INTRODUCTION

Hanging by a Pen: A (Brief) Genealogy of Fanzines and Other Independent Self-Published Publications and Contemporary Challenges

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Le papier souffre tout [Paper can withstand everything] is a popular French saying that could not make more sense nowadays, when we think of the word as a form of resistance. In fact, not only the word by itself and on its own, but the word in relation to other artistic contents, such as music, theatre, or cinema. In the musical field, punk is perhaps the ultimate example of this pressing relation (Guerra, 2020a), since it leads us to an understanding of music as a resource for social resistance (Hebdige, 2018). In fact, movements like punk or the Riot Grrrl movements are a fundamental link to situate us about the importance of the word, namely the importance of fanzines as independent publications, especially by the fact that they position themselves as an anti-status quo disposition (Dunn & Farnsworth, 2012). The paths that are taken, the words and their meanings seem to be more and more, a fruit of the fluidity of contemporary society. However, with this same fluidity comes the ephemerality that, due to constant changes, has become the cornerstone of the virtualisation of the world. Paper can withstand everything and never rebels against the messenger. So, we can set the motto for this book: a reflection around the strength of the message conveyed by independent publications and the role they play within (sub)(post)-urban cultures. Very briefly, we can say that fanzines are the artistic productions that are most often associated with independent publications, because they tend to be produced and created at home, but they also obey self-distribution patterns, leaving aside large publishers or mainstream distribution vehicles. Thus, by referring in this book to independent publications, we want precisely to account for these logics of self-production and artisanal distribution/dissemination. These are ways that do not correspond to the logic of the market and that do not obey the established structures. We also want to bring to light that these independent publications assume themselves as forums of criticism (Bittencourt & Guerra, 2018). As in Umberto Eco's book and as mentioned in the excerpt above, publications of an independent nature talk about other publications, whether in a logic of opposition or exaltation. In fact, the film 'In the Name of the Rose' itself is a perfect example of the importance of the word, especially since the narrative of the text is built around the library.

Image 1 Puppies. Val Drayton and her brother Tony Drayton who was KYPP editor
Source: Tony Drayton.

There is little research that confers an understanding of the role of independent publications today, in fact niche, small-scale and, of course, independent publications tend to be ignored. They even disappear in the logic of consumer analysis (Masurier, 2012; McKay, 2006). However, the independent concept is somewhat ambiguous, and the only certainty it conveys, as Masurier (2012) puts it, is that it manages to capture the trend of commercialised contemporaneity in Western and Anglo-American contexts. Indeed, Leadbeater and Oakley (1999) place independent production under the umbrella of a thriving ecology. Within the range of the term independent, various manifestations fit, whether music, fashion, publications, cinema or television, which can be understood and analysed from micro-enterprises logic which, in turn, concentrate on themselves a wide range of tasks. Perhaps the main differentiating link between independent and mainstream has to do with communication and distribution channels, given that everything independent depends on small informal networks of proximity for the dissemination and maintenance of its practices. The aim is not to expand but to have creative control (Masurier, 2012: 386).

Given the creative control, we cannot fail to highlight the association between publications and the visibility of a scene; however, as Atton (2006) states, publications - and especially fanzines - should not be seen only as (sub)cultural products. In fact, we intend to affirm that independent publications, as well as the messages and creative processes inherent to them, aim at the creation of alternative spaces of expression, in opposition to the traditional mass media (Hebdige, 2018; Savage, 1991). At the same time, it is also about the need to create a community, a collective that shares the same interests and ideologies, originating social networks of sharing (Farias, 2011). According to Will Straw (1991), the cultural scenes may be seen as spaces of coexistence of a multiplicity of cultural practices, this because these same scenes transcend the physical spaces (Guerra & Figueredo, 2020).

Image 2. Ripped & Torn, vol. 12, 1979.
Source: Tony Drayton.

