

# HAVE YOU ZINE ME?

## A Study of Zines as Empowerment for Women Within Skateboarding

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## **Foreword**

"BECAUSE we wanna make it easier for girls to see/hear each other's work  
so that we can share strategies and criticize-applaud each other."

- Kathleen Hannah, Riot Grrl Manifesto

Throughout my studies it has become clear that in order to be heard, you need to write. When I first began Language- and Culture studies I did not know what exactly to expect, only that I was interested in culture as a whole. Throughout my studies I first set up my home base at literary studies, and later moved on to gender studies. This interesting journey has taught me that in order to be remembered, to make a difference, to fight oppression, to make people laugh or cry, you can write. When researching different novels and movements I came to the conclusion that whenever something important was made possible it was because of writing.

In my thesis I wanted to reflect on this insight as well as incorporate a part of my own personal interests. Next to studying a great deal of my time went to the sport of skating (for me in all forms: longboard, skateboard, quad skate). Also there I recognized change was still needed. So if writing could really bring on change, why not write about it myself? This is why I chose to search for a way in which girls could empower themselves within skating through writing. This topic brought together both my interest in literary studies, as well as gender studies. And it also allowed me to study my passion on an academic level. What more could I have asked for?

Although I choose the subject of my passion and interest writing this thesis still proved to be a bumpy road. Throughout the last years of my study I have struggled with a clinical depression that urged me to keep postponing the actual writing of my thesis. And when I did write it, I still had trouble with it. That is why I want to thank those who have helped me get up every time I was at the point of giving up. My first thanks goes to my supervisor, dr. Susanne Knittel, who always allowed me to do things in my own time, but kept my eyes on the goal by setting deadlines. Also her extensive commentary is what made this thesis to what it is now. Secondly I want to thank Sara Espi Jacobson for her useful material on zines. And lastly I want to thank my boyfriend, Luitse Brouwer, who was the one that dragged me out of bed on the bad days, and smiled for me on the good. Without him, there would not have even been a thesis. I would also like to thank him, and all my skater friends (who are too many to name), for giving me background information on the skating culture which helped me tremendously in structuring my chapter about skateboarding.

The end of the road is there and this thesis will hopefully inspire girls within skateboarding, as well as women in general to write and make a change. Enjoy yourself reading my thesis!

Kimmy Pletting, Utrecht, 15 August 2014.

## **Abstract**

This study focuses on the theoretical characteristics of zines, such as their place in the context of the third wave of feminism, their embodied materiality and their content serving as a third space using 'borderlands rhetorics'. These theories are considered using a framework of, respectively Alison Piepmeier & Rebecca Walker, Judith Butler & Donna Haraway and Adela C. Licona. These theories are connected to the skateboarding culture in order to point out how zines can work to empower women within this culture and the culture as a whole. For the skateboarding culture this research focuses on the works of Becky Beal, Asa Bäckström and Lisa Weidman. The position of girls within skateboarding is studied using Steph MacKay & Christine Dallaire's earlier study on the matter. Three girl skateboarding zines, *Gunk*, *Escape Route* & *Brash*, are analyzed to illustrate the theoretical research.

Keywords: skateboard, skateboarding, culture, feminism, zines, zine, riot grrrl, butler, haraway, licona, piepmeier, beal, Bäckström, weidman, mackay, dallaire, gunk, escape route, brash, empowerment, third wave, embodiment, third space, borderland

## **Introduction**

"Skateboarding is not for girls at all." (Huston, 177) says professional skater Nyjah Huston in his interview with widely known skateboarding magazine *Thrasher*. This statement stirred up the skateboarding community and countless photographs and films of girls skating came into being to prove Huston wrong.<sup>1</sup> The skateboarding community itself however is still highly male-dominated<sup>2</sup> and it seems up to girls themselves to change this representation within the culture. "Sports studies scholars argue that the discursive (hetero)sexualization and trivialization of sportswomen in media (re)presentations are the primary means by which masculine dominance is reproduced in sport." (MacKay & Dallaire, 173). This also counts within the skateboarding culture. "Females are rarely represented and when they are, tend to be sexually objectified." (Beal & Wilson, 38). An example of this is the advertisement Globe uses to promote their 'Bantam' model board.<sup>3</sup> It is important to look at this aspect of popular culture, because while it tries to identify itself as "open to all" (Beal & Wilson, 32), in fact it does the opposite. Becky Beal and Charlene Wilson have done extensive research as to how skateboarders position themselves towards the mainstream culture. From this research we can conclude, that when they started analyzing the role of women within skateboarding, they discovered that the culture did not so much differ from the mainstream culture. "[...] it has become apparent that identities are partially constituted through mainstream commercial processes" (Beal & Wilson, 33). Although skateboarding is a culture on its own, when it comes to the representation of women and girls, it does not differ so much from the mainstream. Skateboarding can be seen as an alternative sport, as shall be shown in this thesis. But on the other hand it follows certain patterns of mainstream culture, including the misrepresentation of women and girls.

Research into girl representations within the skateboarding community has been done before (Beal, Bäckström, Abulhawa, MacKay & Dallaire), but it focuses mainly on identity construction within the skateboarding culture and shows what role women play in the overall culture. The ways in which girls could empower their representations, however, have so far not been widely considered. This is where the research for this thesis ties in. Steph Mackay & Christine Dallaire present a case-study about a group of female skateboarders that call themselves

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<sup>1</sup> An example of this is the article on the statement in *Cooler Magazine* which sums up the great efforts women have put out there in skateboarding. <http://cooler.mpora.com/features/9-reasons-why-nyjah-huston-was-wrong-about-girls-skateboarding.html>

<sup>2</sup> The latest X games competition, which is considered one of the most important competitions within skateboarding, had 50 competitors of which only 10 were girls. Source: <http://xgames.espn.go.com/events/2014/austin/invitedathletes/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr2uGHW-mdk>. This promotional video was shot in 2012 and shows barely clothed women only holding the boards, while the men are portrayed with action shots of the skateboarding itself.

'skirtboarders' in their article "Skirtboarder net-a-narratives: Young Women Creating Their Own Skateboarding (Re)presentations". They especially focus on the Internet as a source of empowerment. I would however like to argue for a different way of representation: zines. Zines have become a more researched topic in the last few years within literary studies. The studies focus on the materiality of these zines and how it can contribute to the message they try to convey. Drawing on this research I would like to argue in favor of the zine as a way of empowerment. For this thesis my research question is: how do zines, with their specific characteristics, contribute to the empowerment of the representation of girls within the skateboarding culture? This question is not only relevant within the skateboarding culture, but also for a more general analysis of how these at first sight 'old school'<sup>4</sup> ways of expressing can still provide a useful way for women to empower themselves in all kinds of situations. It will show from different theoretical perspectives how zines offer a solution for empowerment that corresponds with contemporary culture. I will use the skateboarding culture as a case study as it is a culture in which we can clearly see the gender difference. However, as stated before, the skateboard culture does not differ so much from the mainstream and thus the answer to the question will be applicable to a far wider context.

