

♀ALLOPIAN ♀ALAFEL
אשת חי

EMPOWERpuff Grrrls

ISSUE № 6
FALL 2008

Girls Will Be Grrrls
Pop Culture and
Its Influence
on Young Girls

Crushing Ken since 2007



ULTRAVIOLET



Not Your
Typical
Mona Lisa

A Study of
Frida Kahlo's
Legacy

WINTA BLAKE



Riot Grrrl
Corner

SPECIAL ISSUE
ON POP CULTURE

FEATURING AN EXCLUSIVE
INTERVIEW WITH ALISSA OF
DEATH METAL BAND THE AGONIST

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The editor reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity or space. However, any changes made will be discussed with the author prior to publishing to preserve the message of the piece as well as the author's freedom of expression.

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Pop Goes the Zine

Hadass S. Ben-Ari



Popular fairy tales have mostly the same elements – a stunning beauty cursed by an evil witch until a handsome prince comes to her rescue. Popular superheroines in comic books share many of the same features – flowing hair, high heels and gigantic breasts.

Sure, it's great to have these incredibly toned women kick ass, but exaggerating their physical assets is quite generic, as a woman's body is something that is heavily exploited in pop culture and media. And sure, Disney's heroines have all affected us one way or another, but their passive nature, which causes them to fall under the spell of an evil witch or under the spell of Prince Charming, makes me wonder if girls don't deserve a more powerful role model.

This is why we feminist indie zinesters look to the culture of DIY for expression and entertainment. There is nothing better than getting your hands on a demotape put out by a band that refuses to abide by the rules of popular record labels, and keeps its music as raw and honest as it was

originally intended to be.

When you send an article to a popular newspaper, the editor will slice and dice it, butcher and shred it beyond recognition before publishing it. Your byline will still be on it, but the piece is clearly no longer yours. DIY zines will rarely edit anything, if only for size or grammatical purposes, and your article will keep the same explicit, bold message it was intended to convey. So DIY is a means one can



use to avoid being sold out.

However, pop culture is still a part of our lives one way or another. Whether our parents read us popular children's stories before bedtime, or if we watched popular movies or grew up with Sesame Street or the Muppets, or even if we played with Cabbage Patch dolls

or G.I Joes, popular culture affected us no matter how indie-vegan-feminist-anarchist-pothead-hippy-punk we may be today.

This issue features various elements of pop culture in all its forms: art, films, poetry, music, dolls, plus a special interview with Alissa White-Gluz, the lead vocalist of Canadian Death Metal band, The Agonist.

Enjoy!



Not Your Typical Mona Lisa

A Study of Frida Kahlo's Legacy

Merav Fima

Frida Kahlo (1907-1954, Mexican), the first female artist to sell a painting to the Louvre, excelled at her art despite her severe physical disability, breaching a field until then largely governed by men. Yet, until recently, her fame had been overshadowed by that of her husband, renowned Mexican muralist and political activist, Diego Rivera.

Kahlo's conflicted identity as a female artist of Jewish descent clearly preoccupied her, as demonstrated by her numerous self-portraits, making up about a third of her oeuvre. She once asserted, "I paint myself, because I am so often alone, because I am the subject I know best."

The persistent depiction of herself on canvas reveals her inner struggle to reconcile her feminine and artistic aspects, as well as her ceaseless questioning whether a female artist is a worthy subject for a portrait? For centuries women's bodies have been featured in major artworks, not as active, creative beings such as herself, but rather as passive objects of admiration by male voyeurs. By painting her

thoughts, fantasies and sensations, Kahlo challenged this prevalent notion, imbuing the female body with a certain depth.

A close examination of Kahlo's paintings clarifies her insecurities as a female artist. While women often appear in power positions, such as her nurse and Mother Earth, endowed with nurturing, creative properties, she herself is often illustrated clad in corsets. Even though they represent

Her trademark unibrow and unsmooth upper lip point to her desire to transcend the gender barrier and to establish herself as a recognized and respected artist.

the medical devices used to cure her injured back, they are curiously reminiscent of the corsets historically worn by women for aesthetic purposes. Such corsets restrain the body, restricting the woman's range of motion, in order to fulfill a fashionable ideal, usually

conceptualized by men for their own pleasure.

Despite her fondness for bright, colorful dresses patterned after traditional Mexican costumes, Kahlo often donned masculine suits. Her trademark unibrow and unsmooth upper lip, captured by her self-portraits, point to her desire to transcend the gender barrier and to establish herself as a recognized and respected artist. By adopting a persona that integrates both genders, she may



“Roots” by Frida Kahlo - One of her many self-portraits

have sought to universalize her artworks, defining herself primarily as an artist. Yet, she maintained her feminine instincts, grieving her inability to bear children in a series of paintings of fetuses in the womb.

