

## Article

# Thina Curtis Amid Creative Disorders: Fanzines, Punk, Improvisation, and Critical Pedagogy

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**Abstract:** Thina Curtis, pedagogue and creator of fanzines in Brazil, has built a trajectory marked by resistance and the expression of a counter-hegemonic ethos that permeates all her production. From an early age, Thina became involved with punk culture, where she found in fanzines a means to express and amplify marginalised voices, challenging sexism, discrimination, and inequalities. Her work and performance stand out for a visceral opposition to fascism and intolerance, while seeking to build a transformative and inclusive pedagogy. Fanzines, in Thina's practice, are a means of critical and anti-neoliberal pedagogy that not only questions the traditional educational system but also promotes participatory education. This approach places Thina and other social agents—women, youth, prisoners, and disadvantaged communities—as co-creators of knowledge, breaking with the idea of one-way teaching. Through a qualitative and biographical methodology, centred on the life trajectory of Thina Curtis, we examine fanzines as adaptable pedagogical tools that challenge curricular rigidity and encourage critical and participatory training, essential for the decolonisation of knowledge and for social transformation.

**Keywords:** punk pedagogy; fanzines; resistance; artistic education; improvisation

## 1. Introduction: Fighting Education with (Punk) Education

Thina Curtis was born and raised in the ABC Paulista region in Brazil, an area known for its history of cultural and political resistance and recognised as the birthplace of the Brazilian punk movement. This city was composed of industrial cities such as Santo André and São Bernardo do Campo; thus, it was a stage for significant labour and countercultural movements. This heterogeneous and dynamic environment deeply influenced Curtis's artistic production, exposing her early on to grassroots cultural manifestations and collective resistance ideologies and activities. Furthermore, her living experiences broadened her understanding of social inequalities, profoundly shaping her critical outlook and the DIY (do-it-yourself) aesthetic of her fanzines. This connection to peripheral spaces is a recurring theme in her artistic and pedagogical practices, which consistently engage with issues of gender, marginalisation, and cultural resistance.

The intersection between fanzines, the punk movement, and critical pedagogy offers a unique opportunity to rethink contemporary educational practices. Each element challenges norms, questions hierarchies, and promotes alternative forms of expression and learning (Guerra and Quintela 2020; Watson and Bennett 2022). Fanzines, which have their roots in punk and independent and accessible modes of production, function as micro-media of cultural resistance and empowerment, allowing marginalised voices to manifest themselves directly and autonomously (Guerra 2023; Verbuč 2024). The punk



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ethos is characterised by do-it-yourself (DIY) and the rejection of traditional power structures, offering a model of educational practice that values the agency of the individual and informal learning—far from the hierarchical forms and content of traditional education.

Improvisation<sup>1</sup>, especially in the arts, complements these values by emphasising spontaneity, collaboration, and experimentation (Schwartz and Robertson 2017; Smith 2017). This chapter examines elements of the daily praxis of the Brazilian fanzine artist Thina Curtis<sup>2</sup> and her transatlantic connections and relationships with other fanzines and pedagogues around the world. By choosing Thina as an object of study, we value an ethos and a praxis that, when applied to teaching, break with rigid planning and the mechanical reproduction of knowledge (Freire 1995), offering a fluid and adaptable approach to the needs of the social agents who produce or co-create zines. We are at the heart of critical pedagogy, as foreshadowed by Paulo Freire and others (Santos and Guerra 2017).

Thina Curtis's (2011, 2013) work with fanzines proposes an education focused on social transformation, with students encouraged to question the structures of oppression and act politically (Verschuur and Destremau 2012). By connecting these elements, we explored how punk fanzines, improvisation, and the principles of critical pedagogy can be combined to create a disruptive and emancipatory educational model. By challenging the traditional conventions of formal education, these practices pave the way for a pedagogy that values creativity, resistance, and social transformation, promoting a critical, participatory education that relates to the social realities of social agents (Duncombe and Lambert 2021; Bishop 2012; Bell 2017). In presenting the work of Thina Curtis, this article provides a critical and reflective view of fanzines as pedagogical materials, ecohumanists, and tools of critical spatial pedagogy (Ball and Lai 2006), based on the empirical analysis of a biographical interview (Harwood and Garry 2003) and an analysis of some of her fanzines.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Praise for an Agonistic Democracy

What can we understand as critical pedagogy and how can its integration with punk principles foster the autonomy and capacity of individuals, reconfiguring power dynamics in their social realities? In the dehumanising process we are experiencing—with global uncertainty, political changes reviving fear of the other, the rise of the far right, and the collapsing value of science and knowledge—pedagogical practices that (re)think social and educational inequalities are essential for understanding and promoting cultural resistance. At this point, critical pedagogy based on the works of theorists such as Freire (2005) and Giroux (2003) challenges power structures and promotes critical awareness, empowering people to question and transform their realities. This approach recognises education not only as a means of transmitting knowledge, but as an emancipatory process that forms critical and active subjects. Education becomes a space of cultural resistance, where alternative pedagogical practices manifest themselves as forms of contestation to dominant norms and the creation of new possibilities of existence and social action (Verschuur and Destremau 2012; Kallio 2024).