To answer the research question it is important to first look into the skateboarding culture itself and its characteristics. Skateboarding is considered not just a sport, but rather a lifestyle (Wheaton) and this creates an entire culture around it. Skateboarding has a high DIY-mentality (Beal), works as a sport through its embodied action (Bäckström) and offers a place where an authentic identity is important (Beal & Weidman). The first chapter will elaborate on these different characteristics as well as on the place girls take in the skateboarding culture and the place skateboarding takes in culture as a whole.

In the second chapter I will elaborate on what zines are and how we can study them. In his study *Notes From the Underground: Zines and the Politics of Alternative Culture* Stephen Duncombe tries to define what zines are in a general way. The most literal definition is that "zines are non-commercial, non-professional, small-circulation magazines which their creators produce, publish and distribute themselves." (Duncombe, 6). I will follow this earlier research by Duncombe about zines to help define them for this thesis. To show what zines are it is best to look at them directly. Therefore three girl skateboarding zines are analyzed: *Escape Route*, *Gunk* and *Brash*. The first two are from America, the continent where zines originated. The second one is one of the first zines published. *Brash* was published in London quite recently and forms the latest of the primary sources analyzed. Anna Poletti has published the article "Auto/Assemblage: Reading the Zine" which will be useful in analyzing these zines not merely as texts, but as material objects as well.

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<sup>4</sup> Working with paper in this digital age can seem more old-fashioned.

After the primary analysis of the zines it is time to look into the different theories about their characteristics, to see why and how particularly zines work so well to empower women within the skateboarding culture. The theoretical framework behind zine characteristics I consider for this thesis is threefold. Firstly, zines belong to the third wave within feminism. To elaborate on this I will look into the writings of Rebecca Walker, who coined the term 'third wave'. An example in the form of a case-study about the connection between third wave feminism and zines will be provided by discussing the Riot Grrrl movement. I will especially pay attention to the Do-It-Yourself characteristic of the zine. This offers a chance to connect the zine culture to the skateboarding culture as will be shown in the example of *Gunk*. The second important theory to consider when analyzing zines is that of embodiment and materiality. For roots of the theory about embodiment we will go back to Judith Butler and Donna Haraway.<sup>5</sup> The concept of materiality within the theory of embodiment will be considered through the eyes of Katherine Hayles and Alison Piepmeier, to be able to connect it to the example of *Brash*. The third theoretical framework for zines was employed as such by Adela C. Licona in her study *Zines in Third Space: Radical Cooperation and Borderlands Rhetoric*. Licona uses the concept of the third space as theorized by Chela Sandoval for feminism and applies it to zines. Licona summarizes what she means to be third space as following: "Third space can be understood as a location and/or practice. As a practice it reveals a differential consciousness capable of engaging creative and coalitional forms of opposition to the limits of dichotomous (mis)representations. As a location, third space has the potential to be a space of shared understanding and meaning-making." (Licona, 2012, 105). Third space, thus is a different way of and place for engagement with subjects, in a non-dichotomous way, that allows for new representations. How zines offer such a different way, will be discussed in this chapter.

When we apply all these different theoretical frameworks around the zine to the skateboarding culture, we see both similarities, as well as differences. Concluding I will therefore compare these theories about the characteristics of the zine with the characteristics of the skateboarding culture, as my hypothesis is that the similarities between these cultures makes the zine so useful for empowerment within the skateboarding culture. This comparison will provide an argument about how zines can work towards empowerment in a broader sense as well. Gender binaries occur in the skateboarding culture, but in mainstream culture as well. Especially zines will be able to break this binary down, because of their specific nature. And hopefully this thesis will show more clearly how zines can contribute to the empowerment of women overall.

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<sup>5</sup> The theoretical field about embodiment is grand and contains a lot more scholars (e.g. Deleuze, Grosz, Sedgwick). For this thesis however I will occupy myself mainly with these two as they inspired most of the theory surrounding embodiment and zines.

## **Chapter 1: Skateboarding, Girls & Culture**

"The ethos of skateboarding resonates with me. It's fundamentally democratic: the participants are responsible for their own growth and development as well as the development of their friend's skill sets and the activity itself. Most skaters do not rely on coaches or a rule book; instead, skateboarders are the ones who construct the activity itself. It's fundamentally artistic: the goal of skateboarding is to create innovative ways of moving oneself and the board through space. Skateboarders are keenly aware of rhythms, tempos, and flows while navigating different spaces. These experiences alter one's sense of self and through them, one creates a unique style. Skateboarding encourages individual interpretation and expression. Style matters." (Beal, xi).

### **1.1 What is skateboarding?**

Becky Beal gives this description of the culture of skateboarding in her book *Skateboarding: The Ultimate Guide*. In this book she composes her ideas on the sport itself and how it developed through the ages. Beal has published copiously on skateboarding culture and in this chapter I would like to bring her work together with other articles on the culture of skateboarding in order to form a theoretical framework about how skateboarding functions as a culture, and especially how girls are positioned within this culture, but also how the skateboarding culture resonates with culture overall.

Already in the short excerpt of Beal's text at the beginning of this chapter, we encounter the main characteristics of skateboarding culture. It is a democratic sport, with a highly artistic aspect to it. It also is a lifestyle, rather than just a sport, it is a culture that is founded on a DIY principle, an aspect that makes the forming of an authentic identity highly important and lastly, it is an embodied activity. These characteristics are what makes skateboarding unique as a sport and form of culture. I would like to elaborate on these topics using articles by sports scholars Belinda Wheaton, Charlene Wilson, sociologists Becky Beal, Matthew Atencio, Åsa Bäckström and media scholar Lisa Weidman.

#### **1.1.1 Sport or Lifestyle?**

Since the sixties a lot of new sports<sup>6</sup> have emerged that did not fit the bill entirely of what people understood to be a sport. They differed from mainstream sports in such a way that entirely new approaches were necessary. A lot of scholars have tried to convey this issue. Belinda Wheaton combined all different kinds of research done about these new sports, under which we can place skateboarding as well. In 2004 she published *Understanding Lifestyle Sports: Consumption, Identity and Difference*, a book in which she elaborated on this new phenomenon and brought articles of different scholars on the subject together. In 2013 she also published a

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<sup>6</sup> These new sports fall under the term of so-called 'action sports'. Examples are: BMX, surfing or snowboarding.

revised version: *The Cultural Politics of Lifestyle Sports*, in which she provides even more articles on the subject. All though a lot of discussion has been going on about how these new sports should be called, Wheaton termed them lifestyle sports: "My predilection for lifestyle sports was because it was the descriptor that emerged in my empirical research; many of the participants described their activities as *lifestyles* rather than as *sports*." (Wheaton, 26, 2013). Her research, which focused directly on the groups of people involved, made her decide on this term as most useful. To define what she considered to be lifestyle sports, she created nine different characteristics that we can ascribe to such sports: they are historically recent phenomena, they are concerned with the consumption of new objects, they ask for commitment in resources (both time and material), they provide a certain feeling that mainly is described as 'stoke'<sup>7</sup>, they contain a creative aspect, they denounce regulation, usually they are performed by a middle-class, white and western group, they are highly individualistic and lastly, they take place in urban spaces. (Wheaton, 2013). From this list we can conclude that these sports involve more than just the sport itself, as mainstream sports usually do. "[...] many commentators are agreed in seeing such activities as having presented an 'alternative', and potential challenge to traditional ways of 'seeing', 'doing' and understanding sport" (Wheaton, 3, 2004). They present us with a whole different way of engaging with sport and seeing it more as a lifestyle, or even a culture<sup>8</sup>.

