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AUTO/ASSEMBLAGE: READING THE ZINE

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In this article I hope to demonstrate a possible method for how the concept of “autographics” can be deployed as an interpretive strategy. I will be offering a reading of the intersection of narrative, image, and materiality in the use of the zine medium for life writing, suggesting how the zine could be situated as an autographical form. This reading will focus on three modes of presentation common in zines: the intersection of printed and handwritten texts in the form of visible editing; the presentation of poorly reproduced images and text through photocopy; and the manipulation of images through their representation in the limited scale of black and white photocopy. This will lead to a wider discussion of the use of the photocopier for the production of life narrative, offering an interpretation of how the form, and traditional function of the photocopier as a tool of bureaucracy, is taken up by zine-makers as a unique tool for reflecting upon the issues of authenticity and originality.

Zines are self-published, low-budget publications produced predominantly by people between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five. While the publications can take any form, they are usually booklets A5 or A6 (210 mm. x 148 mm. or 148 mm. x 105 mm.). They vary in length from two to fifty pages, and can be edited by a group or a single person (see *Microcosm*). Zines are circulated within an economy of gifting and exchange, and are distributed predominantly through the postal system or sold by online distributors such as *Microcosm Publishing*, or in sympathetic book and record stores. Where zines are sold, they usually cost under six dollars, and most people who make zines do not recoup the costs of production through the sale of their publication. It is generally accepted, indeed expected, within the subcultural context in which zines circulate that it is not possible or desirable for zines to function successfully (that is, profitably) within a money-for-goods economy (Zweig 4).

While zines are used for a variety of styles of writing, the publishing of life narrative is a common and popular use of the form (Sinor 243, Duncombe 11). Zines which take the subjectivity of the zine-maker as their topic are known as “personal zines” (or perzines) in zine culture (Duncombe 11), and it is this style of zine which I wish to argue is an example of “autographics.”

Zines use specific strategies of narrative and material production, and it is the materiality of the zine that presents the most pressing issue when considering how to read personal zines within current theories of life writing. For while these theories are well equipped to unpack the dynamics of textuality and representation, very little work develops interpretative strategies for auto/biographical acts which engage in practices of material as well as textual production. Jennifer Sinor argues in her article “Another Form of Crying: Girl Zines as Life Writing” that the lack of attention paid to zines in the field of life writing “says a lot about reading, about what we choose to read, and how we choose to read” (242); however, I believe it is how we, as scholars of life writing, come to think about the zine once we know of its existence which will yield these insights. Sinor accounts for the absence of attention to zines in life writing studies by observing that “It is easy to dismiss as uncomplicated or juvenile what a 16-year-old in Ann Arbor, Michigan is writing late at night at her computer” (242), and her article offers a series of interpretations and arguments for why this assumption of simplicity is erroneous, using the subcultural context in which zines circulate as a frame through which to read the texts (242). Sinor’s strategy is similar to that adopted by theorists such as Anita Harris and Stephen Duncombe, who also read the zine through the lens of the activities and subcultural values of riot grrrl and zine culture respectively. This article takes a slightly different approach, seeking to avoid the cul de sac of adopting the stance of introducing the academy to zines and the zine community (a route which is almost impossible to avoid because the texts themselves circulate entirely outside traditional textual sites), and aims instead to initiate a theoretical and interpretative analysis of *how* zines use their unique status as homemade texts to practice a particularly complex set of representational strategies. This seems to be precisely where the term “autographics” may be useful. I wish to approach the zine text as offering a unique and complicated reading experience which can be interpreted and appreciated through the practices of close reading that are the hallmark and strength of contemporary life writing theory. Thus, rather than adopting the problematic role of “outsider critic” to zines—a position which Sinor negotiates by self-depreciatingly labeling herself “a fraud” because she is not a participant in zine culture (240)—I believe we can best take up the challenge of

reading zines by adopting the position of the reader, as depicted by Philippe Lejuene in his seminal essay “The Autobiographical Pact”:

By taking as the starting point the position of the reader, (which is mine, the only one I know well), I have the chance to understand more clearly how the texts function (the differences in how they function) since they were written for us readers and in reading them, it is we who make them function. (4)

As readers, the zine challenges our established reading strategies by offering text-objects which explicitly explore the intersection of narrative and materiality, and it is this intersection which is hitherto largely underrepresented in life writing studies.