In the context of independent publications, it is also possible to verify a growing visibility and loyalty that is linked to a strong sense of belonging (Thompson, 2004), and if we initially said that paper can withstand everything, we want to affirm that - in paper or in the digital universe - there are forms of communication (Grimes & Wall, 2014) for those on the margins, in the sense that they tell the ordinary things of everyday life and invite the other to be part of it. At the same time, they transport us to a constantly evolving movement that is marked by several dynamics, as is visible in the chapters present in this book. Thus, independent publications live on the cusp of duality, whether between an economy of the visible or an economy that is peripheral and at the margins (Guerra & Figueredo, 2020). The independent publications, which, as we mentioned initially, aim to create forums for debate and criticism of the ills of society, may be analysed and understood as central points for the realisation of aesthetic experiences and the dissemination of marginal contents, whether in fashion, in the arts, in attitudes, in behaviour or in ways of being.

If we take as an example the 'explosion' of punk fanzines, as the epitome of independent publications, in the sphere of underground subcultures, we come to the conclusion that there is a need for alternative channels for the dissemination of information and knowledge, with free radio and television also being present here (Hein, 2006). Paper can hold everything, and everything fits on it, but not only on paper. In life, in culture, and in the various and distinct forms of expression too. It is this very form of expression that creates and consolidates a sense and a feeling of community, based on symbols of belonging (Guerra, 2015; Triggs, 2006; Force, 2005). This concept of community is rooted in the importance of the meaning of the message in everyday life, through its role as an anchor and matrix for representing the common sense of community experience (Bennett, 2004; Lewis, 1992; Frith, 1981). In this way, publications like fanzines, for example, have a prominent role in denouncing the ills of societies and the subsequent living in them. In a certain way, in the chapters that compose this book, we have these themes present. It is known that the fanzines have a historical connection to the feminist movements - hence their connection with the Riot Grrrl movements - but, more recently, other themes have emerged. We have more and more pressing the environmental and ecological question[1], but also social classes or issues related to ethnicity and racial identity[2].

A publication as matter and material is a symbolic representation. We are facing objects that are constructed in a voluntary way, in which the individuals involved have an active role in the creation, editing and distribution process. If we have previously spoken of the virtualisation of the world, we cannot leave aside what Atkinson

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[1] For example, fanzines such as !Mulibu! and X.cute deal with ecofeminism, namely the relationship between ecology
and feminism.
[2] On this topic, fanzines like Kindumba da A.N.A are decisive, because they take us to issues that tend to be neglected,
such as the importance of hair and aesthetics that are also targets of prejudice.

(2006) tells us about the democratisation of design through amateur DIY practices and about self-publishing. Whether we think of the specific case of fanzines, or focus on a wide range of independent publications, DIY and amateurism end up being almost inevitable characteristics and, of course, they meet the emphasis that is given to the creative process in detriment of the massification of contents, as already mentioned. In this way, it makes sense to frame and perspective independent publications within the collaborative model of Becker's art worlds (1984), as these are based on the materialization of tastes, affinities and several types of belonging, materializing themselves in artefacts that are the fruit of a relational framework of multiple concretizations.

Even the graphic component is of added importance, as much or more than the written word. In fact, in this book you will find significant examples of this point of view. In addition to paper, the image also holds everything and, even more importantly, tells us everything. The analogy that can be made between what is written and what is seen, according to the dominant aesthetics within the context of independent productions, are declared forms of communication, of verbalisation, of struggle, but also of affirmation and resistance (Guerra, 2019). These are personal ethics that occupy a central place (Duncombe, 1997).

Image 3. Cover of the Ibérico Fanzine (1990). Ed. Fred Somsen. N.º 3. Oeiras.

Source: Fred Somsen.

Image 3. Cover of the Ibérico Fanzine (1990). Ed. Fred Somsen.Image 4. Cover of the Lunatik Fanzine (1994). Ed. Luís Moreno and Ricardo Barros. N.º1. Porto.

Source: Luís Moreno and Ricardo Barros.