### 1.1.2 Do It Yourself & Identity

"D.I.Y. culture emerged as part of the countercultural movements of the 1950s and 1960s in the USA; the D.I.Y. cultural ethos invokes the capacity of individuals to produce music and art without recourse to formal networks and corporate structures. Thus, those who participate in D.I.Y. culture view their identities as entrepreneurial, or as 'self-made'." (Atencio, Beal & Wilson, 18). The D.I.Y. culture Matthew Atencio, Becky Beal & Charlene Wilson describe also found its way into the skateboarding culture. In their research they note: "Street skaters are often portrayed or refer to themselves as being 'self-made'; this D.I.Y. ideal purports that skateboarding is a socially democratic enterprise where individuals can freely participate and construct unique styles, practices and identities." (Atencio, Beal & Wilson, 6). Coming from a D.I.Y. culture skateboarding

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<sup>7</sup> The 'stoke', or 'flow', as it is also called, is a certain state of being or feeling that is unique and differs in description for everyone. A skateboarder, and friend of mine, Guleed Yussuf described it as following: "The flow" is that place where you go when you practice your passion, and you are so immersed in it that thought, feelings, even this world, vaguely disappears to the background. There is only that moment, that one everlasting moment in which your energy is unlimited, possibilities are infinite and creativity is endless."

<sup>8</sup> The words culture and subculture are used interchangeably to identify 'skateboarding' in this thesis. However subculture must not be read with any connotations to earlier theories about subcultures. Michelle Donnelly argues against the use of 'subculture' to identify extreme sports in her article "Studying Extreme Sports: Beyond the Core Participants" as according to her this limits the research possibilities, because sports cultures differ in many ways from standard subcultures, and for this thesis I will follow her argument.

defines itself as being "a more individualistic, creative and process-oriented activity." (Beal, 1). Doing everything yourself is of high importance within this culture, and makes skateboarding such a unique culture. This opposes mainstream sports that are mainly focused on funding and sponsoring from outside the sports world, while skateboarding does not want to rely on that, but rather defines itself as anti-consumerist.

The importance that is attached to D.I.Y. ties in with what Becky Beal and Lisa Weidman call an authentic identity within the skateboarding community. In their article "Authenticity in the Skateboarding World" they conclude their empirical research with the statement "It appeared that embracing the central values of the subculture - participant control, self-expression, and a de-emphasis on competition - was essential to the authenticity of a skateboarder." (Beal & Weidman, 344). And especially authenticity is important within this culture. "In fact, authenticity is arguably the single most important factor determining admittance into the subculture." (Beal & Weidman, 351). So, conforming to these core values, such as a D.I.Y. attitude, is what allows the participants into the culture. It allows them to identify themselves as skaters, since they may belong to that culture. After all: "It is an anthropological notion that one's identity is bound by one's culture." (Beal & Weidman, 338).

### **1.1.3 The Body & The Board**

"[...] she is constantly sensing the board, the body and the material conditions of the context in which she is performing. Her knowing is a kinaesthetic experience of movement - a moving body on a moving board." (Bäckstrom, 18). With this statement Asa Bäckstrom concludes her analysis of the embodiment in the skateboarding activity of her test subject Anna. In her article "Knowing and teaching kinesthetic experience in skateboarding: an example of sensory emplacement" Bäckstrom tries to formulate how a body 'knows' and she uses skateboarding as a case-study. She argues that, when answering the question how skateboarders learned, most scholars focused on the external input from the culture around it. She, however, tries to build a theory on how internally skateboarders can learn; how their body can get to 'know' the different tricks<sup>9</sup> performed. "Skateboard tricks are manoeuvres [sic] performed on the skateboard while riding it. Tricks are essential for many skateboarders, and some street skateboarders would even characterise tricks as constituting the very core of their practice. A substantial amount of time and energy is spent on learning new tricks and perfecting old ones." (Bäckstrom, 11). These tricks need a body to learn them by both repetition and enforcement. This happens individually. A skater repeats certain movements until the body itself understands the physics of what its doing and thus a trick is created. This provides an endless individual search to more possibilities. Skateboarding without the body cannot be performed and this makes this sport a highly embodied activity.

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<sup>9</sup> A trick within skateboarding can be defined as a manipulation of the skateboard and the body that makes them move in a certain way within the space given. Examples are an 'ollie', or 'kickflip'.

## 1.2 She's a Skatergirl!

As already identified in the introduction of this thesis, women's position within the skate culture is a difficult one. The sport is mainly male-dominated and this domination is perpetuated by the way in which women are represented. In 1965, nineteen year old Patti MacGee became the first female professional skater. She was the only one among a lot of boys. Since then skateboarding has become more and more popular with girls. As Natalie Porter tells us: "Female skateboarders have always participated alongside the men, but it has been a constant struggle because their accomplishments are rarely encouraged by the skateboarding media industry, and mainstream media representations reflect this practice." (Porter, 20). There is both no encouragement towards girls to go skate, and the way in which they are represented also keeps them away from the sport itself. Women are always told that skateboarding is not the right behavior for them. Only looking at the quote of Nyjah Huston at the beginning of this thesis, he is implying that the 'roughness' of skateboarding is not meant for girls. The way in which women are misrepresented finds its roots in the male wanting to stay dominant. "The representation of women as sex objects or in situations where they are illtreated, "sells well" as an attitude because it reaffirms the heterosexuality of the participant, in what is a heavily male – and ostensibly heterosexual – dominated performance arena." (Abulhawa, 60/61). We can see this for example in skateboarding advertisements from brands such as *Creature*, picturing naked women, or the earlier example of the *Globe* advertisement. Women in skateboarding are not regarded for their skills, but rather their outer appearance is praised.

Not only are female skaters not represented favorably, they are also not accepted by the social culture that surrounds skateboarding. In their pursuit of researching the authentic skateboarder identity Atencio, Beal & Wilson encountered this problem. From their empirical research they conclude: "Sean then went on to explain that girls were not 'decent' or 'respected' skaters because they would rarely attempt difficult tricks and would only 'putt around on the board' and 'just hang out' like 'groupies'. Sentiments such as these implied that the embodiment of risk-taking dispositions worked as the primary social mechanism through which gendered skaters became positioned as either legitimate or inauthentic." (Atencio, Beal & Wilson, 4/5). Girls would only be accepted into the culture when they conformed to the masculine standards of risk-taking. MacKay and Dallaire also encounter this in their research among girls: "[...] the skater girls they interviewed saw themselves as participating in an 'alternative' girlhood through their skateboarding performances and identification as 'skater girls', becoming a 'skater' often meant embracing the culture's masculine norms." (MacKay & Dallaire, 176). So rather than presenting themselves within the culture, a lot of the girls conformed to the identity that was already set out for them by the masculine norms. Both the representation of girls and this social mechanism make the position of girls within the skater culture problematic.