Paulo Freire (2005) introduced the concept of banking education as a critique of the traditional teaching model, where knowledge is simply 'deposited' in students in the same way that money is deposited in a bank. Students are considered passive recipients who store and repeat information without any interaction or critical questioning. The teacher, who is the holder of knowledge, transfers information unilaterally, without involving students in a true dialogue or in the collaborative construction of knowledge. Freire argues that this approach dehumanises students by treating them as mere repositories of information, suppressing their creativity, critical capacity, and sense of agency. He points out that banking education serves the interests of oppressors by keeping students in a state of passive conformity, without encouraging them to question or transform social reality.

This form of teaching perpetuates oppression and prevents the development of a deep understanding of the world and its social and political dynamics.

In contrast to banking education, Freire proposes a critical pedagogy that emphasises the active participation of students in the educational process. Freire's critical pedagogy involves dialogical education, where teachers and students engage in an authentic and collaborative dialogue, building knowledge in a mutual and respectful way. This approach promotes a critical understanding of social realities, empowering students to question and transform the world around them. For Freire, education should be a liberating practice, in which learning leads to action and social transformation. The fundamental principles of critical pedagogy include the horizontal relationship between students and teachers, in which both teach and learn from each other. This involves an expansion of the perception of reality, allowing students to see the world in new ways and be motivated to act in it; empowerment and awareness, enabling students to understand and act on the information they receive; and transformation, where education causes significant changes in the participants' worldviews. Education is therefore a political act, influenced by power structures that determine the content and form of teaching (Guerra 2023).

Despite the profoundly hopeful nature of Paulo Freire's perspective, education has not shown much improvement, especially considering the studies of Apple (2013, 2016), presenting four interconnected movements that sustain the neoliberal educational model: (1) neoliberalism pushes to establish a connection between education and business models, guiding schools to adopt principles of efficiency, competitiveness, and return on investment; (2) neoconservatism imposes standardised narratives in schools, a framework that Curtis's work disrupts through fanzines and grassroots educational practices; (3) the new managerialism is guided by a culture of evaluation, imposing highly restricted evaluation and accountability models, focusing on standardised metrics to measure the performance of students and schools; and (4) the religious and populist movements adopt and proclaim ultra-conservative positions in the education system, often seeking to integrate religious beliefs and values into school policies and curricula. This school model has been applied extensively in the Western context.

In contrast, Giroux's (2003) public pedagogy represents a set of moral and political meanings that aim to achieve a radical, participatory, and inclusive democracy. This democracy can only be achieved through progressive social and political changes, which challenge traditional power structures and promote the active participation of citizens in democratic processes. Giroux (2017) contrasts this critical pedagogy with the 'corporate public pedagogy' of neoliberalism, the dominant ideology of the twenty-first century.

Corporate public pedagogy refers to how neoliberal educational practices and discourses shape educational and cultural institutions to serve corporate and market interests. This model, according to Giroux, reduces education to a commodity, focused on preparing individuals for the job market to the detriment of a critical and civic education. Returning to Freire, critical public pedagogy promotes education as a space for the construction of critical consciousness and social transformation, seeking to involve students in a process of questioning and deconstructing hegemonic narratives, stimulating reflection on the relations of power and injustice in society. This emphasises the importance of active participation in the public sphere, encouraging students to become agents of social and political change (Figure 1).

This pedagogical practice is aligned with punk, which has historically symbolised resistance to the dominant culture and oppressive social norms. In a society that is shattering at both the social and personal levels, one can share a culture of opposition that can either exist only at the level of discourse or be actualised (2023, 2024a). In the educational context, punk encourages the creation of alternative learning spaces that function

outside the institutional educational discourse and have a counter-hegemonic potential (Santos and Guerra 2017; Smith 2017). Such spaces allow the articulation of new forms of expression and community organisation, promoting what Chantal Mouffe (2000) calls ‘agonistic democracy’, recognising that dissent and conflict are engines of a more inclusive and dynamic society. Punk pedagogy illustrates how educational practices can be informed by an ethic of cultural resistance, using the ethos of the punk movement to question and subvert established hierarchies and norms, offering a model of education that is participatory, critical, and rooted in learners’ lived experience. This approach is vital to promoting an inclusive and transformative education, empowering individuals and communities to resist cultural impositions and create authentic and liberating alternatives.