We may state that visual cultures, with everything they encompass, are the fruit of a visual mediation that crosses the identities that are built and the identities that are communicated (Meneses, 2003). In view of this context, in which graphics take a prominent place, the concept of graphic memory emerges. Well, this concept is nothing more than a set of collections of images that are accompanied by a description and by an analysis (Lena-Farias, 2017). Even more, the very concept of graphic memory intends to describe rescue processes of visual artefacts, mainly printed publications that tend to disappear with time, but that confer meaning to identities. Thinking in a more individualistic logic, I look at my bookcase, to my right, and I see on a shelf the book 'Amor de Perdição' [Doomed Love] by Camilo Castelo Branco, from 1978 and I automatically remember the first time I read it at school. I remember writing my name on its back cover so that nobody would take it away from me. Of the hundreds of books that I have and that fill my bookshelves, this is perhaps one of the most important and this is because it is a graphic memory. It represents my identity and its formation. Looking at the pages of that book makes me think of the tiny variations that my self could have undergone, but it also makes me realise the basis of being who I am. It is as in Umberto Eco's narrative, the book demonstrates much - if not everything - about human genesis. Its virtues and its poisons. Since we are dealing with independent publications that, in a way, presuppose a resistance to mainstream modes of communication, it further attests to their relevance as heritage and as graphic memory, since they represent the struggles of a current society and materialise a social, political and cultural history.

Elizabeth Eisenstein (1980) is one of the pioneering authors in print culture studies, having been one of the first to define this culture as a kind of written, oral, or graphic counterpoint. The term print culture itself accompanies different types of publications and productions and is not only concerned with the format but especially with the content. The emphasis that is placed also depends on the very context in which the productions are made, e.g. in Portugal, the focus lies on printing, as in the Spanish context. In other countries, the focus may be on distribution, creation, or content, as is the case in Brazil.

It is on these points that Priscila Lena-Farias (2017) refers us that the studies on these themes of memory, the visual and identities, despite dating back to the 20th century, have not been worked on in depth. In fact, there is to some extent a devaluation of independent publications, for example, as a form of heritage. Of memory. Even of identity. Graphic artefacts play a central role in everyday life, whether they are books, photographs, drawings, or paintings, among others. Again resorting to Umberto Eco, it is not only through words that we communicate, even because in a logic of first interaction with someone unknown to us, we tend to approach graphic artifacts that are close to us, in an attempt to establish interpersonal relationships. So, based on this idea, we cannot fail to establish a relationship with the notion of material and immaterial heritage.

As Paula Guerra (2020b) states, inherent in the definition of heritage is the idea of inheritance, so it is also important to understand - in today's societies - which heritage can be transmitted from generation to generation. Returning to the concept of graphic memory, we realise that sociology focuses on the social

processes that allow the appreciation of the material and symbolic value of objects. In fact, it is in this conception that we frame this book, as it raises new questions and dimensions for understanding what heritage is (or could be). Thinking about the case of independent publications and their connection to this concept of heritage, it seems pertinent to refer the contributions of Daniel Fabre (2013) about the 'heritage emotion', which can be reproduced around a building, a space or an object, giving rise to a common lived heritage. Now, it is precisely this issue of 'heritage emotion' that we see present in the independent publications presented by the authors in this book. In fact, as Nathalie Heinich (2017) states, heritage can be understood according to the universe of belonging, and this is where we have placed independent publications, which makes it necessary for us to broaden our horizons about what can be considered as heritage.

Image 5. CRU Fanzines.
Source: Esgar Acelerado.

By highlighting independent publications as very rich communicational supports that allow us to understand society at every moment, we also obtain a perspective of time and space, which is why the chapters presented in this book are very relevant. In Chapter 1, Catarina Figueiredo Cardoso and Isabel Baraona present us the 'Tipo.pt project: Preserving Portuguese Small Press'. This is a research project associated with an online archival database of artists' books and self-publications in Portugal. Its target audience are Portuguese artists, illustrators, or designers, and at the same time it intends to preserve the memory and protect the publications. The authors address the issue of the perennity of the printed versions of fanzines, highlighting the importance of creating ways to preserve such publications, given the consequences caused by the nature of independent publications in Portugal.

In Chapter 2 'Showing, Telling and Selling Out', Caelli Jo Brooker and Matt Sage analyse the street press of free distribution, as a publication format that is related to recognition and urban culture, in its diverse forms. Thus, the authors intend to establish a parallel between the independent productions based on DIY and do-it-yourself logics, as opposed to the commercial street press. To this end, the authors use a technique centred on autoethnography, aiming to explore the motivations, perspectives, contributions, and contradictions present in Australian independent street production.