### 1.3 Alternative or Mainstream?

In the foreword of the book *Skateboarding: The Ultimate Guide* Holly Thorpe and Douglas Booth start with saying: "While extreme sports are fascinating in their own right, they are also a window on popular culture and contemporary social issues." (Thorpe & Booth in Beal, ix). This statement summarizes in one sentence why skateboarding does not only form an interesting case-study on its own, but it provides insight into culture as a whole. The relation between the skateboarding culture and culture overall is a contradictory one. "Skateboarding has been touted as both an alternative and mainstream sport." (Beal, 1). On the one hand, the activity itself tries to define itself as 'alternative' to mainstream sports. The different characteristics - being a lifestyle, the D.I.Y. ethos and embodied learning - make this sport differ significantly from the mainstream. But, on the other hand, skateboarding is a large part of mainstream culture. "Skateboarding is growing faster than any other sport in the United States." (Beal, 1). The sport has become so commercialized that it can no longer be seen as just an 'alternative' sport, but rather should be examined in relation to the bigger culture as a whole, because it has become such a big part of it.

Wheaton points to this need to keep analyzing these sports, stating that: "Although lifestyle sports provide the possibility of renegotiated identities, traditional structures of social and cultural power and inequalities continue to be reproduced within them." (Wheaton, 21, 2004). So, although skateboarding is an alternative to the mainstream, that provides possibilities for change, still the perfect balance is not found. Especially since skateboarding has become such a big part of our culture, we can use these still existing inequalities we see happening in the skateboarding culture as an example of how inequalities happen within culture overall.

## **Chapter 2: Zines and their Potential**

This chapter tries to define what zines are, and how we can analyze them in a way fitting for this new kind of media. *Notes from Underground: Zines and the Politics of an Alternative Culture* by Stephen Duncombe is one of the earliest accounts of zines within the academic field and will be used as a basis for this thesis.<sup>10</sup> After discussing Duncombe's definition, three different girl skate zines will be presented as an example to his study. They will be analyzed using Anna Poletti's research into the analysis of what she calls 'autographics', under which zines fall.

### **2.1 What Are Zines?**

"A typical zine - although "typical" is a problematic term in this context - might start with a highly personalized editorial, move into a couple of opinionated essays or "rants", criticizing, describing, extolling something or other, and then conclude with reviews of other zines, bands, books, and so forth. Spread throughout this would be poems, a story, reprints from the mass press (some for informational value, others as ironic commentary), and a few hand-drawn illustrations or comix." (Duncombe, 10)

Duncombe tries to define what zines and their characteristics are, and how they are used in a political sense. This forms a basis for how we look at zines within this thesis. In the quote given above Duncombe tries to define the content of a zine. Zines are an assemblage of different kinds of texts and images. Apart from that he also researches the materiality, costs, and lifespan. Zines are made out of different kinds of source material that find their place in a photocopied sort of magazine. Everything in it is mostly cut and paste work and a lot is also handwritten and self drawn. Due to this basic form of production the costs are usually low and the maker will not ask more than the costs for making the photocopies. They are not distributed in great numbers and sometimes it is just one issue, sometimes zines run for years. He defines the zine as somewhere in between a magazine and a personal letter. All these characteristics come together in one word that he uses to describe zines: "amateur" (Duncombe, 14). Duncombe uses this term to distinguish zines from the 'mainstream' magazines. There is no regularity, no profit and no high-tech production involved in the production of zines in opposition to the 'mainstream' magazines.

Although having this amateur character Duncombe recognized the power they had: "In zines I saw the seeds of a different possibility: a novel form of communication and creation that burst with an angry idealism. A medium that spoke for a marginal yet vibrant culture, that along with others might invest the tired script of progressive politics with meaning and excitement for a new generation." (Duncombe, 3). Duncombe saw the political potential of zines and this is what he further explored in his book. With themes like identity, community and consumption he described the zine culture. What is important for this thesis is especially the theme of identity, because

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<sup>10</sup> Others have written on the definition of zines, but since this is the most complete account of the phenomenon I choose to follow Duncombe's study. In the next chapter more specific characteristics of the zines will be highlighted using different scholars.

identity plays such a big role in the representation of girls - we will also encounter this in the next paragraph considering Alison Piepmeier's account of zines. Regarding the identity of the zine maker Duncombe recognized that they were usually outcasts, misfits, the marginalized group. "Marginalized people with little power over their status in the world still retain a powerful weapon: the interpretations they give to circumstances and conditions, that surround them, and the ideals and character traits they possess. Such is the case with zine writers." (Duncombe, 20). From within their different way of looking at the world and publishing this, marginalized groups can regain a certain power. Next to being politically powerful in giving the marginalized identities a voice, Duncombe recognized the strength of zines in the community they created. Through the making, distributing and reading of zines all sorts of communities were and are created. Zines are distributed mostly personally and they tend to provide a site for people to connect throughout. Having the production of such media in your own hands is where Duncombe saw the theme of consumption. Duncombe states that in the world of mass media "we are alienated from what we consume." (Duncombe, 107). And this alienation is what zines go against. They try to mend the void between us and the entertainment we consume. Zines are not just made for us, but by us. And this is what makes them strong in that they do not alienate. In Duncombe's themes of identity, community and consumption lies the political potential he speaks of.

Concluding it is important to see both the amateur traits zines possess, and the political potential they have. These two characteristics cannot be seen apart from each other. The one makes possible the other. Because they are so highly personal, produced in an amateuristic fashion, they open up possibilities for marginalized voices, community creating and defenses against alienation from what you consume. And this is what makes zines to what they are: a unique subject to research.

## **2.2 Analyzing 'Autographics'**

To see what zines are and how they work we can best look at zines themselves. On how we can read and interpret such texts Anna Poletti has done research, which provides a way to look at primary sources. In her article "Auto/Assemblage: Reading the Zine" Poletti elaborates on a way to analyze what she calls 'autographics'. She uses this term because she argues for a way of analyzing that combines the analysis of materiality and images with analyzing it as an autobiographical piece.

In essence her article is "a reading of the intersection of narrative, image, and materiality in the use of the zine medium" (Poletti, 85). She doesn't look so much at what is told directly in a zine, but also at how it is mediated through images and material. Poletti uses different examples of zines where text has been crossed out, images have been assembled together, sentences are handwritten and so forth. She states that we must not look solely at what is being said, but also as to how it is being said, with these images and different materialities. Following studies on life

writing<sup>11</sup> she argues also for analyzing not so much taking on the role of the "critical outsider", but rather of the "reader". We must analyze a zine as though we are the reader. This does not mean we do not have to engage with it critically. But, we must also look at it as though we were reader of the zine, instead of analyst. She argues for an analysis in which we take both this role as a reader into account, as we do the fact that it is not only the narrative that creates the meaning of the zine.

In the following paragraphs *Gunk*, *Escape Route* and *Brash* are first introduced looking at their production, distribution, layout, form, content reception etcetera. After this I will highlight one of the elements according to which they can be analyzed<sup>12</sup> for each zine. Following Poletti, the zines are approached not merely from a critical outsider position, but also as a reader. This forms a short introduction to some source materials. In the next chapter some theories will be introduced and these zines will be used to explain these theories.