**Figure 1.** Thina in an intervention with *Fanzinada* and a fanzine workshop at Sarau do Vale (São Mateus/East Zone of SP) (October 2023). Photography: Celso Marchini. Source: personal archive of Thina Curtis.

While punk is often positioned as a counter-hegemonic movement resisting the dominant capitalist culture, its relationship with capitalism is far from simplistic. On one hand, punk embodies an ethos of DIY production, enhancing grassroots creativity and autonomy. This resistance to mainstream structures is visible in fanzines, independent music production, and self-managed spaces. However, punk has also been commodified over time, with its aesthetic and cultural artifacts appropriated by the market and integrated into consumer culture. This is visible from the fashion industry’s adoption of punk styles to the commercialisation of punk music; this dynamic reveals how capitalism absorbs and neutralises subversive movements. Thus, punk operates in a paradoxical space: it is both a critique of and, at times, a participant in the capitalist system.

Punk is a space of and for resistance (Guerra 2020). It is a (sub)culture<sup>4</sup> that deliberately confronts aesthetic and social rules, an anti-status-quo disposition (Santos and Guerra 2017). The integration of punk principles into critical pedagogy results in an educational approach

that not only recognises but also celebrates the potential for dissent and contestation. According to [Dines \(2015\)](#), critical pedagogy centred on punk opens two paths: configuring itself as a transformative educational tool and becoming an object of academic study. In each case, 'a punk pedagogy should be liberating. The outsider positionality and capabilities of punk enable the development of an educational process that can both happen *inside* of punk and draw from it to the outside' ([Guerra 2019](#), p. 11). We can consider fanzines significant educational tools within punk, providing platforms for social criticism and the creation of new narratives. By fostering spaces where students can experiment and practise self-management, critical punk pedagogy creates educational environments that reflect cultural resistance in action. The convergence between critical and punk pedagogy represents a powerful strategy for cultivating an active and engaged citizenry. Critical pedagogy and punk exemplify how education can serve as a tool to promote a radical democracy based on contestation and active participation.

### 3. Not Your Girl Next Door

Despite their outsider status, punk fanzines have had a lasting impact on the growth of music scenes, contributing significantly to documenting these scenes, enhancing their visibility and fostering a sense of community ([Guerra and Quintela 2020](#)) and elevating fanzines as a recognised communication medium ([Grimes and Wall 2014](#)). [Dannus \(2013\)](#) concludes that fanzines played a crucial role in the punk movement by narrating the scene and encouraging readers to actively participate. The rise of punk fanzines was also a key driver behind the growth of alternative media, including local print publications, free and 'pirate' radio stations, and television channels ([Guerra and Quintela 2020](#)). Fanzines were a crucial element in the development of punk scenes, playing an active role in fostering a sense of community ([Atton 2002](#); [Triggs 2006](#)). This idea of community is grounded in the significance of music in daily life, serving as a symbolic anchor for a shared sense of community experience ([Guerra 2024b](#)).

[Pine \(2006\)](#) describes fanzines as material forms of symbolic representation, enabling participants to assert their social presence, integrate into (sub)cultures, and engage culturally. [Ball and Lai \(2006\)](#) talk about place-based pedagogies (Figure 2), which articulate with Thina's artistic process, given that her fanzines can be understood as an artefact, resulting from local cultural production.

There is also an inherent sense of empowerment for fanzines, not least because local cultural expression becomes legitimised. By analysing the fanzines produced by Thina, we are discussing an educational typology based on the place and its implications for critical pedagogy. Touching on the theme of ecohumanism ([Ball and Lai 2006](#)), fanzines, in the specific case of Thina, advocate an education that is more connected to the community, in response to the marginalisation of these elements.

Therein lies Thina's ecohumanism. In relation to pedagogy ([Aloni and Veugelers 2024](#)), ecohumanism combines the principles of humanism with ecological and environmental concerns. It proposes an education centred on the relationship between the human being and the environment, emphasising the connection with place and community as fundamental to citizenship. This view promotes a holistic understanding of the world. Thina promotes an educational approach that combines valuing the environment, the local community, and individual creativity to stimulate social transformation.

From the ecohumanism perspective, fanzines are a form of reappropriation of local space, where creators can reflect on regional issues while building networks of collective action. Thus, Thina's fanzines are a fundamental tool for involving communities in critical and reflective creation; in this specific case, reflection is made on gender issues, namely, the role of Brazilian women in the fanzine culture.