On the one hand, the lack of theorizations of the intersections between the material, the textual, and the visual in theories of life writing is understandable, as the majority of work being done in auto/biography studies still takes professionally produced texts as its focus. One exception to this is found in diary studies, where contemporary discussions of the diary manuscript, such as those by Cynthia Huff and Judy Nolte Temple, have considered the disjuncture between manuscripts and published diaries and the reading strategies they require. These theorists have noted that as an object, the mass-produced book demands little interpretative attention, and that scholars, as well as everyday readers, have “been socialized by years of learning to have conventional, limited and limiting standards for a readable text” (Temple 77). Adhering to well-established standards regarding acceptable material, typographic, and visual presentation has resulted in the mass-produced book being accepted as an invisible medium of textual delivery in discussions of life writing. That is to say, as readers and theorists of life writing we are not accustomed to reading *the object* in which the narrative is presented to us and its impact on the functioning of that narrative and its reception (for a recent exception to this, see Whitlock). In addition, the mass-produced book is central in establishing the cultural authority of its author by being “sanctioned as significant by its status as a mass produced commodity” (Huff 510). In this sense, the processes of professional publishing are another mechanism—functioning in conjunction with those of critical reception and canonization—where cultural status is conferred by an industry and therefore assumed by the everyday reader. As Huff and Temple have argued, reading manuscripts, as well zines or other non-mass produced texts, throws into relief how our relationship with the book has to a large extent codified our expectations regarding materiality and presentation as readers and critics.

In the case of zines, the text-object has a distinctive physical presence which is constitutive of the modes of signification the form makes possible. And while comparisons with diary manuscripts are useful, it is important to note that manuscripts are singular, often private objects, while the personal zine is—in visual art terms—a limited-edition multiple intended for public, albeit subcultural, circulation (Zweig 4). Thus, in reading the perzine as life writing text, we are drawn into considerations of the communicative potential of the text-object which is presented to the reader as a handmade expression or representation of self. In this context, the current tendency to theorize life writing as self-making takes on another dimension, as the zine-maker physically constructs the text-object which houses the narrative. It is my opinion that for us to read the life narratives published in zines, we need to develop an interpretive strategy which can account for what I would somewhat clumsily call the constructedness of the zine. This concept of construct-edness refers to the presentation of text and images, layout, and photocopying quality, and how they effect, interact with, contradict, or interrupt the narrative. And again, this may be precisely where the more elegant phrase “autographics” can be deployed.

I would like now to turn to an example from an Australian personal zine which gives a clear indication of the dynamic between narrative and layout common to the form. While the modes of emplotment used in personal zines usually aim to engage or entice the reader through the use of strategies such as direct address and first person narration (Sinor 257–58), layout techniques often disrupt or completely stop the act of reading, forcing the reader to engage with the zine object as part of the reading process. Sinor characterizes the zine form as creating a dynamic where “images and text work together, multiplying possibilities and meaning, disrupting expectations, forcing the reader to consider the consumption of the text” (258), and in this article I will extend the reading of this dynamic to include the photocopied object of the zine itself. The result of the intersection between text, image, and materiality is a palpable rendering of the tension between the gesture of exposure required for the autobiographical writing to connect with its reader, and the recognition that, as young, amateur producers of autobiography, zine-makers lack what Laura Marcus describes as the “cultural status” traditionally attached to the authors of “valid [canonized] autobiography” (8). We can see this tension strikingly mapped in the introduction to the zine *R&D*.

Here the zine-maker, Money, presents a consciously edited introduction to her zine which posits the reader as intimate, yet foregrounds the exclusion of information in the physical blacking-out of text. The anxieties regarding an intimate relationship with the reader and the reader’s potential hostility are acknowledged, and indeed given precedence, by the blacked out middle

“ Because the rhythm of a conversation makes no allowance for dead periods, because the presence of others calls for continuous responses, we are left to regret the inanity of what we say, and the missed opportunity of what we do not.

”

Yo friends, associates,

I started off wanting to make this an effort at straight fiction, but those initial pieces were quite contrived, and gradually, they dribbled out (bar one), with few regrets. Instead I've written some of this stuff to do away with a few recurrent thoughts of mine - make way for new ones. ~~I had a hard time to write my first story, and I loved it more than I appreciate the opportunity to write more. I just wrote some really important pieces of fiction, and I'm glad to have them and the more and the more I write whatever the hell I want for if you can ever really do that. (I don't know)~~ Even still, I've been quite confused about who this has been written for. Not the question for me to ask, I suppose.

If you already know me, you may have heard ~~this stuff~~ ^{this stuff} ~~things~~ ^{stuff} before. Doesn't really matter. Perhaps I've been able to arrange the ideas more coherently here, than I have after those seven beers, that time, where you said that thing about... and then I said, and then we laughed...or something. ~~I'd like to~~ hope so.