### 2.3.1 *Gunk*

The zine *Gunk* is the eldest example of a girl skating zine that I could find. This zine was published as part of the Riot Grrrl movement on which this thesis will elaborate further in the next chapter. The author of *Gunk* is Ramdasha Bikceem. About the production of this zine I can give no clarity as it was produced in 1990, however we can draw from the connection to the Riot Grrrl movement that it was distributed by hand within the scene, seeing this was common. This zine was part of a series of five, that not only considered itself with skateboarding, but also had themes such as race, feminism and youth angst written about by Bikceem. The analysis I can give on the layout of this zine is not complete either, as I could not get my hands on the zine itself and had to work with excerpts. These excerpts however consisted of different stories, mostly written on a typewriter and cut and pasted on the page, together with cutout photographs and handwritten titles, using what seems to be a photocopier to create the zine for distribution. This completed zine also follows the 'standard' in zines, being an A5 format on regular print paper. Being produced so early, there is also a problem for the analysis of reception. For this zine we can thus only of the supposed effect for the maker, Bikceem, and not so much for the effect it had for readers. Although the analysis on this zine is rather incomplete, as I have shown, I still feel it is important to include this zine in my examples. It gives us information about the earlier age of zines and shows that already in the nineties girls in skateboarding was an issue that was being thought and written about.



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<sup>11</sup> She combines the work of Jennifer Sinor, which tells that for the study of zines you should not analyze as an outsider, as it will give a better account when you are participant in the culture itself, with the essay "The Autobiographical Pact" as written by Philippe LeJeune, in which he argues for the position of the reader as a starting point for analyzing life writing.

<sup>12</sup> For these elements of analysis I choose the three intersecting ones Poletti presented: narrative, image and materiality.

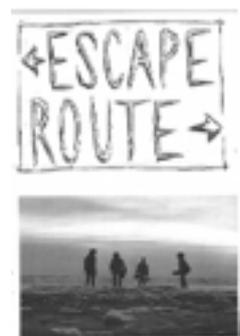
The following excerpt from the zine is the only part specifically about skateboarding and therefore I chose it to serve as an example. In these early zines it was still the narrative that counted above all else and this is why I chose this one of Poletti's elements to analyze this zine.

"When I got my first skateboard I was probably around 12 years old. It didn't really occur to me at the moment that what I was doing was considered out of the ordinary for a lot of girls. But as I got older and started getting more into skateboarding, I realized what role most girls played when it came to skateboarding. Their role was to sit on the sidewalk while the rest of the boys were having a rippin' time. At first I tried to ignore and I even looked down upon these girls for not trying. I felt like nothing was stopping me, so why couldn't they give it a try? When I turned 14 years old my two best girlfriends also started to skate also. We were truly an awesome anarchic girl skate gang..." (Bikceem, n.p.)

Bikceem tells her personal story about her experience as a girl within the skateboarding culture. She tells about how she enjoyed it for herself for a long time, but as soon as she got more involved in the scene she recognized that the boys within the culture did not acknowledge her as an equal participant. She found out when she had some girlfriends join her this was a way for her to resist this ongoing gender binary in the skateboarding culture. The narrative itself here is telling the story of her personal experience. The zine offers her the possibility to write this story, because it is of her own hand. There is no one to determine what she can and cannot write in her zine. And by telling her story she can empower herself.

### **2.3.2 *Escape Route - Skate Like A Girl***

*Escape Route* is the second publication from North America, next to *Gunk*. It is a zine made by a girl skate community with the aim of creating a larger all girl skate community. In this zine they all share their personal stories and photographs about their skating and life. In contrast with *Gunk* this zine does have a main focus solely on skateboarding and girls. And it is a collection of all these different stories, instead of one girl speaking.



All the contributions are collected and made into one zine. Producing the whole is Nancy Chang from San Francisco that collected all stories, drawings and photographs from the different girls and put them together in *Escape Route*. She pasted everything and put it inside an A5 format booklet, which she photocopied. This can be seen in the messiness and black and white layout of the zine. The whole zine is thus a collection of all different stories around the same theme: women in skateboarding. There is a review of a skateboarding event by Patty Chung, that seems written on a computer and printed out and stuck on the page not completely aligned. This is accompanied by photographs of girls competing in this contest with their name handwritten in the corner of the

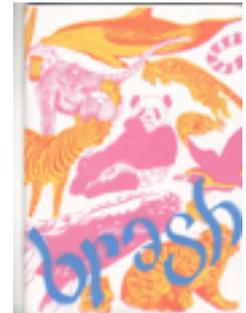
photographs. There's a script of a documentary on women's skateboarding on one side of the page, while the other side is filled with photographs of the shooting of the documentary. One page is also an advertisement for *Dear & Yonder*, a movie on women, surfing and skating, that's completely handwritten. These are just three examples of different stories, with different designs you can find in *Escape Route*, but it illustrates the diversity in both content and style.

For this zine I chose to highlight the element of the image, since there are a lot of photographs in this zine that are not only there to serve as decoration, but tell a story on their own as well. I choose the contribution from a skater girl named Ali in this zine as an illustration to this. The image below shows us a collage of photographs of girl portraits and girls skating. In the middle we see a small text frame that is a call to come skating with Ali. Just one page before this collage Ali writes a short column on girl community in skating in which she tells about her search for other skater girls and the hope to bring them together. This collage of photographs and the column fortify each other. The story that is told is about skater girls getting together and in this collage different photographs of girls skating are being brought together. So in this case the imagery works to tell the story as well. The reception of this zine can be tested against this example. I have contacted Ali and she told that because of the distribution of the zine within different skating communities girls, by handing zines out at events and meetings, have contacted her and expressed their warm feelings towards the article. The most common reply was that they no longer felt alone within the skateboarding scene and now enjoyed skating together.

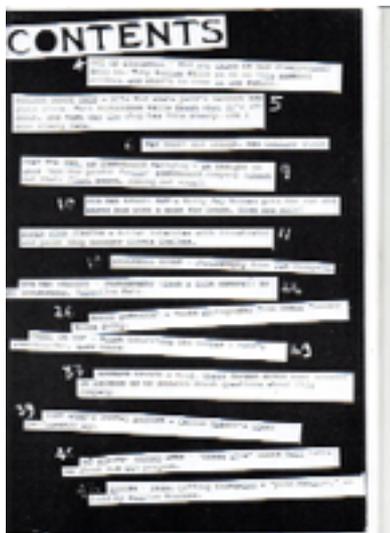


### 2.3.3 *Brash*

A UK-based zine, *Brash*, is made by Harriet Shephard. This fourth issue of the zine is especially made as an addition to her thesis, and therefore is the most extensive of the series. She produced this all by herself. Making different illustration, holding interviews, getting the zine together etcetera. In the introduction she points out how much work went into making such a zine, but also in distributing it. She went to different events and tried to promote her zine using the internet.<sup>13</sup> With *Brash* Shephard tries to create a zine about skateboarding. It is not only about women in skateboarding, but since she is a girl herself this is still a theme that occupies about half of the zine. Next to the theme of skateboarding Shephard has also included an article about tattoos and one about another zine that is being published by a friend of hers.