**Figure 2.** *Fanzinada* place-based pedagogy and fanzine workshop in the cultural occupation #foratemer at the Conchita de Moraes Theater, Santo André, October 2016. Photography: Celso Marchini. Source: personal archive of Thina Curtis.

The zine maker Thina is a paradigm of how ecohumanism can be applied to the production of fanzines. She creates fanzines that promote critical awareness of both social and ecological issues, incorporating themes of self-management, collectivity, and cultural resistance. Thina combines DIY aesthetics with a strong social critique, creating spaces for reflection on the interconnection between humanity and the environment, encouraging sustainable practices. Fanzines thus work as a critical and ecohumanist pedagogical tool, helping to disseminate new ways of thinking about the relationship between human beings, society, and nature. Concomitantly, we can establish a parallelism with the concept of spatialised critical pedagogy, which understands space as something socially constructed, shaped by power relations (Morgan 2000). Education spaces reflect and reproduce social, economic, and cultural inequalities; they are microcosms of how society deals with issues of class, race, gender, and territory. Space can be both a place of control and oppression and of resistance. Spatialised critical pedagogy seeks to make visible the ways in which the geographies of oppression affect certain groups, while identifying how these groups resist and transform these spaces into sites of struggle and emancipation, in this case through fanzines.

The relationship between punk and fanzines is multifaceted and cannot be reduced to a single narrative. While many fanzines have historically been tied to the punk (sub)culture, serving as tools for documenting and amplifying their ethos, not all fanzines are exclusively “punk” in origin or intent. Within punk, fanzines have been more than just fan-made publications, i.e., they act as vehicles for critical discourse, grassroots activism, and cultural resistance. The connection between punk and fanzines can be understood as historical and symbiotic, with fanzines playing a key role in punk’s DIY ethos, while also existing as a broader medium for self-expression that transcends punk itself.

Critical pedagogy, based on Freire’s (1995) concepts, aims to promote awareness and social transformation through education, encouraging individuals to reflect critically

on their reality. When this pedagogy becomes spatialised, it focuses not only on social relations, but also on how spaces are occupied, structured, and experienced. Fanzines operate as a cultural practice that already reconfigures the discursive space, giving voice to communities, groups, and individuals who are usually marginalised by traditional media. In Thina's case, we see themes such as feminism and prisons. When the perspective of spatialised critical pedagogy is applied to fanzines, we see that they can serve to question and transform the occupation of physical and social spaces, as Thina's productions show. The spatialised critical pedagogy applied to fanzines can also reflect on the cultural reappropriation of spaces by rescuing the history of social movements, cultures of resistance, and local traditions that have been erased by urban development or globalisation.

Duncombe (1997) sees personal beliefs and ethics as fundamental to such publications. Fanzines frequently reflect their creators' ideologies. They also convey distinct tastes or aesthetics. In essence, fanzines are rich communication tools, providing extensive information offering insight into the punk movement's development. As Dannus (2013) cautions, fanzines evolved over time, adapting alongside the development and solidification of specific punk scenes and serving to communicate a message of resistance. They act as platforms for opposing the cultural and political mainstream, becoming arenas for cultural and political dissent and actions against dominant narratives. In this context, fanzines serve as 'political forums' (Hebdige 2018).

Women's fanzines have played a significant role in what Garrison (2000) describes as 'oppositional technologies', utilising DIY methods—a practice adopted by the riot grrrl movement. Piano (2003) sees zines as crucial elements of subcultural feminist production, creating a space that serves as both a platform for identity construction and a 'safe place' for women to reflect on their experiences, addressing issues like sexual assault, eating disorders, and sexism within the punk scene.

If fanzines had never emerged, the landscape of subcultural production might have been radically different. Without the platform provided by fanzines, women would have faced the formidable challenge of gaining visibility and influence within mainstream media, historically dominated by patriarchal structures. Fanzines played a critical role in fostering the riot grrrl movement and similar feminist subcultures. This underscores the importance of fanzines not just as media artefacts, but as a vital instrument of cultural resistance and community-building.

These fanzines provided political platforms to challenge the prevailing portrayals of women and construct new concepts of femininity (Ussher 1997). The significance of fanzines as instruments of intervention and their subsequent value for young women lay in their capacity to 'construct these narratives in sub-cultural spaces [and] . . . function pedagogically to enhance their abilities to understand and educate about diversity' (Piano 2003, p. 244). In this sense, feminist fanzines have contributed to creating narratives in subcultural spaces, playing a crucial educational role by facilitating teaching and learning about differences. The resistance and creativity of women stemming from the production of these materials gain a new dimension when we consider the contribution of Thina Curtis (1975–).