Kahlo's fascinating character and artistic innovations have inspired numerous other artists to produce works based on her life and paintings. At least six films have been made, the best known of which is *Frida* (2002) starring Selma Hayek. Moreover, a dozen plays have been performed worldwide, as well as dance shows by three different companies in Europe and North America. Likewise, Italian artist, Marco Corona, has published a graphic novel entitled *Frida Kahlo: A Surreal Biography* (1998), while Nikolas Muray photographed her. Finally, fashion designers, includ-

ing Jean Paul Gaultier, have been intrigued by her eclectic style of dress, modeling their own collections on her favorite clothing items. However, Calvin Klein's underwear advertisement, *The Suicide of Frida Kahlo*, featuring her adorned head juxtaposed with a muscular male torso, reflects the instability of her gender, and perhaps a man's refusal to believe in a woman's creative powers.

Kahlo's greatness as an artist derives from her perseverance, despite the pain she suffered and the difficulties she encountered as a woman. Indeed, she seems to have transformed these obstacles into creative stimuli, explicitly engaging with them in her paintings. It is no surprise, then, that she continues to inspire others in their own artistic endeavors.

Life in Plastic

Hadass S. Ben-Ari

I grew up in the Barbie generation. Being my spoiled little self, I had a whole load of them, with all their accessories and a fully furnished, three-story doll house, with a plastic elevator operated by a string. What frustrated me most about the dolls was not their slender figure, as I was probably the human representation of their proportions, but their asexuality. Their breasts have no nipples, and neither they nor the only Ken doll I ever owned had any signs of genital organs.

Even as a little kid I used to dream of anatomically correct Barbies that would allow me to play around with their facial expression because my Barbie had moods, and her smile was too fake and static to represent those moods. I also wanted my

doll to have extra movable joints in the fingers and toes, and that her butt and breasts would be made of a softer material to make her seem more human. Finally, it appears they did in fact come out with such dolls but made for grown men who can't get laid, but I digress...

In this generation, Barbie is dead. Now they have Bratz. Leaving aside the obvious negative connotation of their name, these dolls are... dude, they're ALIENS! Their eyes are huge, they have no nose, their head

is enormous compared to the rest of their body and Mick Jagger is obviously jealous of the size of their lips. Talk about misrepresenting human proportions.



I thought if Barbie caused such a stir because of her looks, maybe the next plastic idol for little girls to come out would be a little less offensive.

Then again, I'm thinking huge head, small body, big eyes... doesn't that remind you of another figure? A cartoon character who came before

Barbie was even conceived... Betty Boop ring a bell?

As alienish as she may seem, that burlesque "ray of cartoon sunshine" was apparently based on a real-life, nice and plump, Vaudeville actress/singer named Helen Kane who does bare an uncanny resemblance to the cartoon. Emerging at an age when skeletal was not yet considered beautiful, Betty was also created under the influence of flapper culture revolutionary in the 1920s: "flapper...referred to a 'new breed'

of young women who wore short skirts, bobbed their hair, listened to the new Jazz music, and flaunted their disdain for what was then considered acceptable behavior. The flappers were seen as brash for wearing excessive makeup, drinking, treating sex in a casual manner, smoking, driving automobiles, and otherwise flouting conventional social and sexual norms."

Barbie is the American adaptation of the Bild-Lilli doll, originating in Germany, first appearing as a comic strip. The comic strip presents Lilli as "sassy and ambitious and had no reservations talking about sex. As she had her own job she earned her own money as a secretary but wasn't above hanging out with rich men."



"Saint Barbie" by Mark Ryden

Bratz were created as an alternative to Barbie, but keeping with the same "fashion doll" aspect of the toy, created for younger and



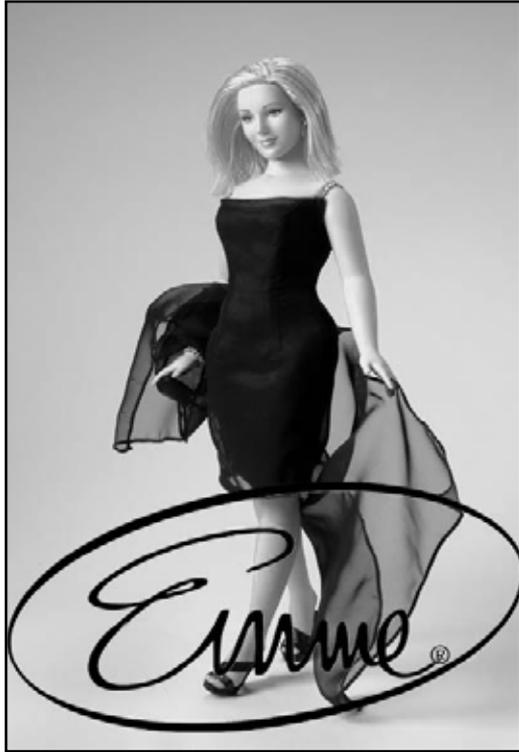
younger consumers.

So none of these characters are all that original. Still, overworked and underpaid factory workers in China mass produce these dolls and their accessories and their unnecessary merchandise, which is then sold to the masses in a vain attempt to quench their consumerist thirst, and then used by little girls who merely find the deformed dolls rather pretty, while some argue that the potential damage may be the girls' psychological internalization of the doll's sexual features.

Is all this really necessary for such unoriginal creations? I guess if it keeps your five year old busy, and she most probably won't be working the late shift at the corner of the street by tomorrow, it's not such a big deal.