♡ MONEY

Editorial

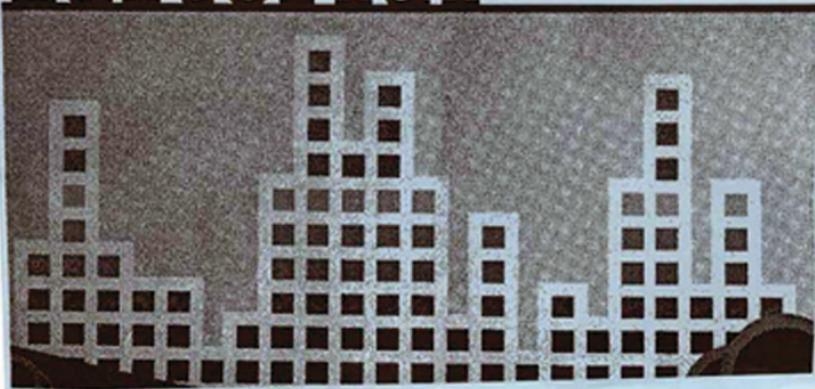


Figure 1. Excerpted from R&D by "Money." Copyright © 2007 and reprinted by courtesy of the author. All rights reserved.

of the editorial. The implied readers of this zine are “friends, associates,” and in the hands of a stranger this designation instructs the reader to adopt a sympathetic reading stance. The unidentified quotation at the top of the page reflects on the art of conversation, focusing on its gaps and incompleteness, and situating the zine as an appendix to conversations Money has had. Despite addressing the reader as a friend, Money confesses “Even still, I’ve been quite confused about who this has been written for,” registering the unique and ambiguous positioning of the zine as a public document which is reliant on the subcultural context for its readership.

On the one hand, the blacked out text in Money’s introduction confirms the zine’s status as an amateur text. We would not expect to *see* the editing process in a narrative which had been exposed to the myriad refinement processes of professional publishing. Indeed, it is perhaps only in a book by Jacques Derrida or one of his disciples that the presentation of text under erasure would not damage the reader’s estimation of the quality of both the writing and the publisher who released it. (And while I am being somewhat flippant here, this comparison is instructive, for in the case of Derrida, with his typographically styled erasure, he wants us to be able to read the text as well as its removal, whereas Money refuses such ambiguous and evocative positioning, and has taken to her text with a black marker—a far more personal, embodied action.)

Thus we may come to interpret this gesture of self-censorship as evidence that Money has changed her mind regarding what she wants to say to her reader at some point in the zine construction process. While this changing of mind could be interpreted as the oscillations of mood which characterize any writer, the presentation of blacked out text suggests a sudden retraction. In her book *But Enough About Me: Why We Read Other People’s Lives*, Nancy K. Miller describes the anxiety “that always threatens the enterprise of going public with private stories” as a recognition by the writer that the reader may say “that it’s only about you and so what” (137). For Miller, this blunt summation emphasizes the fear held by the autobiographer that her story will fail to illuminate the life of her reader, or connect to her experiences and wishes for the future which, for her, are the goals of memoir writing (137). In the case of Money’s introduction, it is intersection of the narrative, the visual elements of the text, and *the inclusion of the edit* which maps this anxiety and makes it a compelling example of the struggle of non-traditional authors of life writing for whom, as Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson suggest, “the authority to narrate is hard-won in a constant engagement with readers posited as skeptical, unbelieving, resistant, and even hostile” (“Reading” 28).

This brings us to a consideration of how this presence and decisive removal of narrative affects the relationship between the reader and the narrating

subjectivity. The instantaneous giving-yet-taking of a piece of narrative in the opening page of the zine leaves the reader in a particularly precarious state. Money welcomes the reader as “friend,” alluding to the intimacies and flow of conversation, while at the same time graphically illustrating her distrust of the reader, and her anxiety regarding her status as the author of a life narrative. The unequivocal gesture of erasure is made all the more powerful by its presentation outside, and indeed its incursion on, the narrative, and is a much more clear and powerful expression of reflexiveness and doubt regarding the possibility of narrating experience than the qualification “I’ve been quite confused about who this has been written for.”

The relationship with a potentially hostile reader is also mapped in the materiality of the zine as a photocopied object. In the first issue of his zine *Arsé*, the then sixteen-year-old Demian reprints photographs of his friends and writings about his life which he, in a gesture of self-depreciation, labels “miscellaneous buggery.” As in *R&D*, the legibility of the text is a key characteristic of the representation. This perzine is practically illegible, with text cut off at the edges of pages, poor contrast making photographs too dark for recognition, and faded typewriter type poorly reproduced. Rather than refine the photocopying technique used in the zine, Demian releases a text which requires conscious and on-going deciphering by the reader. The poor quality reproduction renders Demian’s life writing inaccessible, complicating the relationship between the reader and the text, and openly challenging expectations of the zine as a readable product. Many zinesters choose to release publications with such flaws in the layout and photocopy, and while these features can be understood as characteristics of zine culture’s allegiance to the philosophy of amateurism, and a necessary manifestation of the limitations of time, experience, and resources, the decision to circulate publications with these material faults must also be read as making up the expressive features of the zine form. Upon discovering a margin error or toner problem, a zine-maker will always have the choice to fine-tune the page or image in question, to recreate the content so that it is legible and easy to read, even if it does cost a little extra and take more time. Indeed, many zine-makers do this with every issue (see Harris [46] for an alternate interpretation of the diversity of quality in presentation in zines).