For *Brash* I decided to highlight its materiality since, because of its extensiveness, it almost feels like a normal magazine, but yet still is a zine. What we can 'see'<sup>14</sup> in the pages below is that the layout and 'feel' of the zine are different from a normal magazine. The content page is cut and paste work and you hold an A4 format hand bonded booklet made out of normal paper and the cover is handprinted. The layout of the content of this zine is however more similar to a normal skateboarding magazine. It includes an introduction, contents page, thank you page, columns, page large photographs. This is exactly how a normal skateboarding magazine is also set up. More about this contradictory materiality and content layout will follow with the theory about 'third space' in the next chapter.



<sup>13</sup> To analyze the reception of the zine I tried to contact Shephard, but could not reach her. On her website <http://brashzine.blogspot.nl/> we can however see that she participated at a lot of events and her zine got widespread because of that.

<sup>14</sup> In the case of materiality it is hard to show within a thesis, because it is the material of the zine itself and its presence in space that provides a certain effect. I chose to include a couple of pages of the zine to give somewhat of an indication. The real materiality can of course only be experienced when holding the zine itself.

## Chapter 3 - Theorizing Zines

Apart from theory on what zines are, as elaborated on in the previous chapter, the academic world has applied different theoretical frameworks to the concept of the zine. In this chapter we will consider the ones that are most important to highlight the specific characteristics of zines. Most of these theories apply to research within gender studies, for example on the LGBT culture. For this thesis however I will apply them to the empowerment of women within the skateboarding culture. This chapter will therefore focus more on the theory itself and not so much elaborate on the specific case studies of the different researches. To take the theories from an abstract level more towards my thesis then, the skater girl zines from the previous chapter will serve as a pool from which I will draw examples. In this chapter we will move, in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3, from the context of zines, to their materiality and back to their content, to explore them.

### 3.1 In Context of the Third Wave

"Then came the riot grrrl movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the Third Wave of feminism began." (Fraser, n.p.) The foremost theory on zines comes from the context in which they were and are created: the third wave of feminism and the riot grrrl movement. "Grrrl zines are deeply and thoroughly implicated in the scholarly and cultural concept of the third wave of feminism." (Piepmeier, 8). To know how zines function we need therefore to look at the concept of third wave feminism. To explain this concept we will first look at the definition of third wave itself and the problems that surround that. To illustrate the third wave itself the Riot Grrrl movement shall be considered next. Lastly I add a paragraph on the characteristic of the DIY culture that will illustrate the connection between the third wave and zines with the example of *Gunk*.

#### 3.1.1 Generational Conflict

To explain the concept of third wave feminism, we need to first consider the wave metaphor used to describe feminism. The waves represent the different generations of feminists that worked on different goals with different beliefs. The first wave feminists are the ones that fought for equality at the beginning of the 20th century. They emerged out of the liberalist, socialist and urban industrial environment and they wanted to open up possibilities for women, especially focused on suffrage. The second wave feminists already incorporated more of the differences between women and they fought for freedom from the patriarchal oppression. Where first wave feminists were mostly white women, the second wave acknowledged the differences between struggles when other axis of difference, such as being black, were at play. The second wave emerged in the context of minorities fighting against their oppression. And this is what the feminists in this wave did. They tried to free themselves from what they called the patriarchal oppression. <sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> This short summary of the wave metaphor for the generational conflict is based upon the book *Not My Mother's Sister* by Astrid Henry, in which she considers all problems involved.

The third wave is where the defining becomes more problematic. The term 'third wave' was first coined by Rebecca Walker in her essay "Becoming the Third Wave". In this essay she states: "To be a feminist is to integrate an ideology of equality and female empowerment into the very fiber of my life. It is to search for personal clarity in the midst of systemic destruction, to join in sisterhood with women when often we are divided, to understand power structures with the intention of challenging them." (Walker, 80). This is how Walker described what it is to be a third wave feminist. In this statement the discussion about the third wave is encapsulated. On the hand is this notion of feminism deeply connected with both postmodernist and postcolonial thinking. Third Wave feminists are thus different from earlier waves in that they act upon the postmodernist notion that there binaries are arbitrary. Informed by this we see for example Third Wave feminists reclaiming their femininity as something good and not so much something forced upon them by the patriarchy. On the other hand, when we read the description by Walker it seems as though it does not differ much from the goals of the earlier waves: both equality and empowerment are sought and a community is wanting to be created. This fits in with the beliefs and thinking of the earlier waves. Walker however does believe in a different wave and ends her essay with the statement: "I am not a postfeminism feminist. I am the Third Wave." (Walker, 80). Not every feminist or scholar believes we can speak of a next wave of feminists, that are doing something fundamentally different.

Pro third wave feminists however do believe in a different kind of feminism that is different from the generations before them. Especially the generational conflict between the second and third wave of feminism shows that something about how feminism is acted upon is different. Within this zines are a primary example of how things are different. The media this wave employs are different.<sup>16</sup> They do still fight for equality and against the patriarchy, but the way in which they express, represent and empower themselves, is different. We can however not ignore the past and in *Girls Zines: Making Media, Doing Feminism* Piepmeier therefore gives an overview of the origins of zines that also elaborates on the predecessors of the zines from earlier waves. Of course feminists back then expressed themselves in a similar way, but it wasn't until the third wave that the concept of zines boomed. "At the beginning of the 1990s, a confluence of events and trends created a perfect storm for young feminism." (Piepmeier, 43). And it was within this young feminism that zines were created. It is with zines and informed by the context of the time that these feminists fought and 'built their own wave'.<sup>17</sup> It is not possible to pinpoint exactly why it could bloom so good then, but the rebellion against earlier generations, earlier waves, and context of postmodernist notions, binaries being arbitrary, must have had surely added to its growth.

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<sup>16</sup> The media employed is of course not the only difference with the second wave, but for this thesis it is the most important to help understand what zines are and what they can do.

<sup>17</sup> As this paragraph shows I personally chose to side with the scholars and thinkers that do believe there is such a thing as third wave feminism. I made this choice as I do believe that zines for example make this type of feminism different from the type that predominated earlier generations.

### 3.1.2 Grrrls Doing It Different

A clearer example of the connection between the third wave and zines can be found within the Riot Grrrl movement. "In these originating moments, two entities stand out: Riot Grrrl and the *Action Girl Newsletter*. They were instrumental in formulating a style, rhetoric and iconography for grrrl zines, and these came to define third wave feminism, as well." (Piepmeier, 45). What Piepmeier is telling us here is that it is not so much the third wave that helped shape zines as they were, but also the zines helped shape the third wave itself. The Riot Grrrl movement was founded in the early 1990's by lead singer of the punk band Bikini Kill Kathleen Hanna when she wrote the "Riot Grrrl Manifesto". It was a cry for recognition of girls within the punk scene in which she was involved. The one sentence that we can consider as spiriting the production of zines in this manifesto is: "BECAUSE we must take over the means of production in order to create our own meanings." (Hanna, n.p.). The whole Riot Grrrl movement was a cry to let your own voice be heard and making one's own media and zines were the perfect medium for that. And in the way these groups employed zines, we can recognize the rise of the third wave. "Riot Grrrl and *Action Girl* connected many of the core ideas of feminism with the trappings of their own cultural moment, and in doing so, they helped to create third wave feminism - a feminist generation with a family resemblance to previous incarnations but with its own distinctive approach." (Piepmeier, 45). The third wave, with entities such as Riot Grrrl, fought for the same causes as the earlier waves. However they employed different approaches, such as zines, to do so. Zines in this way helped define the third wave, and vice versa. Without the third wave zines would have not come into existence, and zines are a fundamental characteristic of the third wave.