#### 4. Thina, a Fierce Xerox

I woke up today  
A collage of myself  
A mosaic of feelings  
A multiplied photocopy  
From my inside

Glued, rewritten  
 A stamp in memory  
 An impression of emotion  
 Composed of various textures, set in the  
 soul  
 (...)  
 (Curtis 2023)

Thina Curtis<sup>5</sup> is a *zineira*, poet, cartoonist,<sup>6</sup> artistic educator, and cultural producer, working with independent publications since the 1990s as a precursor to Brazil's fanzine movement. She is currently involved in the cultural scene of São Paulo, but few know the depth of her work. Thina Curtis is recognised for her significant contribution to the punk movement and the production of fanzines, which have played a crucial role in her strategies of cultural resistance. In the cultural and political context, cultural resistance can be defined as the unfolding of conscious or unconscious, effective or ineffective practices, carried out by subordinate, discriminated-against, oppressed, and minority groups in opposition to dominant cultural, political, and economic discourses and structures (Duncombe and Lambert 2021; Guerra and Zańko 2019). Curtis's trajectory can be read as aligned with punk culture and fanzines, which have always been configured as teaching tools promoting emancipation and social transformation (Duncombe and Lambert 2021).

Among her works, the zine *Spell Work*, produced in the first decade of the 2000s, and the *Fanzinada* event (2011) became milestones for Brazilian zine culture. Curtis's actions are strongly marked by DIY initiatives, references to Brazil's 1990s rock universe, a passion for poetry and comic books, and a desire to improvise. Both the ethos of DIY and the power of writing as subjectivity form potent strategies in the *zineira's* discourse—the former because of the importance of strengthening punk's emancipatory power (Guerra 2024a) and the latter because it constructs modes of existence (Moraes 2008, p. 3), from subjectivity to collectivity.

Curtis narrates her personal journey in an introspective and sociologically significant way by reflecting on her childhood, the loss of her father, conflicts with her mother over dressing style, and the discovery of fanzines as a form of expression. Originally from Santo André,<sup>7</sup> she lived at the intersection of Sapopemba, the east side of São Paulo, and Santo André, characterising her dual identity and constant connection with different urban environments. The region of Santo André, known as ABC Paulista, was rich in underground manifestations and is considered the birthplace of punk<sup>8</sup>, generating bands such as Garotos Podres,<sup>9</sup> DZK,<sup>10</sup> and Menstruação Anárquica.<sup>11</sup> From an early age, Curtis's interests were considered atypical by the dominant culture, placing her on the margins of conventional standards of feminine behaviour:

I was very precocious . . . I was raised reading comics. I was a nerd . . . [and] at that time nerds were not accepted; they were outside the margins, so I had the whole stereotype of bullying and non-acceptance by society: tall, thin, with the soul of an artist, a comic book reader, and I liked strange music. I already liked rock, dressing differently, many of my clothes were created by stencil by me and friends, bought in second-hand stores. So, it was very different from today . . . I think teachers who can see this . . . can work very well, including socializing with the classes, with children, adolescents, like that. Now, when the educator has a more restricted mind . . . because generally the fanzine . . . is still a marginal object, it is not welcome in several spaces. For example, people think it is not a nice



thing and bothers you, not only because it is practically handmade, but because it has an ethos of deconstruction. (Interview with Thina Curtis, March 2024)

The discovery of fanzines happened under the influence of friends from the alternative circuit. Thina already made fanzines but did not know others did too. These friends encouraged her to create her own fanzines, which would prove transformative. For Curtis, fanzines were not just independent publications; they represented a way of building authentic networks and expressing marginalised identities. Thina describes fanzines as precursors to contemporary social networks. From the moment she sent her first letters requesting copies, Thina was inundated with an enthusiastic response from the fanzine community, providing a new way to connect and express herself.

Thina Curtis's experience allows us to understand the relevance of fanzines as spaces for freedom, reflection, and creation that offer an alternative to conventional media (Guerra 2023). In these spaces, autonomy of thought is promoted in a way that contrasts sharply with the uniformity of mass media. While traditional media filter and standardise information due to commercial and political pressures, fanzines thrive on freedom, allowing for the expression of marginalised voices and non-hegemonic narratives. Moraes (2008, p. 5) indicates that the writing of punk fanzines is always provisional, since it seeks to incite the other subject to writing, which consequently leads to 'a collective process of subjectivation . . . this process makes "being punk" an always unfinished construction'.

As Thina explains, in an environment where conventional media tended to homogenise the discourse, fanzines stood out by offering an essential platform for the plurality of perspectives, providing a channel for the emergence of new ideas and cultural movements. This involves a continuous process of critical questioning on topics often neglected in the dominant public debate (Figure 3).

