common for zine creators to trade their zines for someone else’s. Although readers often do pay for the zines they receive, generally a dollar or two sent in a concealed manner through the mail, this payment generally only covers the costs of photocopying and mailing the zine.<sup>50</sup> And even when money does change hands on a larger scale, as is the case with some zines, like *The East Village Inky*, which are stable and long-running enough to offer subscriptions, the qualities of the zine medium I’ve already discussed—vulnerability, care, messiness—keep the acquisition of zines from feeling like a financial transaction. Instead, the zine is a kind of gift. It operates outside of economies of scarcity and hierarchy and creates, instead, “economies based on pleasure, generosity and the free dispersal of goods and services.”<sup>51</sup> We give gifts because we care for someone and want to make a connection with them. Gift giving makes us vulnerable, because a gift can be rejected or misunderstood, unlike a financial transaction. Giving gifts is also pleasurable because we imagine the pleasure of the person receiving them, and in imaging this receiver, we create a connection that the physical artifact—the zine as “present in the mailbox”—makes material.

In fact, zine makers often up the ante on materiality, adding other artifacts and detritus into the zine exchange. Buttons, letters, and stickers often accompany zines; for example, the zine *No Better Voice* arrived with a tiny button that said “No Better Voice,” and the zine *Brother Dana* came with a pink “Erica Rules, boys suck” sticker sta-

pled inside each copy. One issue of the zine *Design 816* included two homemade Huggy Bear patches made of cloth and glitter. *First Person: True Stories by Real People* regularly contained a “free toy surprise” such as a moist towelette or Elvis Presley trading card stapled in a tiny envelope on the back page. It is almost as if the zine itself is not enough, since the zine makers are inspired to add additional objects to manifest a relationship. Clearly the physicality—the object-ness—is what’s at stake here, as is evidenced in an anecdote from Vikki Law. When I asked Law why getting paper mail is more exciting than getting email, she responded by sharing a story about receiving a zine from a friend. The friend had written Law’s two-year-old daughter’s name on the envelope in glitter. Law reported,

So she’s like [motions letters as if Siu Loong is spelling], “What is that?” And finally she’s like, “Oh! That says Siu Loong,” and it’s this amazing sort of like *ding ding ding* light bulb, a baby milestone. She’s recognized her name because of this wonderfully decorated envelope with glitter, and I think there was a picture on the back of it, and suddenly she could hold it in her hand and shake it around, like, what is this? Oh this is for me, you know?<sup>52</sup>

What this anecdote conveys is the significance of the material object as well as the personal quality of a zine as something which is “for me.” Although most zines are photocopied and therefore not explicitly made for one individual, the particular aesthetic and structural qualities that characterize the zine medium make all zines feel a bit like they were made for the individual reader. To enhance this gift-like quality, zines often arrive in hand-addressed envelopes; indeed, in some years it was not uncommon for subscribers to *The East Village Inky* to receive envelopes that had been addressed by Halliday’s daughter Inky herself. The envelopes are often decorated and accompanied with hand-written notes from the zine creator so that they, too, become gifts, acts of creativity, generosity, and affection (Figure 8). The gift economy is perhaps particularly visible in the envelopes. If zines themselves are seen by some as disposable (so much so that some zine makers have expressed surprise that zines are being archived in library collections), envelopes are even more so—explicitly created to be discarded, only important in the transporting of what is inside, with no value of their own.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, when zine creators offer elaborate drawings and glittery decorations on this disposable artifact, they are offering a gift which exists for no other reason than to evoke pleasure and affection, to create embodied community.