### 3.1.3 Do It Yourself? Publish Yourself!

An important characteristic of the zine that followed from being created in context of the third wave is that it is created in a Do-It-Yourself setting. What the Riot Grrrls took with them from the punk scene was the D.I.Y. attitude. "[...]the punk rock feminist DIY ethos of the movement lived on, becoming subsumed under the idea of DIY feminism." (Harris, 185). Zines are self-published magazines with emphasis on the 'self'. These zines were not mainstream, commercialized, publications, but is was something of the girls themselves. Not so much the issue of gender was at stake, but moreover the personal problems of the feminists involved. And this was made possible because the girls could choose for themselves what they wanted published.

An example of this is the zine *Gunk*. The author Bikceem could choose to write about her own topics. She was one of the Riot Grrrls and she decided to publish her own (maga)zine, as she felt some of her own topics, such as race and her exclusion within the skateboarding community, were still under represented. The third wave, and especially the Riot Grrrls, inspired this sort of self-made media, in their search for a different feminism. This D.I.Y. facet of zines is empowering because it gives the possibility to define yourself.

### 3.2 Zines & Materiality

The second theory on zine characteristics comes from what they are as physical objects. "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." (Piepmeier, 230). When considering zines it is, like Poletti already stated important to not just to look at the narrative they are trying to convey, but also at the materiality in which this narrative is presented. This materiality calls in an embodied experience is what Piepmeier is suggesting here. To understand this embodied experience we must first look at what embodiment itself is, and then look more closely at their connection with materiality. To illustrate this I will show the embodied nature of the zine *Escape Route*.

#### 3.2.1. The Performative or Cyborg Body

The body is a concept that has been widely considered by scholars. In feminism especially the works of Judith Butler and Donna Haraway concern themselves with the body and embodiment. They both lean on work by Michel Foucault who in *Discipline and Punish* set out the relationship between power and the body. Our bodies, and especially the female body, are conditioned to function in a certain way and both Butler and Haraway have been looking for ways to change this.

Butler follows Foucault in her work *Gender Trouble* by stating " 'There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; [...] identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its result.' " (Butler, 25). We are not so much our gender, but moreover perform a certain gender. When you are born your body can be defined as a certain sex by the certain genitals you possess. What your gender is however is something that is not ingrained in the body you possess, rather it is performed. When a person with the assigned sex of girl gets born a mother for example will give her dresses to wear and dolls to play with. This is a certain performance that the gender of this person to be girl. So, the body does not define the gender of a person, it does however have the performative power to do so. The way you act with your body determines what the body is. In her argument Butler connects embodiment with performativity. It is important to see how she subscribes a performative power to the body, that the body itself is not so much something, but it has the possibility to choose what it is. When you perform your own body for Butler this is the ultimate way of embodiment.

Haraway takes Butler's notion even further<sup>18</sup> and in "A Cyborg Manifesto" calls for a so-called cyborg identity which does not confine itself to the boundaries of what is nature or culture, but transcends this. To explain this we must look at her manifesto. Haraway concludes her essay: "Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our

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<sup>18</sup> We must however take into account that her work was published priorly. The notion of 'taking further' is meant here more as taking it to a further extreme in theory.

bodies and our tools to ourselves." (Haraway, 316). Her whole essay is built around the image of the cyborg. This image is the image of a half human, half robot, or technical being. Haraway argues in favor of this image as the ultimate way of overcoming the dualities, such as nature/culture or man/woman. This image is used as it provides a way out of how we think about the body generally. Being a cyborg you do not have to define yourself along the lines of a certain gender or politics. For Haraway this imaginative combination of technology and humanity, this not choosing a certain side of the duality, is the way to empower people in their embodiment.

### **3.2.2. Materiality & Embodiment**

Connecting these theories about embodiment to Piepmeier's quote at the beginning of this paragraph it is noticeable that Piepmeier points into the direction of the materiality of the zine that makes possible embodiment. The materiality of the zine, the fact that you can hold it and engage with it, is what makes it possible to embody yourself, to perform your body in the way you want it to, as Butler would argue, or in a way that transcends the dualities, as Haraway would prefer. On the one hand when you make a zine you experience a way to perform your own body. You can choose in which way you make it and you embody yourself in the process of making the zine and the content you fill it with. On the other hand, for readers to engage with this hand-made object they can connect with this way of expressing in a way that allows them to overcome dualities. The reader is provided with a physical object that is different from the dualities they engage with. In a way you could metaphorically say that the zine is a cyborg on its own. It transcends the 'normal' ways in which magazines and websites express themselves in dualities.

The connection between embodiment and materiality becomes clear when we look at "Print is Flat, Code is Deep: The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis" by Katherine Hayles. She argues why a technical, digital, materiality can also bring an embodied experience into being. Hayles calls for a media-specific analysis in which we take the medium in which a narrative is presented into account. "The crucial move is to reconceptualize materiality as the interplay between a text's physical characteristics and its signifying strategies. This definition opens the possibility of considering texts as embodied entities while still maintaining a central focus on interpretation. In this view of materiality, it is not merely an inert collection of physical properties but a dynamic quality that emerges from the interplay between the text as a physical artifact, its conceptual content, and the interpretive activities of readers and writers." (Hayles, 69). Hayles says here that that the interplay between the materiality and content can create an embodied experience. Haraway, favoring the technology metaphor would see this possibility in digital materiality, while Butler would not care about the sort of materiality, as long as you can embody yourself within it. What we can take away from this discussion is not so much whether digital or analog materiality creates a better embodied experience, but that materiality as a whole opens up possibilities to create better embodied experiences.

### 3.2.3 Embodied Zines

Zines, which place much importance on their materiality are exactly the kind of medium to create embodiment. An example of this can be found when we look at the zine *Escape Route*. In this zine we encounter extensive photography that is cut and paste around the pages, as described in the previous chapter. It also has a different materiality than a 'normal' magazine. This makes that this zine has a different materiality. An example is the advertisement for *Dear and Yonder*. Being completely handwritten combined with a photograph of the makers differs from what we normally expect from an advertisement. The way we engage with this materiality as a reader calls in the embodied experience in that we see the possibility to overcome the binaries of what is 'normal'. For the maker of the advertisement it is also a very personal way to create. It is a manner of creating that allows for them to perform their own body, their own way of looking at the message of promoting their film.