But how about something different and refreshing, like say, the Emme doll? These dolls are based on the famous plus-size model Emme Aronson. Aronson is also the host of a fashion television show where she addresses issues such as body image and true beauty. In fact, creators state that some of the proceeds made by Emme doll sales will be donated to self-esteem and body image organizations. The dolls are voluptuous and stunning, proving that beauty does not depend on size.

However, considering the other end



The Emme doll based on plus-size model Emme Aronson

of the spectrum, providing little girls with chubby dolls can also have a negative impact on their health. That is, stuffing your face to be fat is not any better than starving yourself to be skinny.

So where's the balance?

There is none. Dolls will probably stay just that, and parents are still the leading role model for their five-year-old. Maybe parents should spend more time teaching their child the healthy way to look after your body instead of shopping around for another plastic humanoid their kid can look up to.

Sources used: Wikipedia (duh!)

HOMAGE TO WONDER WOMAN

“Wonder Woman is the personification of the spirit of truth: As a goddess, she carries a lasso that can extract the truth out of anyone. But that lasso is simply a conduit for her essence, which also includes purity and nobility... GHE [Greatest Heroine Ever] has been raised to be as competitive as she can be so she can defend her home. So not only can she kick butt, she can kick butt relentlessly.”

<http://joshmoe10.spaces.live.com/blog/>



Ain't Got No Vagina

How *Cunt* Changed My Life Forever

Book review by Yahm Reichart

When I was in high school and started talking about how amazing penises were and how I wished I had one, I, by chance, saw *The Vagina Monologues* by Eve Ensler, and was so shocked to find out how amazing my vagina was and is. I must have been radiating after the show for weeks. I went around embarrassing my friends, parents, and brothers by talking to anyone who would listen about how I had gotten over my penis envy and how Freud is such a ridiculous fucker.

And then I read *Cunt: A Declaration of Independence* (or *Cunt* for short) by Inga

Muscio on the advice of my feminist punk therapist, Kim, because I was becoming a budding, angry, punky feminist. I was already aware of what a ridiculous patriarchal society American society is (thanks sociology!), but this book took that to a whole new level. Inga wrote things that I didn't even know how to express, and in a way that made me smile, such as: "Women and silence have been historically mashed together like potatoes and cheese."

So what is *Cunt* all about? It has

three parts: the word, which discusses the Goddess-ly origins of the word "cunt" (which references the whole awe-inspiring world between our legs, not just the "functional" birth canal); the anatomical jewel, in which Inga discusses how our cunts are used to tear women apart from each other so that patriarchy can

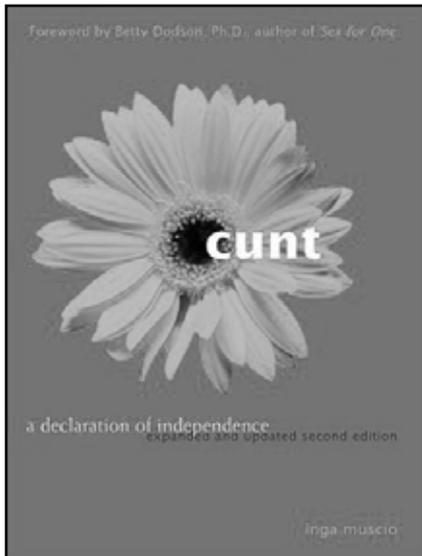
continue on its merry way (from tampons to rape to Aristotle to Whoredom); and reconciliation, which is about Inga's own patching up with her cunt and the cunts around her, and contains several womanifestos.

There is also an afterword that discusses the trans community and a fab *Cunt-Lovin'*

Guide that contains tons of resources for the *Cunt-Lovin' Goddess* (as in, appreciator of our cunt, not necessarily lesbian) in each of us.

Changes I've made in my life after reading *Cunt*:

* I use cloth pads instead of tampons because I don't like shoving anything up my vagina, especially disposable cotton things that have an option of smelling like flowers. My cunt should not smell like flowers. My period is also something so



fucking rad that my cloth pads are hand-made by women who have the talent and patience to sew beautiful cloth together so that I can enjoy my period. At night, I sleep with my very own bright orange blood towel. And my sheets never get messy anymore.

* I love getting my period, especially the first heavy flow day, because I feel more in-tune with my body on that first heavy flow day than any other day during the month. I stay home, sleep a lot, eat chocolate, cry over movies, whatever the flip my body feels like she needs from me.

* I do everything in my power to stop myself from cutting up women when I meet them for the first time. I don't size her up and go, "Oh yeah, well, her hair might look good, but when I had long hair I didn't have to dye it to get those beautiful blonde highlights." I stop those thoughts, unless the female in question irritates the fuck out of me, and I start cutting her up again (This has only truly happened once since I read *Cunt* a few years ago, and I feel rather ridiculous about it).

Cunt set down this idea in my head that I do not have to compromise my values, beliefs, goals, and who I am, for the sake of anyone or anything, without intentionally hurting anyone.

* I constantly seek a sisterhood because no matter how comfortable I feel with a group of men (I have four brothers), I never feel as comfortable as I do around a group of women who also share my affinity for talking about society, patriarchy, home remedies for yeast infections (garlic) and u.t.i.'s (parsely

tea), make-up, our love of food, and so on.