This human connection seems to inspire reciprocal materiality. Zine readers send gifts and artifacts to zine makers. Halliday explains, “I get fan mail, I get love letters, people send me all sorts of interesting



Figure 8. Envelope in which a zine arrived (courtesy of the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture, Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University).

little toys for the kids. Like, one time I wrote about making mojitos when we were here in Cape Cod, and this *East Village Inky* reader sent me a big package of mint so that I can make mojitos in New York.”<sup>54</sup> This perhaps more than any other example shows the importance of the materiality and how that materiality facilitates the creation of community. Only a sense of connectedness, of individualized relationship, would inspire someone—ostensibly a stranger—to send mint or children’s toys to Halliday. Materiality enables a special kind of community, even among those who are not strangers. The tangible object transforms an imagined relationship into an embodied one. The function of physical objects to invoke bodies is evident in an anecdote from scholar Henry Jenkins; describing his son’s romance with a girl he knew only online, Jenkins observed that the teens sent each other objects: “These objects were cherished because they had achieved the physical intimacy still denied the geographically isolated teens. . . . Even in an age of instant communication, they still sent handwritten notes. These two teens longed for the concrete, for being together in the same space, for things materially passed from person to person.”<sup>55</sup> Zines pass materially from person to person, as do the gifts sent by readers. When a reader holds *The East Village Inky* and reads about mojitos, perhaps the longing to be “together in the same space” with Halliday inspires her to send mint and thereby to share an object that

her hands have held, that has been in the same space with her. It is this sense of embodied community that zines create. As one colleague pointed out, no one is sending mint to *Cosmo*.

Zines make visible the connections among pleasure, gift economies, materiality, and the human body. We can see some of these connections in the book medium, as well: William H. Glass, in an essay in *Harper's Magazine*, discusses the pleasure of shaking a book to see what detritus of human life falls out, from gum wrappers to old telegraphs.<sup>56</sup> In the same essay, he refers to how he can "enjoy the memory of my dismay when, perhaps after years, I return to my treasured copy of *Treasure Island* to find the jam I inadvertently smeared there still spotting a page. . . ."<sup>57</sup> Books, then, have a special relationship with the human body. Our bodies alter them, and they collect material that characterizes human life. We find jam, a ticket stub, we smell our old house, and these things are pleasurable. This pleasure, however, has more in common with Anderson's *imagined* community: imagined because there is not necessarily a physical other with whom the book reader is connected. The ticket stub that falls from the pages of the book was not placed there by the book's creator as a surprise for Glass. In other words, unlike books, zines register the *care* that is a crucial part of embodied community, care that is invested in the material. Although Glass recognized his personal relationship with his copy of *Treasure Island*, he was under no illusion that *Treasure Island* was created—written, bound, and transported—for him in particular. But zines do feel like something "for me." Zines manifest and materialize human care. Siu Loong recognized her name in glitter on the envelope in part because of the care that had gone into making this physical object.

This care, which encompasses affection, pleasure, vulnerability, and the gift economy, is especially evident in a story from the zine *Doris #4*. *Doris* is a long-running zine that combines typewritten narrative with friendly, doodled titles and marginal drawings. In this early issue, Cindy Crabb describes the process of secretly slipping a copy of her zine into the backpack of a girl she sees on the train, a girl who seems outcast. She explains her motivation: "i still want the same things. to break—with this one small gesture—the crazy things we are taught; to keep distant and distrustful, alienated, lonely and safe."<sup>58</sup> She explicitly figures her zine as gift that will provide her a way of connecting with another human being. By giving the zine, she wants to counter the cultural messages that keep people isolated from one another. The zine functions to create community between two young women who do not know each other and may not find community otherwise. Silently giving the girl *Doris #1*, which she describes as "full of my secrets," Crabb creates a currency of intimacy.<sup>59</sup> She trades her secrets for the possibility of closeness, trust, and connection—which she implies are the opposite of safe. And this trade is made possible by the

physical durability of zines. Although zines are ephemera, they share the book's quality, articulated by Glass, of registering the passage of time. They can be tucked into a backpack, hidden away, and found later.

