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WOMEN IN ACTION

My Adventures with *Adventures in Menstruating*

A Case Study of Feminist Zinemaking and Period Positivity

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Keywords

Zines, Graphic Design, Menstruation, Case Study, Design Practice.

Abstract

From the pun *Ad-ventures* to the choice of glossy covers over a more DIY feel, Chella Quint's *Adventures in Menstruating* zine pastiches the commercial, skewering menstrual product advertising messages and exposing recurring themes of secrecy, whispering, and "Leakage Horror". Chris Bobel notes in *New Blood: Third Wave Feminism and the Politics of Menstruation* that most menstrual zinesters "eschew the glitz and gloss of corporate mass-produced material, generating instead a homespun and intimate look", but *Adventures in Menstruating* emulates the corporate: each cover reimagines past publications where periods were usually absent: comic books, pulp novels, fashion magazines, science journals, war propaganda...This memoir-style case study uses autoethnography and humorously shares the rationale behind *Adventures in Menstruating* and how the project expanded from zines and craftivism into transmedia companion pieces, going from Ladyfest festivals to Maker Faires to mainstream galleries, seeding menstrual activism ideas within other artists. Zines provide immediacy and agency, underpinning projects that struggle to gain mainstream acceptance through established publishers or galleries. The author credits her community of helpers and tracks the opportunities the work created, showing how zinesters can use their art as activism, and create routes for an artist on the periphery to succeed within the establishment.

1. Being a “Zine Girl”

This is my account of the history, evolution and impact of my zine series, *Adventures in Menstruating*. The zines are out of print, the next issue is well overdue, and the subsequent campaign has gone online, but this work has been discussed by students (Docherty, 2010), researchers (Bobel, 2010, 2018; Chidgey, 2018; Fahs, 2013, 2015; Newton, 2016; Nijsten, 2017; Røstvik, 2019a, 2019b) and popular authors (Barnett, 2019; Chakrabarti, 2017; Hill, 2019) and this is my contribution. This article will most likely be read digitally, but please imagine that it is hot off the photocopier, swiftly stapled, crisply folded, and lovingly shared with you. I’m going to focus on how I came to write *Adventures in Menstruating* and what happened next, but you should probably know from the start that I think in zines and always have: every project that becomes something else – an installation, a comedy show, a bit of activism – begins life as a zine. My brain works in narratives. I loved reading and rereading children’s literature, and I was definitely the art and design-obsessed kid in the elementary school classroom, spending ten minutes working on a cover page and running out of time to finish any writing assignment in class. When I started combining the two, even when it wasn’t required, suddenly it all came together. I needed to understand how my brain was composing, folding and unfolding ideas through the medium of working on page layouts. I quickly transferred my skills to zine making and even shared a print catalogue of crafts I made, sending it to pen pals and swapping zines I’d seen reviewed in *Sassy Magazine* (Jesella & Meltzer, 2007). I was in the right place at the right time to be (at first unknowingly) participating in *Riot Grrrl*

culture with my friends and the DIY aesthetic of my work was part of that zeitgeist (Ablaze!, 2013). When I was a dramatic writing and media student at NYU I was regularly making collage-style posters for shows at *Kinkos* photocopy shop, trying to push an ordinary Xerox machine to its limits.

When I came to Yorkshire, UK to study theatre, dial-up internet connected me to message boards and early blogs, and the friends who would have written zines tended to write for these or create the online equivalent of a *perzine* or “personal zine” on platforms like *Livejournal*. I enjoyed reading them, and even wrote for and helped moderate a queer youth blogging site for a while, but I missed printed zines.

Soon after, I qualified as a Drama, Media, and English teacher and was suddenly able to express my zine-love as lesson plan and worksheet designing. My study guide on Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* was basically a zine. The internet was good for sharing ideas, and school was a great creative outlet, but the relief I felt when I found UK friends who still made print zines a year or two later was as tangible as the little booklets themselves.