* I became less afraid of talking about being raped. I started being less afraid when I was seeing Kim, my feminist punk therapist, but this book took that lack of fear to a whole new level. I try to educate about rape and post-rape syndrome whenever I can.

* When my niece, Brooke, turned nine, I bought her a crap-load of books that had a strong, brave, and charismatic female hero as the main character, because she loves to read. I wouldn't have thought of buying her Pippi Longstockings if it wasn't for Inga.



* I became even bolder about em-



Lotus cloth pads

barrassing my friends, parents, and brothers by talking about my “feminist stuff,” especially if it involved cunts, and even more so if I had the opportunity to say “cunt.”

* I am very much aware that I, like everyone else who uses money, am a whore in a capitalist society, but I’m also not afraid of this whoredom and therefore don’t flip out when I’m in *minus* (overdraft) 2,000 shekels.

* More than anything else, I think *Cunt* set down this idea in my head that I do not have to compromise my values, beliefs, goals, and who I am, for the sake of anyone or anything, without intentionally hurting anyone. The difficulty of being my true self at all times (or attempting to) is gigantic, but that difficulty is not a factor for my “success” or “failure” in life. Society fucking sucks for women, but I will not let that stop me from: making Aliyah because I’m an idealistic, peace-wanting Zionist, and because I am disgusted with America; becoming a singer (who does not play guitar, even if that’s cooler or something); writing analytical essays about the meaning of a book; buying an

iPod; getting degrees in English and Hebrew Literature; cooking for my friends regardless of what my bank statement says; not wearing a bra; not buying “sanitary napkins” (as if I’m dirty or something); shopping for clothes and shoes because I admittedly enjoy being a consumer; being a cunt-loving goddess; being a lesbian who has a list of men she’d like to date but never would because penises just don’t do it for her anymore; loving aesthetically-pleasing (to my ear) punk/riot grrrrl/ska/any other kind of music; rockin’ out to the Spice Girls; constantly being in and out of tune with God (who has no sex/gender); riding my skateboard; being shy; loving Bollywood; being angry; being so fucking sad that I can’t even move; being so flippin’ happy that I giggle like an insane person on the bus and everyone turns around to see why the fuck I am making so much noise; and anything else I feel like doing, being,



Bollywood star Katrina Kaif

believing, seeing, etc. *Cunt* gave me basis from which to voice my truths. What could anyone else ask for from a book written by such an articulate and lovely cunt-lovin’ goddess?

HOMAGE TO TANK GIRL

“Tank Girl is not a fad! What makes her different is her irreverent spirit and its everlasting quality. Tank Girl embodies the ‘Fuck You! attitude’ with glaring perfection. She can deliver a resounding ‘Fuck You’ with savage aggression, mirthful charm or casual indifference. Either way, she’s ruthless. Now, don’t we all want to be like that sometimes?”

<http://www.tankgirl.info/tankgirl/index2.html>



Girls Will Be Grrrls

Pop Culture and Its Influence on Young Girls

Nicole Walker

“O MIGOD, that MILEY CYRUS she is like... so UGLY she went all GOTH what a freak!!”

This is an acidic comment spewed from the mouth of my 10-year old neighbor, as we stood in my driveway discussing the music she liked as I tried to force, er, I mean give her, a CD of a local female-fronted band called “The Joys” (www.the-joys.ca). She refused so I asked, “Well what kind of music DO you like? Do you like Miley Cyrus? Do you like Gwen Stefani?”

You see, I get all my pop-culture information, not from the TV, not from the radio, but from the few nine-year old girls I know. My best friend is 40 and I am 28. She has a daughter who is 10 and occasionally I will flip through her “pop” magazines all about boy-bands and girl pop-stars. I spend a lot of time with my 10-year old neighbor - she’s a good kid. And I am slowly but surely chiseling away at her pop-culture knowledge and inserting empowerment, compassion and feminism. Quite a good way to spend a Saturday afternoon, don’cha think?

I spend a lot of time with my 10-year old neighbor. I am slowly but surely chiseling away at her pop-culture knowledge and inserting empowerment, compassion and feminism.

Women in pop culture - in this article I am talking about major label musicians/actors. The Miley Cyruses, Jessica Simpsons, and anyone who graces the covers of the mainstream magazines. The gossip generators, fashion moguls, and TV-interviewees of the current time. The ones whose names are on the tip of every young girl’s tongue. The ones who schill

fashion accessories and clothing at your local Wal-Mart. These women (although some are still in their teens, of course) affect the lives of girls in a myriad of ways - their opinions are weaved into the culture because their stories are published and broadcast into the lives of our

girls daily. We live in a celebrity-obsessed society and these images and ideas are absorbed - but the question is: how does it affect us as women? What do these pop culture divas teach us?

I think you could divide the pop-culture women into two categories. The empowering, educating women who use their fame to enhance the lives of their fans, and the ‘fluff’ girls who only smile and nod and do what they’re told. It’s important that we take the time to help girls recognize and separate the ‘fluff’ from



Miley Cyrus

the 'good stuff'.