Significantly, Crabb prefaces this story with a seemingly unconnected discussion of wanting things to be small enough to fit in her pockets. She writes, "i want this thing here [the zine itself] to be smaller. may be you could fold it twice and it would fit snug in the back of your blue-jeans like doris #one did, getting dirty and ratty and torn."<sup>60</sup> Here Crabb identifies the zine as something not only durable but also vulnerable. Its durability and its vulnerability—its simultaneous non-preciousness (something you would fold and carry in a pocket) and preciousness (an object that is cherished like a love letter, because it signifies human connection)—are linked to its ability to initiate embodied community. This is an object that carries generosity and kindness, and that function is inextricably connected to the zine's vulnerability. It is not an art object or a consumer item, kept at a remove from the human body; rather, it is supposed to get "dirty and ratty and torn" in someone's pocket, get warm and worn. The reader can revisit it, and although the text will stay the same, the artifact itself will change in subtle ways, like a body itself. The zine therefore brings together essential human qualities of care, fragility, pleasure, and endurance and allows Crabb and the girl on the train the possibility of a meaningful, embodied connection, even if they never meet in person again.

It seems to me that, as Crabb implies, zines are an inherently hopeful medium. They counter the cultural imperative "to keep distant and distrustful, alienated, lonely and safe" and make visible the desire for community and human connection. More importantly, they offer a model for how individuals might form relationships—not simply imagined ones, but relationships rooted in quirky, physical realities. Zines' materiality produces embodied community.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Volumes such as *The Future of the Book* (ed. Geoffrey Nunberg, [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996]); *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computers* (ed. Rogert Chartier [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995]); Janet H. Murray's *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998); and the Media in Transition series published by the MIT Press all question the effect of digital media on the codex book.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Duncombe, *Notes from Underground* (New York: Verso, 1997), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Duncombe cites the 50,000 figure in *Notes from Underground*, 14. As evidence of zines' prevalence, one issue of the tri-annual zine review guide *Zine World: A Reader's Guide to the Underground Press* #21 (Murfreesboro, TN: self-published, May/June 2004) features reviews of 155 individual zines, while another, #24 (January 2007) reviews 199 zines. Microcosm Press stocks 353 different zines as of May 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 227, 238–40.

<sup>5</sup> This essay is part of a larger study of zines by girls and women; therefore, although men make many zines, this study only considers those by women.

<sup>6</sup> Nomy Lamm, "It's a Big Fat Revolution," in *Listen Up*, ed. Barbara Findlen (Seattle: Seal Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Lamm, *I'm So Fucking Beautiful 2½* (Olympia, WA: self-published, 1991), n.p.

<sup>8</sup> Lamm, *I'm So Fucking Beautiful 2½* (Olympia, WA: self-published, 1991), n.p.

<sup>9</sup> Michele Moylan and Lane Stiles, "Introduction," in *Reading Books: Essays on the Material Text and Literature in America*, ed. Michele Moylan and Lane Stiles (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Moylan and Stiles, "Introduction," 12.

<sup>11</sup> Gregory Sholette, "Dark Matter: Activist Art and the Counter-Public Sphere," [http://www.gregorysholette.com/essays/docs/05\\_darkmattertwo.pdf](http://www.gregorysholette.com/essays/docs/05_darkmattertwo.pdf). Sholette speaks of Dark Matter primarily in terms of its relationship to the art world, but this concept is equally applicable to the ways in which academic humanities scholarship overlooks certain kinds of texts and artifacts. A number of trade books have addressed the zine phenomenon, including Chip Rowe's *The Book of Zines* (New York: Henry Holt, 1997), Francesca Lia Block and Hilary Carlip's *Zine Scene: The Do It Yourself Guide to Zines* (Girl Press, 1998), and Mark Todd and Esther Pearl Watson's *Whatcha Mean, What's a Zine? The Art of Making Zines and Mini-Comics* (Boston: Graphia, 2006). However, Stephen Duncombe's *Notes from Underground* is the only full-length scholarly book examining zines. Mary Celeste Kearney's *Girls Make Media* (New York: Routledge, 2006), Anita Harris's *Future Girl* (New York: Routledge, 2004), and recent essays by Janice Radway (see "Girls, Zines, and the Miscellaneous Production of Subjectivity in an Age of Unceasing Circulation," a lecture presented by the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies of Writing and the Literacy & Rhetorical Studies Minor, No. 18, University of Minnesota, 2001) also offer scholarly examinations of zines by girls and women.

<sup>12</sup> Lamm estimated that she has sold "potentially five thousand" copies of just the first issue of *I'm So Fucking Beautiful* (Lamm, personal interview). Duncombe estimated 500,000 to 700,000 zine readers in 1997 (*Notes from Underground*, 14).