Then, in Chapter 3 'The Marginal Porto: Contributions from Hell by A.Dasilva O. in the 80's', Paula Guerra presents us with a chapter on A.DaSilva O., while introducing us to the growing openness of the city of Porto, in Portugal, in the 1980s, to the cultural and aesthetic changes that took place as a consequence of (post)modernism. A.DaSilva O. arose from the need to resist and to seek a new world, whether through radio, fanzines, music or television. Starting from the struggle for the right to be different, as the author of the chapter refers to us, a set of authors and writers stand out, namely A.DaSilva O. in the sense that it assumed itself as the key element for the publication of projects of cultural domain, based on the theme of intervention. Thus, a city is portrayed through independent publications.

In Chapter 4 'Brazilian Provocations: Brazilian Counterculture through the Alternative Press – The Column Underground (1969-1971), Flor do Mal (1971) and Rolling Stone (1972-1973)', Patrícia Marcondes de Barros reflects on Brazilian counterculture from the aegis of the production, dissemination and reception of alternative press media, focusing on three demonstrative examples. Within the Brazilian context, the contents, behaviour, and the need to create alternative spaces for communication and expression are thus analysed, while at the same time binding ideological positions that consequently create a counterculture. Here counterculture takes on a different meaning since combined perspectives are presented under the study of the American underground. The main aim is to understand ideological struggles.

In Chapter 5 entitled 'Boring, Unconfortable and Mutated: Chili com Carne at the Nexus of the Contemporary Portuguese Independent Comics Scene' Pedro Moura presents another type of independent publication. He gives us a glimpse of the other side, that of the production centres of the USA, France, Belgium, and Japan, with comics as the motto. As an example, the text revolves around the independent Portuguese publisher Chili Com Carne, introducing it within a scene in which multiple elements converge, such as sales markets, social structures, and messages. Furthermore, a reflection is also made around the importance of aesthetics, ethics, and politics.

Still focusing on the Portuguese case, in Chapter 6 designated 'Literary Maga/zines: Poem-action and Togetherness', based on a sociology of culture, Rita Grácio addresses the contemporary forms of production and circulation of literary periodical publications. Using a methodology in which interviews are privileged, Rita aims to give us an account of the small-scale projects that exist in Portugal, as well as the ways in which they are put together by non-professional poetry lovers. The chapter thus ends up focusing on the project 'Nova Poética da Resistência' [New Poetics of Resistance].

In Chapter 7 entitled 'DIY Activism: The Dialogical Influence of Bakhtin in Poc Activist Zine Culture', S. Patrice Jones focuses on the analysis of 50 fanzines written by people of colour, thus assuming a qualitative methodological basis and, concretely introduces concepts such as heteroglossia, double voice and the concept of double consciousness, as a way to emphasize and validate the voices, the languages and the resistances that are carried out by independent publications, as is the case of fanzines. In this way, the main objective is to understand the ways of resisting to the marginalization present in society.

In Chapter 8, entitled 'From the Fanzines to the Internet: The Evolution of Communication Channels Throughout the History of the Spanish Ska Scene', Gonzalo Fernández Monte sets out considerations on the ska music scene, created in Jamaica in the late 1950s. Over time, this scene has proved to be a very strong channel of communication, in the sense that it relates to the cultural mainstream, while also tracing the evolution of ska in Spain through different periods of its history, looking at the link between the media and the diffusion of music.

Finally, in the last chapter, 'Embodied Authorship in Feminist and Queer Zines in the Iberian Peninsula', Laura López Casado focuses on the concept of authorship that has been addressed during the last decades. Thus, the author proposes an analysis on the authorship of feminist and queer fanzines, based on the DIY movement and the DIT. And ending our approach with our epitome, let us read that,

We are dwarfs... but dwarfs who stand on the shoulders of those Giants, and small though we are, we sometimes manage to see farther on the horizon than they. (Umberto Eco, in 'The Name of the Rose').

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INDEPENDENT DIY PUBLICATIONS

AND THE UNDERGROUND URBAN CULTURES

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