So when my neighbor decided to spit her acidic opinion on me about Miley Cyrus - (which coincidentally is quite ironic, considering who she said it to - a pierced, angry, fashion misfit who only listens to said "goth" [heavy metal] music and dresses mostly in camo, black, and skulls!) I couldn't help but question her judgmental attitude and caustic insults. I asked her questions such as: "Why do you judge her based solely on her image - when I was asking you about her MUSIC?" "Don't you think she is entitled to dress/look however she wants, as long as her music is fun to listen to?" "Would you like it if you got a new hairstyle and someone judged you by it before even knowing you?"

To which, of course, as a 10-year-old faced with such 'adult' questions - she promptly wrinkled up her nose and looked at me, rolled her eyes back and sighed. Then she made an excuse and said she suddenly had to go home. Well, at least I tried! I planted one tiny seed in

her brain to think about which side of the fence she's going to place the women in pop culture. What characteristics does she look for in a pop culture idol? How does she feel about the women she reads about - can she separate the 'fluff' from the 'good stuff'? And will she think twice before she chooses her next CD - or her next insult? I am optimistic my seed will grow.

Let's hope next time I offer her a CD she'll be more hopeful and adaptive to learning more about the women in the band than just what color their hair is or whether or not they are 'goth'. As an update, I've given her a No Doubt mix CD and told her all about Gwen Stefani and how she's a great role model because she's extremely talented, driven and has founded her own businesses and is doing very well for herself. She agreed, yes, Gwen Stefani is worthy of respect. And off she ran, up to her room to listen to the CD on her own. We'll work slowly towards the Ani DiFranco. Maybe when she turns 11. :)



Ani DiFranco

Sisters

Sara Eisen

Don't look now, Barbie:
Ken is in the penthouse with Skipper.
She's telling jokes
on the vinyl flowered couch.

With her he forgets that he's got
plastic hair, and nothing
between his legs.
Little sister, after all, is missing
her own anatomy:
A shadow of you, Barbie,
Skipper stands flat.

So when she laughs
at Ken's stiff jokes
on the pink patio;
When she tilts her head up
to look at him and tickles him under
his Hawaiian shirt,
and he calls her 'Squirt':

She tells herself it is no crime.
Barbie, after all, is a goddess and has been



sold with Ken forever.
Little Sis says: Who am I?

Sweetie pie: You are the Barbie you think
you hate.

Unworthy? Only of trust.
(Which is bust.)

That's why Barbie
is always on tiptoes
around neutered Ken
(before he compares her to you again.)

It's why she smiles a lot,
even as busy little girls
chop off her hair
(and stare at There).

But she'd give up
a cup
(or two)
for immunity, impunity,
Skipper:
Like you.

DAUGHTER OF THE BARRICADES

Roy Runds

Rosa Luxemburg was one of the greatest woman revolutionaries in history and a leading Marxist theoretician. The co-founder of a revolutionary band called the Spartacists, she was a fearless crusader who passionately opposed war, wanton bloodshed, all forms of injustice, and the heartless exploitation and oppression of human beings everywhere. Born into a Jewish family in Russian Poland in 1871, Rosa made her living as a journalist. In 1918, at the end of World War I, she was imprisoned and murdered by a contingent of the conservative military forces in Berlin.



Rosa Luxemburg -
“Red Rosa” -
fiery lioness of Judah,
searing tongue, scorching intellect
torching serpents;
brutally extinguished,
your flame will flare forever,
your brand of liberty
lighting the beacon to the bowed and burdened.

Brothers of the world,
unite to smash your chains!
Seize the reins!
Do not be borne by chariots of war
spilling your brothers’ blood.
Workers of the world,
rise as Spartacus did against the slave masters of Rome!
Share your treasures, brothers.
Shed no more brothers’ blood.
Though the horsemen of hate hound our footfalls,
on winged steeds we will soar to Paradise!

Sympathy for Cinderella's Step-Mom

Leah Moses

You know, I've always kind of felt for
Cinderella's step-mom.
I mean, being evil isn't easy,
but being good
is impossible.

You tell me how to:

Treat them like they're your own
but always remember you're not their
mother



Stand Firm,
assert your authority
but be their friend

Butt out,
let their "parent" decide
while you run the house.

Life is no fairy tale.

JUNO

Leah Moses

And they wonder why I start wars.

It gets to me after a while.
Day after day, alter after alter;
Hearing women complain about their husbands.

I mean, the abusive ones are one thing,
the out and out type.
You can write them off as crazy.
There may be more of them than I'm comfortable with, but, after all
it's sickness...

It's the day-to-day stuff,
the stuff that almost every woman brings that sets me off.
The little insults, criticism
Lack of sympathy,
Absence of Love.
Forget about helping with the dishes
and bedtime.

I mean, what is it with these men?

Don't they see how difficult it is to be the woman in a family?
Do they think it's fun for everyone else to come first?

Then I've got to go home to my own husband.
What a jerk.
Doesn't spend any time with me...
and when he finally shows up,
he's just nasty.



I know, I know, I shouldn't take it out on those poor, defenseless girls he goes around with.
But hey, I might be a goddess, but I'm not G-d.

I get so angry...
can't control myself anymore.
It has to come out somehow...

But Zeus doesn't like it when I'm angry.