Over the next couple of years, I got the hang of teaching and living in Sheffield, and qualified for a permanent visa. This gave me time and space to feel more settled and I was able to work on my own creative projects again, and I started writing zines and performing DIY feminist sketch comedy and spoken word. Since my ideas start as zines, they often morph into live performances and installations after I do zine read-

ings where I get feedback on the work, refining it and performing live errata. I found the cycle (sorry) of performing readings and putting together new issues formed a dialogue about menstrual taboos and began to change the discourse with those who participated. Audiences provided creative urgency and their responses really spurred on my designs.

2. The Adventure Begins

In May 2005 I entered the *24 Hour Zine Thing* (Julie, 2005) – an annual challenge to write a twenty-four page zine in a day. I love narrow parameters when starting a new project. I took inspiration from a dream I had that morning about charting my menstrual cycle – I woke up wondering if I’d be getting my period that day and realised I wanted more encouragement to chart my cycle – so I decided my 24 hour zine was a ten year cycle chart, and got to work.

I asked for people to write to me with their menstrual musings, but the internet was slower then, no one I knew had smart-phones, and the world of “instant reply” didn’t exist. I interviewed my mom and sister over the phone because they were in an earlier time zone and I thought that would help me get the jump on the day. My mom contributed to my zine with the enlightening information that I was an accident, because her cycle charting was not accurate enough. So with that revelation I knew it would have to be a humour zine, and, with her blessing, included this big reveal in the interview. I interviewed a couple of friends about reusable menstrual products, drew some illustrations, laid out the chart, and chose images to go behind the calendar pages from the invaluable resource I had discovered

an old advert from the *Ad*Access Archive* at Duke University (She Was Baffled! How about You? 1950). As I read more of the adverts, there was so much more I wanted to say. I saw links between messages in these ads and contemporary attitudes to menstruation, including a lot of shame and inferiority aimed at menstruators. I felt like there was a whole other zine forming in my head, but the 24 hours were nearly up, so I finished *Chart Your Cycle* (Quint, 2005a). The next day, more replies started coming in from the shoutouts I had done over email and I could feel another starting to come together. And that led to *Adventures in Menstruating #1* (Quint, 2005b) (Fig. 1).

I chose the title carefully: *Adventures in Menstruating* as a send up of the film *Adventures in Babysitting*, something that sounds totally mundane but could actually be quite exciting, and possibly a bit terrifying, but just like the film, ultimately resolvable. It also had the cheeky pun *AD-ventures* which was a subtle nod to the ad-busting and anti-corporate tone and content.

When a friend came to Sheffield in July 2005 on a zine reading tour, I arranged a gig for him at the *Matilda Centre*, a reclaimed autonomous art venue that was being squatted as part of a development dispute. The show went down well, and I saw how easy it was to put a tour together: all you needed were friends to provide lifts, good public transport, a place to crash, and a place to perform.

The *Adventures in Menstruating* series focused on what I've come to call *Big Tampon* and their manipulative tactics to sell more products (Kissling, 2006), so I found that autonomous



Figure 1. Chella Quint, *Adventures in Menstruating* #1: *It's Highly Absorbing!* The cover parodies DC Comics: Isis rescues a woman from giant falling tampons, August 2005.

spaces were the best venues and felt most at home on DIY scenes. I put out feelers and what followed was a series of positive responses and invitations to speak, read, perform and lead workshops based on my zine. That summer, I travelled to the US. Friends on the east coast hosted shows in their towns, and fellow zinesters offered word of mouth promotion and lifts. These were all folks who also made zines on political topics or from marginalised perspectives, and some of them already worked or volunteered at alternative bookshops, squats and other spaces. I invited people to perform, swapped zines, and donated copies to local zine libraries. At *Philly A-Space* in Philadelphia, I met activists from Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC) and they gave me stickers for their Tampaction campaign (Bobel, 2009). Their aim was to “infuse healthy attitudes surrounding menstruation into our culture’s consciousness” (McDaniel, 2004). At *Bluestockings*, an activist bookshop collective on the lower east side of Manhattan, I was surprised when the librarian Jenna Freedman from *Barnard Zine Library* (Sabadosa, 2019), asked to buy copies for the archive. I was delighted there was a library in an academic institution devoted entirely to zines.