The fanzines produced by Thina offer a myriad of perspectives. They can be equated with other literary and visual productions, whose main objective is to represent the lives of those who consume them. The fanzines of Thina Curtis go beyond merely dissenting from the mainstream; they actively create spaces for plurality and constructive dialogue. While dissent is a fundamental aspect of fanzine culture, Curtis's approach highlights their potential as tools for fostering creativity, collaboration, and empowerment. Her fanzines serve as platforms for marginalised voices and for communities to co-create knowledge.

I didn't look for things, things were happening; they were taking me to the fanzines. I started making zines when I got to know the punk movement—and then it became very strong and enlightening what the power of the fanzine was as information, as popular communication. But also feminism, because I didn't have a voice until then. I was able to realize how important fanzines were for me and for other women. From the moment you start to reproduce this, other women were coming to identify with you, and we were starting creating networks. So the first fanzine workshops of my life were in an environment totally outside the musical underground. The East Zone of São Paulo was (and is) a very peripheral, very poor place. In this post-dictatorship, there were many malnourished children, many mothers who were victims of domestic violence, very hungry. So I was very impacted by this whole environment: most of these women couldn't read, they didn't know how to write. My idea was that if we made collages in the fanzines and those who knew how to read passed it on to the others, the information could pass on more easily. We wrote food recipes by hand with a lot of collage, because there was no internet. Then I realized I needed to do something and that the fanzine gave me that possibility. So they invited me to take a community leader course and I did: and then things were never the same, so from there to teaching, to art education. In short, I never stopped. I

ended up finding in the art of education and in the fanzine a powerful tool that opened paths for me that maybe if I were inside the classroom I wouldn't be able to do. (Interview with Thina Curtis, March 2024)



**Figure 3.** Fanzine workshop at Fest Comix in São Paulo (September 2024). Photography: Celso Marchini. Source: personal archive of Thina Curtis.

Important to Thina's work is how consumers of her zines are seen by her. Young people are no longer seen as passive consumers of information. This is the main purpose of fanzines: to trigger critical thinking in *prosumers* (Lang et al. 2021). Thina's use of the digital field has allowed her to adopt an intersectional and transatlantic perspective.

The fanzines produced by Thina serve as a model for various vehicles of meaning creation, enabling broader identities and experiential experiences. These advantages challenge the status quo in terms of authority. Punk kicked off Curtis's community actions, encompassing not only style and music, but the character of self-criticism and independence. Thina realised the fanzine's power to give voice to others in an act of sharing experiences and resistance, especially with other women:

These women gave, and continue to give, this return to me: they said I thought I couldn't write, draw or be a good mother. I said, look, this space here is the process of you, from now on, having access to information. So, with the fanzine, we chose themes and talked or managed to take professionals to talk about important topics . . . they were very young girls, so imagine at the age of 12 a girl taking the pill, being without the babies, because they were going for adoption. A very sad scenario. But the fanzine . . . was a very important communication tool, especially with the theme of the female body, of seeing themselves as black women, for example. I said and put it in the zine: it is very important for us

to accept ourselves . . . Finally, the fanzine arrived both for art therapy and for information. (Interview with Thina Curtis, March 2024)

Thina Curtis gradually extended her actions to schools, health centres, spaces of violence against women, prisons, shelters, and cultural spaces, diversifying the approach and content of the fanzines, strengthening the exchange between the people involved and reinforcing the idea that the *Fanzinato* is built on the principle of mutual collaboration. Thus, we can assert that the fanzine has been (and remains) actively involved in opposing authoritarian regimes in several nations where it has manifested itself (Reddington 2021) both in the North and in the Global South (Guerra 2023).

## 5. Putting the Thina Touch into DIY

Thina has used fanzines to challenge established norms and build an autonomous and resilient voice incorporating themes related to gender, identity, and social justice in a male-dominated field. Feminist fanzines often reveal criticism of a society considered retrograde, misogynistic, and patriarchal. They also detail women's everyday experiences in a social environment with these characteristics, including intimate descriptions of the adversities they faced. Fanzines are used as instruments of critical reflection and creative expression, enabling people from vulnerable groups to explore and document their own narratives and experiences. The actions around differences are therefore situated in an educational approach that is based on action-reflection, where participants are encouraged to act based on their convictions and reflect on their experiences, promoting a connection between theory and social practice.