I'm afraid if I take it out on him,
he'll go away forever.

Cunterrific!

Hadass S. Ben-Ari

A vagina is truly a work of art. In fact, this is probably why a small underground group of people began creating art using the female genitalia as their main subject, and named it Cunt Art.

It was only during that Cunt Art exhibit in Tel Aviv that I actually found out there was such a movement called Cunt Art, which actually began in the 70s.

Yes, it's literally various depictions of vaginas in various mediums and different contexts.

The exhibit I went to was in this small intimate bar called Ashmoret, on Rotchild street, Tel Aviv.

The usual summer weather of Tel Aviv set the atmosphere quite well for a night of looking at vaginas - hot and moist.

Anyway, there were some beautiful paintings and sculptures, photographs and slideshows of various collages depicting vaginas or naked women.

Along with that, they had live presentations, women talking about the history of Cunt Art and what it represents - power, beauty, depicting the vagina not for pornographic means but as something beautiful

and strong that should be respected, celebrated, adored, etc. - and also some very moving poetry readings.

I also got a couple of booklets in Hebrew about it. One is a collection of interviews with women talking about their experiences with their body, their sexuality and their vagina (kind of like *The Vagina Monologues*).

The usual summer weather of Tel Aviv set the atmosphere quite well for a night of looking at vaginas - hot and moist

The second is about body hair - an issue I personally struggle with, and wish I had the courage to ignore really.

There were clearly many women there, many lesbians, and a surprisingly high number of men, one of which was my

cousin! I love seeing a nice turnout of men (especially straight men) at a feminist event. I think something like that can only happen in Tel Aviv because it's much more open and liberal than Jerusalem, for example.

Jerusalem... well for one, Jerusalem would probably not have such an event to begin with. I would have LOVED to see a presentation of *The Vagina Monologues* or some feminist exhibit or anything related to the female body in the Holy City. But God forbid the orthodox com-

munity caught anyone depicting the impure part of the woman to be displayed in the public forum. This is immodest! It should be hidden because it is used for immodest purposes like intercourse and menstruation.

Immodest purposes, my ass. The only immodest thing about it would be if these closed-minded men were to look at these paintings, run home and jerk off, clearly not understanding that these paintings are not meant to be pornographic but represent something very important and crucial in our twisted society.

Vaginas, however, are still taboo. It is considered a dark place, moist, hairy, smelly, scary and sometimes even mysterious for those who haven't yet managed to find the clitoris.

Of course, there are those (men) who see the vagina as the complete opposite of that. My cousin is one of those people and we've had a very long and interesting discussion about the event afterwards.

Another guy is my ex. When we were together, he all but worshipped my cunt. I won't go into details, but it was unbelievable.

Back to the immodesty claim - what about the power of the vagina to bring life into this world? Would the orthodox community also consider that impure? These people have like 12, 13, 14 kids in their

family, they clearly worship their wife's vagina in one form or manner, because these men couldn't begin to conceive (forgive the pun) the agonizing pain of childbirth.

Cunt Art deals with all issues pertaining to the female body in general and the cunt in particular. There were depictions of birth, rape, masturbation (which made up most of the paintings), and they were all different but significant in their own way. I tried researching the history of Cunt Art and found very random and very vague articles. So I'm happy that the organizers of this event managed to pull off this event and have a pretty big turnout as well, and have me among the crowd :-D



My Cunt Art piece:
A Female Potato



TaDa!

Mindy Aber Barad

The microphone stands before me

TaDa!

It whispers

Then someone turns it on

And it turns on my voice

And TaDa!

I cannot stop.

I welcome,

Give directions -

I whisper and I am heard.

I catch everyone's attention

In my fist

By the microphone

And hold it fast

Within my grip.

And finally

A voice inside

Begins to make tiny demands

Enough!

It shouts

And pulls me off the stage

Like a flopped vaudeville act

But not before I get

A thunderous applause.

McWorld

Hadass S. Ben-Ari

Were would pop culture be without consumerism? I mean, a big part of pop culture is selling out. And in order to sell something you must advertise and urge people to buy and consume...

So yes, a consumerist capitalist society sucks balls, and we can all agree on that, especially now as the economy turns to shit and we see the capitalist system blowing up in greedy people's faces.

The most ridiculous part about this is that people (including us) are sold by advertising gimmicks that make no sense.

Like, why do people stick a cartoon of a happy chicken giving a thumb's up on a package of frozen chicken breast? As if the chicken is really happy you're eating members of its family. As if the chicken is saying, "I don't twitch much after you chop my head off. I'll smile at you from chicken heaven as you tear away at my tender meat. Enjoy!"

Or like why do commercials for pads and tampons show girls running on the beach, laughing, having fun, dancing, camping, rock climbing, making out with their boy-friends...?