<sup>13</sup> Tristan Taormino and Karen Green's *A Girl's Guide to Taking Over the World: Writings from the Girl Zine Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997) anthologized excerpts from a number of zines by girls and women and has become a primary resource for scholars studying grrrl zines. In her excellent book *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Routledge, 2004), Anita Harris relies on *A Girls' Guide to Taking Over the World* for many of the zines she analyzes. Sholette's discussion of zines in "Dark Matter" relies on Duncombe's *Notes from Underground*.

<sup>14</sup> Vikki Law, *Fragments of Friendship: The Survival Stories* (New York, NY: self-published, 2004), n.p.

<sup>15</sup> Law, personal interview.

<sup>16</sup> In 1997, Duncombe asked, "What is the future of zines? One word: computers" (197), and in a 2004 essay, Jennifer Bleyer agreed, writing of zines in the past tense and arguing that "The blank URL bar of an Internet window has proven itself in many ways to be the great cultural equalizer" (Bleyer, Jennifer, "Cut-and-Paste Revolution: Notes from the Girl Zine Explosion," in *The Fire This Time: Young Activists and the New Feminism*, ed. Vivien Labaton and Dawn Lundy Martin [New York: Anchor Books, 2004], 56–57).

<sup>17</sup> Jenna Freedman, zine librarian at Barnard College and zine creator, notes, "The first question I get asked when I explain zines to someone who is new to the medium is, 'You mean like a blog?'" (Freedman, Jenna, "Zines Are Not Blogs: A Not Unbiased Analysis," <http://www.barnard.edu/library/zines/zinesnotblogs.html>), and zinester Eleanor Whitney encounters a similar question when she discusses zines: "So, now that there are blogs, does anyone make zines anymore?" ("In Praise of Zines: Pushing Paper in the Digital Age," *Bitch* 31 [winter 2006]: 27).

<sup>18</sup> "What's a Zine?" *Zine World* 21 (Murfreesboro, TN: self-published, May/June 2004), 2.

<sup>19</sup> Lauren Jade Martin said that "real zines are Xeroxed" (Martin, personal interview). Lisa Jervis, too, explained, "People thought the internet was going to herald the death of print, which was a crock even in the boom days. The feeling of a printed document is never going to lose its appeal or be replaced by an electronic alternative" (Amy Spencer, *DIY: The Rise of Lo-Fi Culture* [London: Marion Boyars, 2005], 57). Raina Lee notes, "Often people who have never 'zined' ask why I choose to print instead of publish online: I state that it's obvious—how will we remember websites 5 years or even 20 years from now?" (*Whatcha Mean, What's a Zine?*, 18).

<sup>20</sup> Sarah Dyer, personal interview.

<sup>21</sup> Megan (no last name given), personal interview. Ayun Halliday sent an email message to her subscription list inviting them to contact Alison Piepmeier if they were interested in discussing their experiences as zine readers.

<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the editors at Seal Press were explicit about not being able to accommodate the kinds of work she does in her zine: "I sent [an editor] a big stack of *The East Village Inky* and I guess they got passed around Seal Press, and they came back and they were like, 'Well, we can't really do an anthology of your zine because we wouldn't know what to do with all these illustrations and stuff, like we're not that into graphics; we wouldn't know how to promote it. But why don't you write a book for us?'" (Halliday, personal interview).

<sup>23</sup> Ayun Halliday, *The East Village Inky* #25 (Brooklyn, NY: self-published, Nov. 2004), n.p.

<sup>24</sup> Halliday, *The East Village Inky* #25, n.p.

<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth Hayes Alvarez, personal interview.

<sup>26</sup> Judyth Stavens, personal interview.

<sup>27</sup> Amy Jalics, personal interview.

<sup>28</sup> Halliday, personal interview.

<sup>29</sup> Anna Whitehead, *With Heart in Mouth* #3 (College Park, MD: self-published).

<sup>30</sup> Freedman, personal interview. Jenna Freedman, *Lower East Side Librarian Winter Solstice Shout-Out* (New York, NY: self-published, winter 2004).