When exploring female protagonism in DIY practices, it is essential to consider how alternative pedagogical proposals, such as those promoted by Curtis, can offer new paths to visibility and inclusion. The use of fanzines as spaces of freedom, thought, and creation not only challenges the conventional but also creates networks of resistance that enable authentic expression and the articulation of women's protagonism to new cultural narratives. Thinking about the context of the public and cultural sphere, it becomes relevant to highlight the observation of this important zine maker and art educator when she exposed to us that 'the feminist (re)revolution happens invisibly on the margins'.

Thina starts from her experience as a woman to create educational and social actions outside the formal educational axis, persisting in the poetics of fanzines that led her to produce events and launch bands and books:

I say that I am a popular communicator. The fanzine is a popular education, so I really like this work. I have been through so many spaces, but I think one of the most important places to date that has transformed me a lot as a person was the prison. I worked for many years in prison with teenagers here . . . I had a very strong work with pregnant girls and girls with babies so there's no way you can just go there and talk. I came here to make a fanzine, to think about a whole capitalist, sexist system: why is that girl there with her child in her arms, so young? Most of them didn't even know they were pregnant . . . imagine a 12-year-old girl with a baby in her arms, going through the process of imprisoned pregnancy. So, what I did . . . was bring information, listen, hold and bring self-care and self-esteem. And the fanzine ended up becoming an art therapy and welcome inside. (Interview Thina Curtis, March 2024)

This practice aligns with Freire's emphasis on dialogical education, as it fosters collaborative knowledge-building and empowers participants to question systemic oppression. At the same time, it reflects Giroux's call for public pedagogy that disrupts neoliberal narratives.

With this in mind, we should add that Thina Curtis's engagement with the prison system stems from her role as an educator and cultural facilitator. This is why, over the course of several years, she conducted workshops and educational activities within correctional facilities, particularly focusing on young women and adolescent mothers. These workshops used fanzines as tools for self-expression, art therapy, and critical reflection, providing a platform for participants to explore topics such as self-care, motherhood, and social inequalities. Curtis's use of fanzines to empower marginalised groups reflects Freire's vision of education as liberation and her emphasis on creating alternative narratives through DIY methods as the ability to challenge corporate narratives in education.

The experience with the former FEBEM<sup>12</sup> is configured in a challenging context. In her work with these young women, Curtis did not limit herself to the creation of fanzines as mere cultural products but integrated them into a broader educational process. Through the fanzine workshops, Curtis offered not only a means of creative expression but also a platform for disseminating vital information about self-care and well-being as well as women's and children's rights using the fanzine as a form of resistance in that environment.

Punk's outsider position and inherent characteristics allow for the development of an educational approach that can grow within this subculture while extending its influence beyond it. Thus, a punk pedagogy is not designed exclusively for punks (Guerra 2019, 2023). In the context of young women in prison, Thina's fanzines brought new possibilities of personal writing, drawings, and reflections on the social place of women and access to information.

Thina Curtis's feminist articulations have resulted in cross-cutting perspectives. Her work adds a valuable framework for understanding and addressing the complex forms of oppression faced by different minority groups. During another time, Curtis worked on the issue of depression in elderly people, integrating affectivity into the practice of the fanzine. Thina has always worked in social assistance spaces and has conducted training with teachers and pedagogical teams to replicate the fanzine in the school environment. In October 2024, Thina launched a book of reports by zine educators working in various social, pedagogical, and academic areas called *Fanzine Eduka*. In terms of the critical pedagogy of Freire (2005) and Giroux (2003), we can see in Curtis's actions a powerful work of socialisation and collectivity through the 'marginal' tool of the fanzine.

## 6. Punk and Pedagogy Forever (PPF) as the New Best Friend Forever (BFF)

The articulation between fanzines, the punk movement, improvisation, and critical pedagogy results in a profoundly transformative and counter-hegemonic educational proposal. In opposition to the model of corporate public pedagogy criticised by Giroux, this approach challenges traditional power structures and promotes a learning space focused on active citizenship, social criticism, and the autonomy of the subject. Curtis's improvisational approach bridges the gap between Freire's dialogical methods and Giroux's critique of corporate pedagogy, creating educational spaces that are both participatory and subversive.

The critical pedagogy proposed by Freire and Giroux and the principles of punk and fanzines converge in a search for an inclusive, participatory education rooted in the lived experience of social agents. Thina's fanzines are vehicles of cultural resistance, providing individuals, especially in marginalised groups, with a platform to express their voices and experiences, stimulating critical reflection and the creation of new narratives. The punk movement, with its DIY ethos, exemplifies how pedagogical practices can be developed from an ethics of resistance that values creativity and contestation. Improvisation and spontaneity, present both in punk and in Thina's critical educational practices, break

with the rigidity of traditional teaching methods, creating open spaces for reflection and social transformation.