Reading these “mistakes” through the concept of “autographics,” the decision to release an imperfect, illegible text can be interpreted as the zine-maker explicitly and consciously engaging in a relationship with the reader through multiple modes which include not only the text, but extend to the visual representation (layout) and the material and experiential domain of the photocopied object. By reading the dynamics of narrative and materiality in the perzine, we can come to view the personal zine as a form which lays claim

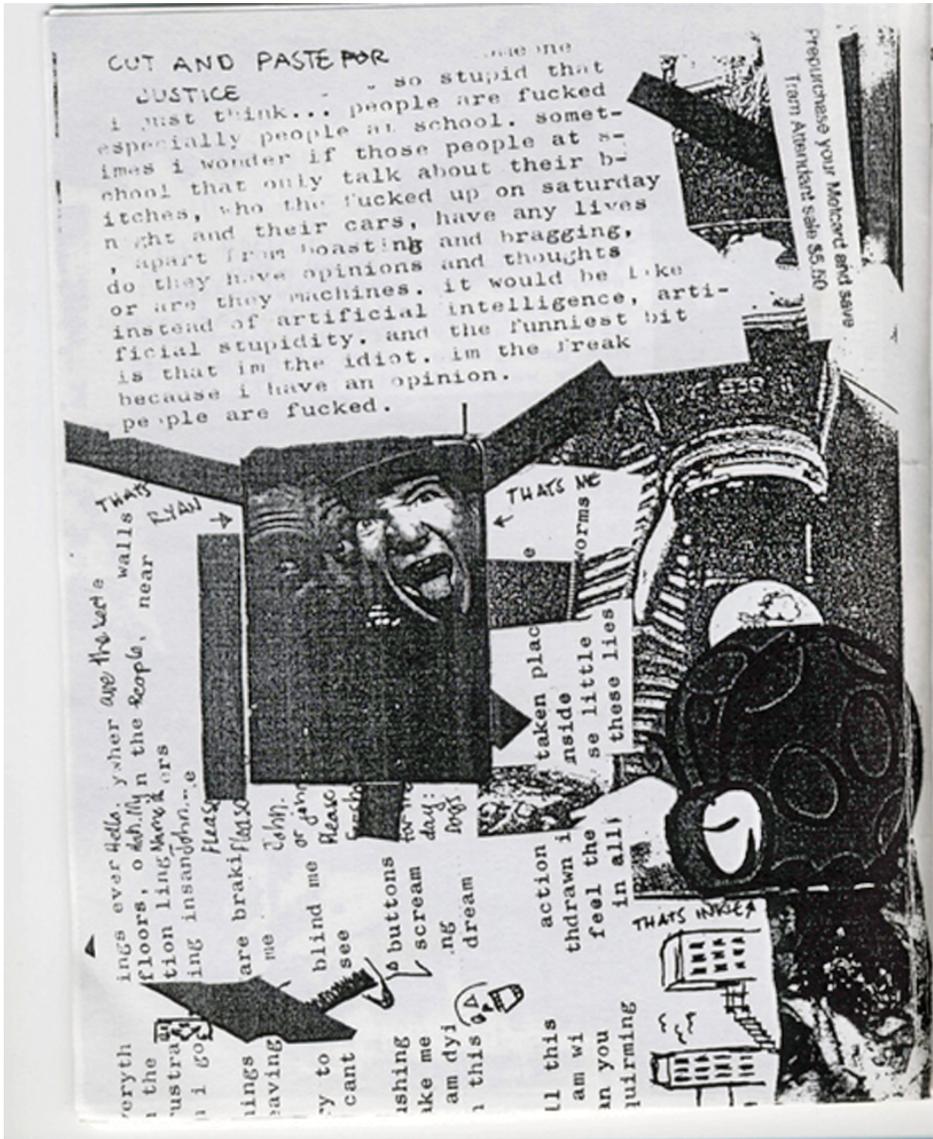


Figure 2. Excerpted from Arse by "Demian." Copyright © 2007 and reprinted by courtesy of the author. All rights reserved.

to but also self-reflexively explores the power of the text-object as a medium for self-representation. Like the diary manuscripts read by Cynthia Huff, perzines employ a “visual rhetoric [which] uses sensory data to complicate and extend spatial and perceptual boundaries beyond the merely written” (518). It is this use of visual rhetoric which makes the zine a unique medium for life writing, as the materiality of the zine object often complicates the relationship between narrative and reader, and explicitly disrupts any assumption that the zine can offer a direct and uncomplicated representation of its subject. Perhaps, then, we can read the text-object as metonym for the project of reading and writing life narrative: one of complicated, partial access, where the limits of representation are continually being encountered and negotiated.