For fuck's sake, when I have my period, I'd be using those same tampons they advertise and I'd still

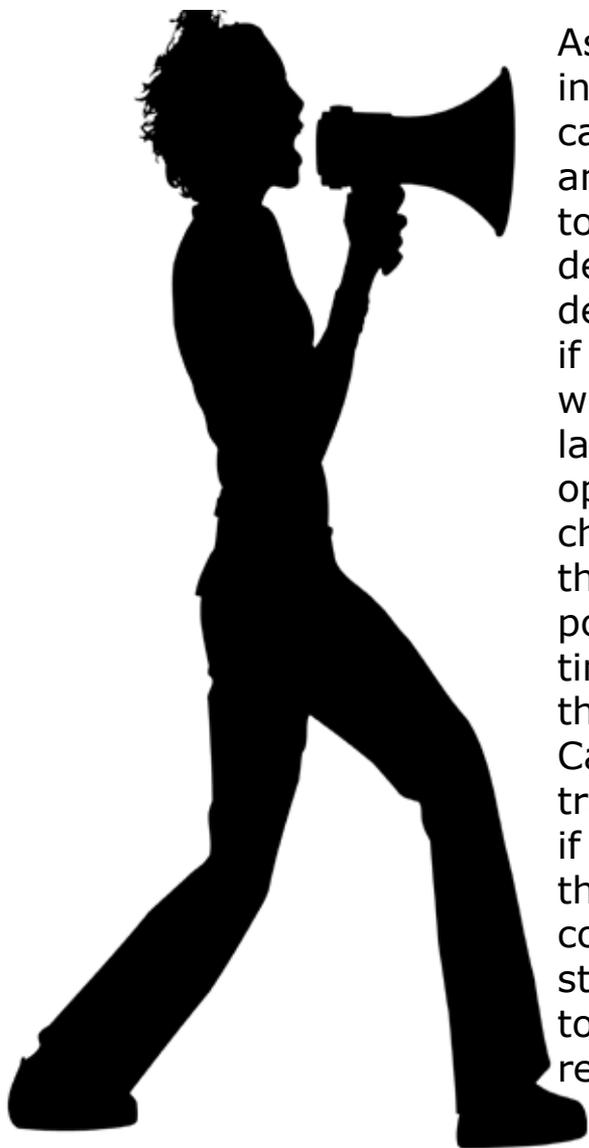
be lying on my bed, with my face buried in my pillow, praying to God to make me disappear, hoping that my pain will disappear along with me. The last thing I wanna do when I have my period is rock climbing. And who the fuck goes out camping when they have their period? No toilet, you'd be out in the wilderness, hiding behind a tree, hoping that this huge tropical cockroach won't fly up your ass as you change your pad.



And who is the idiot that came up with spontaneous song and dance scenes in the street? That never happened in reality, and it never will. It will definitely never happen because somebody opened a coke can or tried a new shampoo. Yeah, sure. Complete and utter strangers will sing and dance for you because you've finally decided to ingest this poison which will slowly eat away at your inner organs if you drink enough of it every day.

It's fucking nonsense, dude. Advertisers think their audience is made up of absolute dim-wits. Advertisements (which would then be called infomercials) should put a bigger emphasis on why you **SHOULDN'T** smoke this or drink this or take this kind of pill or go out camping while having your period. Show the reality of it, let people make their own choices and deal with the consequences.

Your Opinion!



As mentioned in the intro, an indie band can remain as raw and honest as it wants to be on its various demotapes and underground gigs. But if such a band signs with a popular record label, how will your opinion of that band change, if at all? If the band becomes popular, does it ultimately mean that the band sold out? Can a band ever stay true to their sound if they emerge from the underground and conquer the mainstream? Is it possible to be popular and still remain raw?

**Send your comments to:
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Hadass S. Ben-Ari

The first time I met Alissa White-Gluz, the lead vocalist of The Agonist, was in May 2008, backstage with Angela Gossow (you should already know who that is by now). As I was still basking in the afterglow of having headbanged for a straight two hours in my first real metal concert featuring Arch Enemy, I didn't grasp just how cool Alissa is until the recent interview I conducted with her.

Her band, The Agonist, is a metal band from Montreal, Canada, and they have just released their first album *Once Only Imagined*.

While juggling between gut-wrenching growls and beautiful clean vocals, Alissa also invests her time in social activism including animal rights, feminism, peace, health issues and spreading awareness on a wide array of causes.

In the interview that follows, Alissa discusses these issues more in depth, and will surely provide insight into why she and her band are featured in this issue's Riot Grrrl Corner.



1. What inspired you to become a metal vocalist?

I just sort of fell into the position when my friends' band needed a singer. But I loooove metal.

2. Your lyrics are very politically oriented. What issues affect you the most and how do you think music can help in promoting change?

Music affects a lot of people on a personal level. I think it is a very powerful emotive tool, so I like to portray the emotions I feel towards social issues through my music so that others may hear it and feel from it as well. I just think people should stand up for what they believe in, as long as it's something positive. Animal rights are particularly important to me, because I feel like it is such a privilege to share this planet with so many amazing species, and we should really be thankful for them instead of destroying them.

3. The "Song for Africa" initiative incorporates a lot of social activism (the organic t-shirts, promoting peace in Israel, fighting AIDS in Africa, etc). Tell us a little more about it and about how you got involved in it.