Finally, through Thina Curtis's production of fanzines, we can see how this practice becomes a powerful pedagogical tool of cultural resistance. Her fanzines offer a crucial alternative to conventional media, allowing marginalised voices to be heard and new forms of protagonism to be built. The combination of critical pedagogy, punk, and fanzines can transform the broader educational and social space into an environment of resistance and emancipation, committed to a more just and inclusive society.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Improvisation, in this context, refers to the spontaneous and adaptive creation of artistic, educational, and social interventions. For Thina Curtis, improvisation is not merely a technique but a fundamental ethos that informs her creative and pedagogical practices.
- <sup>2</sup> Elaine Cristina Silva (born 11 February 1975 in São Paulo, Brazil) is a Brazilian poet, fanzine, cartoonist, basic education teacher, art educator, and cultural producer. She has been working with fanzines and activities in favour of independent publications since 1990. We highlight the following milestones: The first milestone was the realisation of the *Fanzinada* project in 2011, considered one of the most important fanzine events in Brazil; *Fanzinada* promotes meetings of writers, cartoonists, illustrators, and producers who exhibit their works, in addition to lectures, debates, and a cultural fair. The project also aims to rescue the memory of fanzines and their authors. The second milestone was marked in 2020 by Thina's publication, alongside Márcio Sno, João Francisco Aguiar, and Jô Feitosa, of *Zines in the Prison*, recounting experiences coordinating fanzine workshops for incarcerated people (Feitosa et al. 2020). The third milestone took place in 2023 during the Comic Con Experience, where Thina launched *BraZineiras* (Curtis 2023), an account of 36 women linked to fanzines, including the author of this article.
- <sup>3</sup> In terms of methodology, the study draws on a qualitative approach involving a semistructured interview conducted with Thina Curtis in March 2024. The interview was carried out by the author and focused on Curtis's experiences as a fanzine creator, her artistic and pedagogical practices, and her reflections on punk and DIY culture. The semistructured format allowed for flexibility, enabling Curtis to elaborate on key themes while maintaining a focus on the study's objectives. The goal was to comprehend Thina's trajectory and artistic creation journey in relation to the Brazilian punk movement. The interview was transcribed and analysed using categorical content analysis. It followed the ethical requirements of the American Sociological Association, the European Sociological Association, and Portuguese Association of Sociology. We obtained informed consent from Thina Curtis to use excerpts for sociological analysis.
- <sup>4</sup> We highlight that traditional conceptualisations of subculture define it as a counter-hegemonic set of practices (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Hebdige 2018; McRobbie and Garber 1997; Willis 1981). This conception has given rise to some important criticisms since the 1990s. This scholarship reworks the concept of subculture, considering shifting communication practices that have altered how and which people now negotiate sociability (Kempson 2015, p. 1082).
- <sup>5</sup> Thina nicknamed herself Curtis after Ian Curtis, the late lead singer of Joy Division.
- <sup>6</sup> In 2022, she was elected advisor to GEEK Culture and helped write her own law for GEEK Culture in São Bernardo do Campo-São Paulo, Brazil.

- <sup>7</sup> The Southeast Zone of Greater São Paulo, better known as ABC Paulista, Greater ABC Region, ABC, ABCD, or ABCDMRR, is an industrial region of São Paulo, part of the metropolitan region of São Paulo, marked by numerous problems of segregation and spatial and social injustice.
- <sup>8</sup> Santo André is often referred to as the birthplace of punk within Brazil, a recognition that highlights the region's significant contribution to the development of the Brazilian punk movement. While punk originated globally in cities such as New York and London, Santo André played a pivotal role in the emergence of a distinctly Brazilian punk scene during the late 1970s and early 1980s.
- <sup>9</sup> A Brazilian punk rock band, formed in 1982 in the city of Mauá, São Paulo. It is known for its critical and satirical lyrics, addressing political, social, and cultural themes, heavily influenced by British punk of the 1970s and counterculture movements.
- <sup>10</sup> A Brazilian punk rock/hardcore band formed in 1983 in Niterói, Rio de Janeiro. The name DZK is an acronym that can have different meanings but is commonly associated with 'Civilized Contempt'. The band is known for its politicised lyrics.
- <sup>11</sup> A Brazilian punk rock band formed in the late 1980s. The group is known for being one of the first female bands of the genre in Brazil, standing out for its direct and provocative lyrics.
- <sup>12</sup> The Foundation Center for Socio-Educational Assistance to Adolescents, formerly called the State Foundation for the Welfare of Minors, is a public foundation under private law created by the Government of the State of São Paulo and linked to the State Secretariat of Justice and Defense of Citizenship.

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