This reading of the materiality of the zine runs counter to approaches to the zine text such as those fostered by Sinor. It is Sinor’s suggestion that the eclectic topics and styles of writing found in the personal zine create “a mode of life narrative that most closely resembles the experience of being in the world” (247). However, as I will argue, a more apt characterization would be that as an autographic text, the zine is a mode of life narrative which seeks to most closely resemble the problems associated with trying to represent the experience of being in the world by tacitly intervening in and manipulating the reading experience.

No More Waiting #2 explores these issues through the manipulation of a specific element of the photocopying process, that of tone, in the presentation of a disjointed narrative concerned with the after-effects of the author being raped by an acquaintance. *No More Waiting #2* appears to be hurriedly put together, with the zine-maker acknowledging on the back cover “this zine was a last minute put together & I nearly gave up forever.” The text is laid out in a common style of zine presentation, with printed lines and sentences cut out and pasted over images (see figure 3), where both compete for the readers attention (Sinor 258). This mode of presentation rejects the formal style of paragraphs, placing space and pieces of imagery between the lines of text.

In the layering of text over images, the zine-maker uses the photocopier to incorporate text into background. In this instance, the crude rendering of gradations of tone by the photocopier results in images—particularly what we could assume are original photographic prints—becoming illegible, as the copying process reduces the spectrum of color or grayscale into stark black and white. In *No More Waiting #2*, the visual coarseness of the photocopying process is used as a means of representing the altered experience and perception of the rape survivor.



Figure 3. Excerpted from *No More Waiting #2*. Copyright © 2007 and reprinted by courtesy of the author. All rights reserved.

On this page, the photocopied image presented with the text is almost indecipherable. We can make out a horizon and a ball of light, yet the content of this image is obscured by the photocopying process, which has, through the radical reduction of tone, roughly (re)produced it in contrasting elements of black and white. Accompanied by prose which explains an effect of the rape as being the undermining of the narrator's sense of self-confidence, the indecipherable image registers this uncertainty, as the poor quality photocopying prevents the reader from knowing the subject of the image. The description of uncertainty is amplified by placing the reader in a situation of uncertainty regarding what it is they are looking at on the page. Throughout *No More Waiting #2*, the "miscopying" of images through the poor reproduction of tone informs the narratives of confusion, anxiety, and hope which make up the zine. The presentation of radically altered sight, which struggles with the recognition of detail and depth, offers a representation of the aftermath of rape which extends beyond its description in prose.

In perzines such as *No More Waiting #2*, we see an exploration of the copying process as "inherently flawed, always beg[ging] for ratification" (Schwartz 212). The photocopied zine explicitly forges connections between

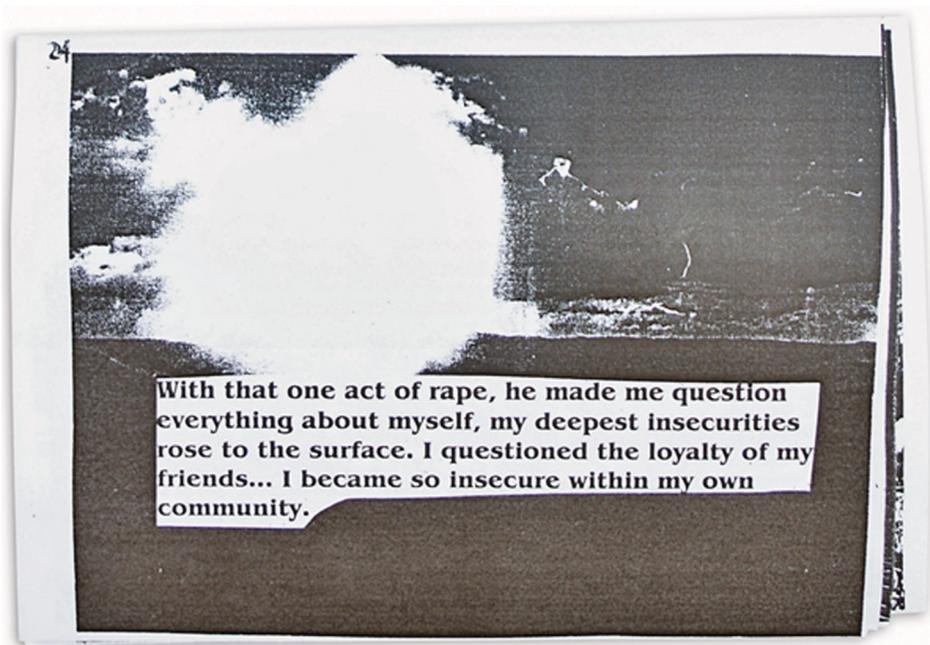


Figure 4. Excerpted from *No More Waiting #2*. Copyright © 2007 and reprinted by courtesy of the author. All rights reserved.