Song for Africa is a young Canadian company devoted to bettering the lives of African children especially through the provision of scholarships, clinics, etc. I actually was introduced to them through my mom, who is also very socially aware, since she worked with one of the founders of the company. We decided to raise money for a new clinic to be built in Masai-Mara in Kenya, and we were also making new t-shirts. We teamed up with No Sweat Apparel and decided that if someone wants to buy a t-shirt, they may as well be able to do several good deeds too! So we printed our [band] shirts on sweat-shop free, organic cotton t-shirts printed in a factory in Bethlehem supported by Palestine and Israel alike, and donate almost all the profit to Song for Africa. So by supporting The Agonist and buying a t-shirt, a fan is also promoting

positive change in several countries around the world.

4. Being a woman in a male-dominated music scene, were there any challenges you had to overcome, and how?

I have overcome many challenges so far, and there are many more to come I'm sure. People stereotype and disregard females in male-dominated industries quite often, attributing any success to her looks, etc. It is hard to get people to realize that we are not a "female-fronted metal band"; we are plain and simple, a metal band. I feel very alone on tour, and I have developed very thick skin. Having Angela Gossow (Arch Enemy) as emotional support along the way really helped me out.

"It is hard to get people to realize that we are not a 'female-fronted metal band'; we are plain and simple, a metal band."

- Alissa White-Gluz



5. What is your stance on feminism? Have you, or are you planning on taking part in any feminist project or fighting sexism and violence against women?

I have a banner for Metal for RAINN (the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network) on our Myspace page, and have written a couple songs on the subject since domestic violence and sexual assault is unfortunately something close to me. I gave some resources on the topic in our album as well. I would hope that just by being a thought-oriented young woman in a commonly male and closed-minded/indifferent scene, I represent how women can and will do whatever they want on their own terms, no matter the challenge.

6. What is your view on popular female pop artists? Do they present a positive or negative image as role models, and how so? (Names can be withheld)

I think that some artists do represent a side of femininity that is often overlooked; the “real”, down-to-earth side. But, most pop artists are horrible examples for young women, i.e. The Pussycat Dolls or Girlicious. I know you said

names can be withheld but those groups disgust me. Their lyrics are specifically targeted at pre-teen females and their videos should be 18+. There is nothing wrong with a woman feeling powerful through her beauty and sexuality. There is something wrong with persuading young girls into thinking they need to sexualize themselves in order to be happy. I work with children in elementary schools when we are not on tour, I know this is happening, I see it with my own eyes. I have heard

seven-year old boys say “She’s hot, I would fuck her” and I have seen six-year old girls wanting to dress in overtly sexual clothing. These artists are targeting a young, impressionable age group for maximum financial profit, with no regard for the effect it may have on their psyche. This really bothers me because we are becoming so desensitized that the shock-factor and sex-selling increases in intensity with each generation. Childhood is dead.

“There is nothing wrong with a woman feeling powerful through her beauty and sexuality. There is something wrong with persuading young girls into thinking they need to sexualize themselves in order to be happy.”

- Alissa White-Gluz

7. Who were your role models as a child? Were there any actresses, female cartoon characters or comic book superheroines you looked up to? How did pop culture help shape you as a singer and as an activist?

My mom was and is my biggest role-model. She raised me to become who I am and I love her to pieces! I really liked Jem and the Holograms a LOT (Jem was a socially conscious singer as well), Gwen Stefani, and the hopeless romantic in me adores Disney princesses.

8. What advice would you give other women/girls who strive to become metal vocalists?

Believe in yourself. There will be times when no one else believes in you, so make sure you don't abandon hope and join in on that negative attitude. If you want something, go get it! Women are powerful! We bear children, create life! We make men melt! We make the world go round! Hell hath no fury like a woman's scorn - we know how to be metal now don't we?

9. Any final words you want to add...

Thanks for the great interview! And I hope everyone checks out our new album because we have been pouring our hearts, souls, brains and bodies into it for the past year!

For more on The Agonist go to:

www.myspace.com/theagonist

www.theagonist.net

This issue's featured lyrics:

BUSINESS SUITS AND COMBAT BOOTS

by The Agonist

Album: Once Only Imagined



Does history guide you, or do you set out to change it?

Breached not broken...

Fuck your skinned-alive designer wear
Fashion shades and salon hair
Heels to help where nature failed
Artificial teeth and nails
The wasp's nest expands

So clap your hands! It's her!

The one black woman whose success you don't credit to Affirmative Action

The way of the future is corporate sponsors raising your kids

Maternal love is nothing compared to what \$7 gives

Put in, suck out plastic body parts

It's the ever-growing industry of cosmetic arts!

Bombarded with the idealized shots, dysmorphic, self-destructive plots

Physical flaws are a mental blank

So pay your surgeons

It's your parents you should thank

These eyes are blind

to several hundred left behind
(Lest we forget again)

But the border is breached but not broken
Who tries to find the several hundred left behind,
When the border is breached but not broken?

Co-existing in a twisted society

Where youth is a crime and wasteful sweat-shops expenditures are how luxury is defined

Now the KKK has found a new masquerade
Fuck your self-proclaimed supremacy
You hide your face and your shame!

Identify right and wrong when all fact is merely opinion

You cannot know the sweetness of victory without first dwelling in the agony of defeat

We forgot again.

LIKE WHAT YOU READ
BUT JUST NEED MORE!?!



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