What Hayles named the interplay between materiality and content is what made possible the embodiment in *Escape Route* for both the maker and reader, as Poletti suggested. This embodiment follows both the definition of Butler, as the one of Haraway. This materiality works empowering as it lets skater girls decide for themselves how they embody themselves within the zine as maker, but also allows for an embodied experience for the reader in which they are able to find an transcending representation, with which they can connect.

### 3.3 Content in the Third Space

The last characteristic I would like to describe is the one that comes not so much from the context in which they were created, more already from their materiality, but foremost from the way in which they allow for expression and what they express. Adela C. Licona subscribes a lot of political and activist potential to zines and their content, by placing them under the scope of 'borderland rhetorics'. "They [zines] are practicing the politics of articulation to imagine and rebuild communities in order to: resist myriad forms of oppression, reeducate, inform and re-present one another, and to practice a radical, countercultural democracies. These practices inform, and are informed by, lived theory and the understanding of borderlands rhetorics." (Licona, 2012, 22). According to Licona the act of writing zines is an act of resistance and it has a lot of activist potential in it. It can resist oppression and change representation. In this last paragraph we will look at her theory of the 'third space' in connection with the 'borderland rhetorics' she speaks of. This is followed by an analysis of *Brash* in which all the potentialities Licona subscribes to a 'third space' and how 'borderlands rhetorics' are employed within the zine, are considered. We can then see how zines exactly are such a 'third space' and are a space for empowerment in how they allow for expression.

### 3.3.1 'Borderland rhetorics'

The theory of '(b)orderlands' rhetorics' Licona bases on the postcolonial theories on 'third space'. As told in the introduction she works with the notion of 'third space' as theorized by Chela Sandoval.<sup>19</sup> "In third-space sites, representational rhetorics emerge that I term, (b)orderlands' rhetorics. Unlike dualistic language structures, (b)orderlands' rhetorics move beyond binary borders to a named third space of ambiguity and even contradiction." (Licona, 2005, 105). To understand what Licona means by this non-contradictory '(b)orderlands' rhetorics' we must explore the 'third-space sites' she names. Already in the introduction we identified 'third space' as being both a practice, that reveals the dichotomous limitations, and a site, a place where shared meaning-making can take place. Zines can be, and for the most part are, this 'third space'. And placing zines in the light of this theory on '(b)orderlands' rhetorics' we can suddenly see all the potential they have in their content. And all this is made possible just by what zines are. They are practices and sites that do not conform to the dichotomy and offer a safe space to connect, share and create meaning.

The 'borderland rhetorics' Licona explains with the work of Gloria Anzuldúa of which she cites the following sentence: "The work of mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended." (Anzuldúa in Licona, 2005, 104). Anzaldúa uses the image of the Mexican-US border to explain her concept of the mestiza she names. She tells that this border split the two in a binary opposition and the way to overcome this is to occupy a space exactly at the border: to use both worlds and transcend the duality. This is what a mestiza should do, and she should do so by using a 'borderlands rhetorics', a language that comes from both sides of the duality and occupies the space in between. Licona rather than focusing on a geographical border chose to see these rhetorics as a means to create a 'third space'.

### 3.3.2. Third Space Potential

To see then how zines are such a 'third space' we must look at how they employ 'borderland rhetorics'. Licona argues for multiple potentialities that zines exhibit:

"Through the deployment of (b)orderlands' rhetorics, zines manifest myriad (micro) practices of resistance to enact social transformations. [...] Specifically, these zines illustrate (1) the transformative potential beyond gender binaries; (2) the re-visioning and reclaiming of histories; (3) the practices of reverso (critical reversals of the normative gaze); (4) the deployment of (e)motion as embodied resistance; and (5) the emergence of a coalitional consciousness and practices of articulation that can create and mobilize communities for social justice." (Licona, 2005, 110).

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<sup>19</sup> The origins of the theory on 'third space' come from Homi Bhabha, who used it to theorize in postcolonial studies what he called a 'hybrid identity'. Chela Sandoval further elaborated on this concept for feminism in particular, so because that applies more to this thesis her notion of 'third space' is considered here.

These specific elements Licona describes we can see in the example of *Brash*. The potential of point 1 and 3 we can see in the page wide photographs of girls skating. They are pictured just like men would be in an ordinary magazine and it does not matter which gender they are, nor do they have to be pictured according to the normative gaze. By writing a personal interview with a famous female UK skater, they can reclaim their histories in a way that speaks to the emotion, by which point 2 and 4 are illustrated. All these different stories and pictures within the zine contribute to point 5. Through these stories and pictures consciousness about the role of females within the skateboarding community has risen and a community is being built. Zines, using 'borderland rhetorics', illustrated by Licona's specific points, can be a 'third space', that provides them a potential to resist. *Brash* succeeds not only in exhibiting the different potentialities Licona describes, but also in taking a border position quite literary. In the previous chapter I have concluded that the zine is quite contradictory in that on the one hand it is hand-made and shows a clearly other content and form than 'normal' skateboarding magazines, but on the other hand, the layout is similar to that of a 'normal' skateboarding magazine. The structure of the zine follows that of a 'normal' skateboarding magazine. This contradictory nature is an example of a 'borderlands rhetorics'. *Brash* uses a way of expressing from both the zine and the normative culture and in doing so proves itself to be a 'third space'. It points out the limitations in representation in both fields, that are there because we look at it in dichotomy, and provides us with a site to transcend this and collectively make meaning. Being such a practice and site, a 'third space', zines allow us to overcome existing borders and this could help female skaters to become more equal within the skateboarding culture, to contribute in shared meaning-making.

## **Conclusion**

In chapter 1 we have seen that skateboarding is quite a culture on its own, with its own characteristics and own gender binaries. Skateboarding is a alternative lifestyle instead of just a sport, it has a high DIY mentality and provides an embodied experience to its participants. Girls however are still not mis- or not represented at all within this culture. For this thesis I have therefore researched a possibility to empower these women in their representation and I have found one in zines. Zines are these quirky little self-published magazines on subjects of the women's own choice. But having the characteristics they have I would like to argue they have evolved into a useful tool for women to use in their empowerment, or change in representation.

Zines originated within the Third Wave of feminism and go hand in hand with the DIY attitude this contained. They offer a way to actually do it yourself, instead of letting other people make the representation for you. Next to that their materiality offers an embodied experience, or even community, that lets women choose how they discipline their own bodies, both in creating zines as well as reading them. And lastly by being on the border of normative community they offer a site and practice, a third space, that can resist. All these characteristics of zines make them a powerful tool.

But why are they especially so useful especially in the skateboarding culture and contemporary society for the empowerment of women? I would like to argue that this is because they fit in so tightly together. Sports such as skateboarding also, as shown, have a high DIY mentality, they are considered with the body in space and offer a lifestyle, a site, that is useful for resistance. Zines, in what they are and can do, fit in with all what skateboarding stands for and can thus offer a solution for women to represent themselves. Also women in general in contemporary culture, that is highly individual and functions on many levels like the skateboarding culture does, can use zines to their benefit, because they so closely connect to the world they live in. That is not to say there are no other possibilities for women to empower their representations, but zines are a good way to get noticed. I mean: have you zine me?

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