the complexities of the object to be copied and the complexities of the autobiographical project. Like the ambiguous, gestural intimacy of Tracey Emin's work, the photocopied autobiographical text-object radically "exploit[s] the terms of the real" (Smith and Watson, "Rumpled Bed" 5) blatantly playing on anxieties about the veracity of the autobiographical in the tactical use of technology which endangers concepts of authenticity and originality. In the context of the autobiographical, it is not just "miscopying" which "raises hard questions about identity, security, and integrity" (Schwartz 212), but the very employment of the photocopied object as the medium for autobiographical expression.

In thinking about perzines as autographical objects of the photocopier, their paradoxical status as limited edition copies becomes an intractable problem in any attempt to place them in the context of discussions of what Hillel Schwartz has called *The Culture of the Copy*. It is Schwartz's suggestion that the relationship between original and copy has become the touchstone of contemporary ethical debate from bioethics (17) to increasingly complex debates regarding copyright (245), and that the contemporary cultural dominance of the copy requires us to strive to "reconstruct, not abandon, an ideal of authenticity in our lives" which "may call us away from the despair of uniqueness toward more companionate lives" (17). In the production and reception of autobiography, we have seen these anxieties regarding authenticity and singularity surfacing in reworkings of definitions of autobiography as a genre of "writing the self," but also in the continuing challenges critics and advocates of life writing face in accounting for autobiographical hoaxes and scandals.

An important shift in rethinking the centrality of authenticity and originality in life writing has come through the inclusion of subjectivity and performativity—most famously developed by philosopher Judith Butler—in approaches to life narrative. Sidonie Smith is one theorist who has consistently applied concepts of repetition and performativity to the autobiographical practices of women, asserting that "the history of the autobiographical subject is a history of recitations of the self. But if the self does not exist prior to its recitations, then autobiographical storytelling is a recitation of a recitation" (111). The complexities of self-representation and construction in contemporary autobiography theory, which question the existence of the self prior to its narration in life writing, are mirrored in Schwartz's analysis of the photocopier and the copyist, where the relationships between original and copies are defined by process:

Photocopying, like photography, is copying→as→appropriation. It reproduces all of a sudden, oblivious to the historical steps that gave rise to what lies before it. Photocopying takes, as it were, without homage. Its fealty is not to matter but to

light. Like the Victorian “photogram” and the engineering blueprint, photocopying bears a platonic relation to substance. Taking all in all, patently indiscriminate, it demands spotless originals, free of creases, thumb smudges, wisps of hair, any of the embarrassments of bodiliness. Copying↔as↔reenactment follows close upon anatomy; copying→as→appropriation surveys empyrean. (229)

In this treatise, Schwartz positions the photocopying process as an appropriative act, the mono-directional arrows of “copying→as→appropriation” articulating the one-sided transportation of data from original to copy, placed in juxtaposition with the multidirectional flow of influence between original and copy in the reenactment epitomized by the culture of the scribe (220–27, see also McLuhan 124–33). The allegiance to light rather than matter in the photocopy brings attention to its penchant for the voluminous, simultaneous production of *whole* documents, both physically and intellectually, as Schwartz indicates that one effect of the invention of the photocopier “was to make it seem that the appropriation of entire text was itself an intellectual assimilation” (234).

In Schwartz’s characterization of its processes, “copying→as→appropriation” also resembles the traditional understanding of autobiography as the textual representation of a self, where the autobiography’s status as autobiography, and its relationship to reality, is verified by checking the author’s name against that of the central character (Lejeune 14). It also reflects the ideological underpinning of autobiography as “self-expressive,” which “assumes that self-identity emerges from a psychic interiority, located somewhere ‘inside’ the narrating subject,” and where the writing of the autobiographical text is simply the narration “of an interiority that is somehow ontologically whole, seamless, and ‘true’” (Smith 108). This correlative in autobiography may well be summarized as self→into→language, where contemporary theorists have found the same dependence on “spotless originals” and the erasure of bodiliness in linear, individual focused autobiographies which have until recently made up the canon of the genre.