<sup>31</sup> *A Hundred Dollars and a T-Shirt: A Documentary About Zines in the Northwest US*. Dir. Rev. Phil and Joe Biel. (Portland, OR: Microcosm Publishing, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> Duncombe, *Notes from Underground*, 99.

<sup>33</sup> Duncombe 98.

<sup>34</sup> Duncombe refers to the phenomenon of zines encouraging readers to make their own zines as emulation (*Notes from Underground*, 123).

<sup>35</sup> Jami Thompson, *No Better Voice* #25 (Ferndale, MI: self-published, 2004).

<sup>36</sup> Thompson, *No Better Voice* #25, n.p.

<sup>37</sup> There is an interesting mixture of time frames here; this is clearly a second edition of the zine, and the reader of this edition encounters the review before s/he reaches the actual content of the zine. According to book art scholar Betty Bright, this is one of the defining features of books: "Within the book, timeframes coexist: that of its original production; that of the completed book's presumed word-by-word reading; and that of each reader's unique experience with it. Such an experience begins with touch to set it into play, and develops along with whatever kind of paged access the reader undertakes" (Betty Bright, *No Longer Innocent: Book Art in America, 1960–1980* [New York: Granary Books, 2005], 11).

<sup>38</sup> One academic reviewer of this project wrote, "The intellectual significance of this project to the humanities is unclear. The state [sic] that 'almost no humanities scholarship exists about zines' makes me wonder if this is because the topic is simply not relevant to the humanities." Sholette argues that dark matter is invisible because at present "the very notion of artistic value . . . is defined by bourgeois ideology" ("Dark Matter," 4).

<sup>39</sup> Halliday, personal interview.

<sup>40</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983. Revised ed, 1991), 6.

<sup>41</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 35.

<sup>42</sup> Halliday, personal interview. Kelly Love Johnson, personal interview.

<sup>43</sup> Law, personal interview.

<sup>44</sup> Kimra McPherson, "Notes from the Zine Underground," in *Breaking the Cycle: Gender, Literacy, and Learning*, ed. Lynne B. Alvine and Linda E. Cullum (Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1999), 148.

<sup>45</sup> Taormino and Green, *A Girl's Guide to Taking Over the World*, xiv.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in V. Vale, *Zines! Vol. 1* (San Francisco: RE/Search, 1996), 102.

<sup>47</sup> Lamm, personal interview.

<sup>48</sup> Megan, personal interview.

<sup>49</sup> Elizabeth Hayes Alvarez, personal interview.

<sup>50</sup> The zine review publication *Zine World* has this advice on ordering zines: "Send cash, wrapped in a couple of sheets of paper, so the green can't be seen through the envelope. . . . Some zines say they're free, but send a dollar you cheap bastard." *Zine World* #25 (Murfreesboro, TN: self-published, summer 2007), 15.

<sup>51</sup> Sholette, "Dark Matter," 6.

<sup>52</sup> Law, personal interview.

<sup>53</sup> See Kate Eichhorn, "Sites Unseen: Ethnographic Research in a Textual Community," *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 14 (2001): 565–78. Eichhorn is in the midst of a research project examining the preservation of zines in libraries. Sarah Dyer donated her extensive zine collection to the Duke University Special Collections Library, and she explained that the archiving of the zines would probably surprise most of the zine creators: "You know, most of these people . . . were just sort of sending this stuff out into the world and probably figured they'd all get thrown out within a couple months" (Dyer, personal interview).

<sup>54</sup> Halliday, personal interview.

<sup>55</sup> Henry Jenkins, *Fans, Bloggers, and Gamers: Exploring Participatory Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 175.

<sup>56</sup> William H. Glass, "In Defense of the Book," *Harper's Magazine*, November 1999, 47.

<sup>57</sup> Glass, "In Defense of the Book," 46.

<sup>58</sup> Cindy Crabb, *Doris: An Anthology, 1991–2001* (Portland, OR: Microcosm Publishing, 2005), 36.

<sup>59</sup> Cindy Crabb, *Doris*, 36.

<sup>60</sup> Crabb, 36.