The alternative to this one-way, seemingly unproblematic transference of self to text, or original to copy, is “copying↔as↔reenactment,” whereby the processes involved in the construction of the original are re-enacted in the production of the copy. For McLuhan and Schwartz, this process is best illustrated in the practices of religious scribes, where the copying of sacred texts was a fundamental component of religious devotion and scholarship (McLuhan 134), and the “validity of the sacraments rested upon the personal holiness of the man administering them” (Schwartz 212). In the autobiographical context, the bi-directional arrows of “copying↔as↔reenactment” evoke the self-making processes of autobiographical productions interpreted by some

strands of contemporary autobiography theory, which seek to understand autobiography as self-making, and the manifestation of productive and performative processes (Smith).

It should be noted, however, that Schwartz's characterization of the whole reproduction of texts in the photocopy process is an idealized version of the copy; as any scholar, bureaucrat, or zine-maker who has spent protracted amounts of time in front of the photocopier knows, copying technology as a means of (re)production has its own processes and chronologies which are by no means instantaneous. It is this very process that is the focus of reflection in zine making, and reading the zine object requires us to recognize the photocopier as the medium of choice of zines, and not merely as a tool of expression uncritically taken up because of the predominance of cheap and accessible photocopying in the societies where zines are produced. One way to situate zine culture's use of the photocopier as medium is to position it as "metacritical," a term deployed by Johanna Drucker in her analysis of artists' books, which designates the "self-consciousness and self-reflexivity in any art form" that "require a critical language which describes structures and methods" (161). The metacritical language "articulate[s] critical issues rather than engag[ing] with formal or thematic concerns" (161), and in artists' books metacritical reflection is brought to the book as form. Drucker argues that

when a book calls attention to the conceits and conventions by which it normally effaces its identity, then it performs a theoretical operation. In critical parlance, one could say that such work calls attention to its own processes of *enunciation* (the acts of speaking, representing making a work) rather than allowing a work to be enunciated (spoken as if it were naturally there). (original emphasis, 161–62)

As zines are not the only medium that utilize the photocopier, a comparison between zine practices and those found in copyart can assist in the examination of how zines reflect on the photocopier, its processes, and its familiar and traditional use as the technology of business and bureaucracy.

Artists' books, copyart, and zines draw on a range of influences which intersect in a fascination with uniqueness, reproducibility, and the book as form. Indeed, while the copyart section of the "The New Media Dictionary" published in the journal *Leonardo* does not include any mention of zines, the definition of the term "copy book" offers a clear indication of the crossover between the three modes:

Copybook—a limited edition of an artist's book produced on a copying machine. Copybooks are often similar to comic books or, at the very least, are distributed in a similar fashion. Copybooks are self-published. (92)

A fascination with the book form manifests itself in radically different ways in artists' books and zines; artists' books are commonly produced as consumable art objects (that is, art objects for sale) and are therefore less limited by the financial restraints (both philosophical and pragmatic) which restrict zine culture (Zweig 4). Like producers of copyart, zine-makers operate under a "limitation of size demanded . . . by the standard dimensions of the sheet of paper" which can be fed through the photocopier (Mühleck and Brunet-Weinmann 81) which limits the diversity of experiments possible, in comparison with artists' books. All three mediums do maintain, however, a metacritical relationship with the practices of mass production and institutionalized circulation of books and art, and artists' books and zines provoke reflection on the standardization of the book form in contemporary culture.

In zine culture and copyart, the mode of enunciation explored is photocopy, where the copier becomes "a companion bright with surprises . . . capable not only of multiplying what lies upon it," but also of reconfiguring "that which is the object of its projections" (Schwartz 241). In this description of the use of the photocopier by female copy artists, Schwartz in fact suggests that the photocopier possesses the potential for "purifying that which is the object of its projections" (241). However, the use of the concept of purification seems, to me at least, too blatant an attempt to redeem the photocopier from the debasement of "copying → as → appropriation." In linking processes of copying with autobiography, the idea of purification through copying reinstates the primacy and importance of the original and the self, whereas the problematics implied in "appropriation" make it a turn of phrase particularly well suited to the perzine's use of cultural appropriation in collage, and the engagement with the processes of the autobiographical. Appropriation is a fitting description of the processes at work in the perzine, where the object is made up of textual and visual self-representations which find a kind of coherence in their treatment by the photocopying process.

An example of this temporary coherence can be found in the zine *can't live without . . .*, which is a collection of photocopied assemblages of personal objects. Here the zine-maker has placed articles directly onto the photocopier's scanning surface in loose collections. In this assemblage we see a black and white photograph of Melbourne's Flinders Street Station, accompanied by a public transport yearly student pass, a journal with a definition of "art" on its cover, and what appears to be a handmade doll, with visible hand-stitching and drawn on eyes. Interpreting this collection of objects through the title of the zine, it can be suggested that the zine-maker (identified only by

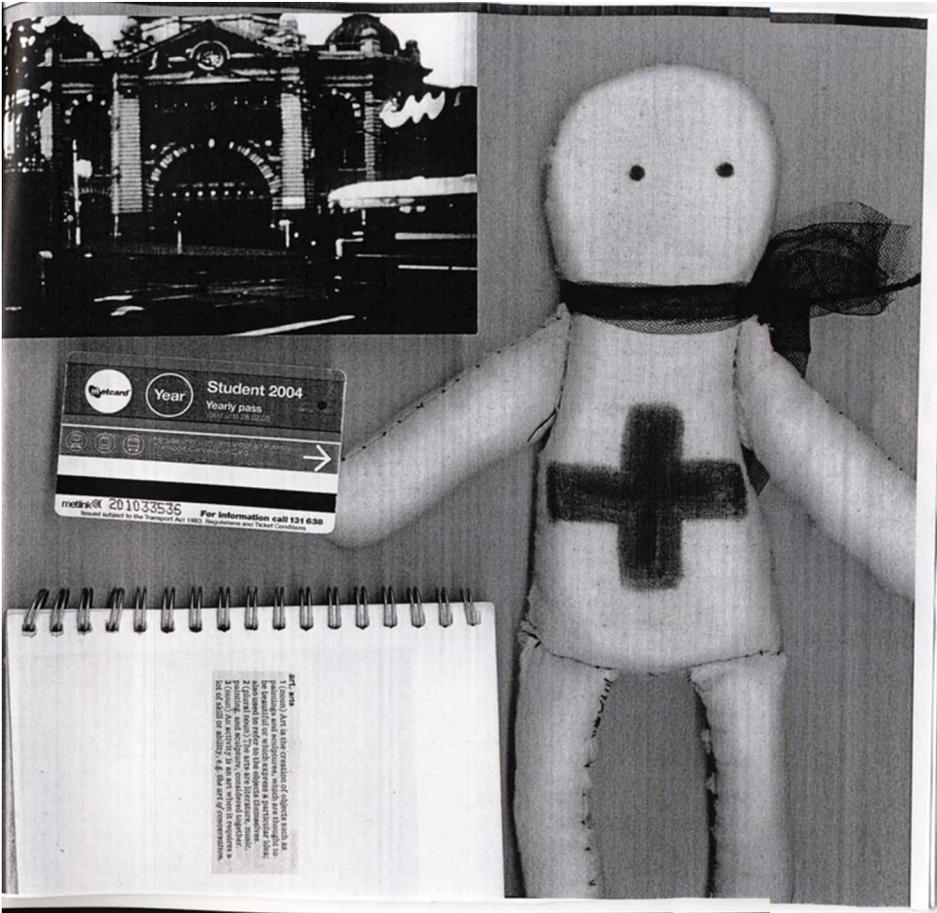


Figure 5. Excerpted from *can't live without . . .* Copyright © 2007 and reprinted by courtesy of the author. All rights reserved.

the email address, suziepunk4@hotmail.com) places importance on her ability to travel, and the capacity to record expressive acts in her notebook. What is particularly interesting about *can't live without . . .* for our purposes is that it is a zine without a master or original. The amorphous placement of the articles onto the scanning surface of the photocopier forms the temporary presentation of a collection which has no formal existence beyond the moment of being copied. The reproduction of the articles in high definition black and white (which is inevitably partly degraded in the reproduction here) testifies to their direct contact with the photocopier, as does the flattening of the doll, presenting qualities which are unique to the direct photocopying of objects. An impression of spontaneity in this zine is facilitated by the responsiveness

of the photocopier as medium: the possibility of instantaneous autographic documentation is grasped and celebrated as a unique characteristic of the photocopier as expressive and creative medium (see Schwartz 241).

In the application of the photocopier in zine culture, the original (the master copy of the zine) is not the primary document, if indeed it exists at all, as is the case with *can't live without* Rather, it is the practice of bringing together elements which find their ephemeral and temporary coherence as autobiographical text in the copies themselves that defines the use of the photocopier as expressive medium by zine-makers. The zine is a work of art of the age of mechanical reproduction, and is like the photograph, of which Walter Benjamin observes "to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense" (218). As a product of the photocopier, the zine is definitively a multiple which, when used for life narrative purposes, consciously raises fascinating questions for the reader through the manipulation of narrative, image, and materiality.

My use of the term "text-object" here has attempted to signal how the zine is a medium that explicitly engages the reader in an embodied experience of reading, which often takes the form of interventions into the legibility of the narrative. In thinking through how personal zines deploy photocopying technology along with specific modes of textuality, I hope to have indicated how the reading strategy of autographics can be used to unpack handmade autobiographical texts such as zines.

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