3. DIY Production Techniques and Outsider Art

“Zines do more than disseminate information as they push against institutional structure and norms. They also work to pull activists together” (Bobel, 2010, p.115). Health and sex education experts, feminists and queer activists loved the content and designers and artists also enjoyed the aesthetic of the layout. Other than the glossy covers, I started by using cut and paste for the internal pages, a technique I had learned

as editor of my middle school newspaper. Then I moved on to *Microsoft Publisher* to more closely mimic a magazine layout, I designed a new cover style that let me line up the title text so the *A* and *M* combined to form what could be interpreted as a broadcasting tower icon or an abstract vulva. I eventually made the move to *inDesign* years later, which made the whole process much, much quicker.

Zines tend to only be sold for the cost of materials and are often given away or swapped at zine fairs or via post, so the pay structure fits the DIY aesthetic. I wanted to make as many copies as possible. For the inside printing, I started by finding photocopy places (or places with a photocopier) based on price, not quality. The cheapest I could find would print black and white for 2.5p a side. For printing the covers without my own high-quality colour laser printer, I started looking for more options to get that glossy, parody-magazine effect. I found a small printing studio in an old, converted steelworks that was about to be knocked down. The printer, Martin Lacey, had actually been a zinester himself in the post punk Sheffield music scene (Lilleker, 2005). He was willing to do 30p silk A3 heavy-weight paper prints and so that I would have A4 covers for 15p each – a bargain! The first image I sent him parodied an old DC comics cover of Isis, but instead of big steel beams and missiles, she was protecting a woman on the ground from falling applicator tampons. The cover was subtly altered so that each detail was periodified: the logos, the comments, the taglines. The one mistake I made going from analogue cut and paste flats to manipulating layers in a digital print file for the first time was that the image I started from was only 72dpi.

It was my first time using open source photo editing software *Gimp* at a local hackerspace, and I did not yet know to start with the highest resolution possible for print output rather than web output. Martin patiently explained that I would need to improve the image quality to remove some of the pixelation, and that I ought to save it in a format other than JPEG. *I know*. I genuinely didn't know this back then, but the way it was explained made me want to get better at digital graphic design, not abandon it or feel alienated. The cover of #1, even when I reprint it, is still lo-res. I stand by it because it shows how my work has evolved.

The first issue of *Adventures in Menstruating* set the template for all the rest. Colour front and back covers, 24 sides of black and white copy, starting with a diary of what I had been up to - letter from the editor style - and including features from contributors. I always featured advertising analysis and comparisons of past and present ads and genuine product testing - not paid endorsements. The tone was humourous and the zines were serialised: you didn't have to read the previous issue to understand the next one, but there was a progression and there were sometimes references to the issue before. The last page always included a preview of the next issue and all of the article credits, and every contributor got a copy of the zine posted to them.

There is a self-perpetuating culture of making the next issue around the same time other zinesters do so that when they've brought out a new zine you have too. I used to do this with *Phlegm*, another then Sheffield-based artist, but his output was so much quicker than mine that I was insanely jealous.



Figure 2. Chella Quint, *Adventures in Menstruating* #2: *Leakage Horror!* The cover parodies pulp novels with a heroine in lingerie with an added bloodstain, April 2006.

Adventures in Menstruating!

Issue #3, August 2007



Figure 3. Chella Quint, *Adventures in Menstruating* #3: *Wartime Special!* The cover parodies propaganda posters and features Rosie the Riveter, August 2007.

He contributed a comic strip to *Adventures in Menstruating* #2 (Quint, 2006), which often is a nice surprise for people who recognise his work from murals in their cities. This issue focused on reclaimed and reimagined versions of classic teenage magazines' embarrassing period stories and the cover was a pulp novel with added blood. The vintage advertising analysis in this issue covered scepticism about claims that anything was leak free, past or present, and examined a *Bodyform* billboard campaign that very closely echoed ideas from eighty years prior. I had interviewed my grandma for this issue and her commentary provided a first-hand account of menstrual literacy that was concurrent with the adverts I had analysed (Fig. 2).

Issue #3 (Quint, 2007a) was subtitled The Wartime Special in reference to baby boomers I had interviewed who were experiencing the menopause at the time of writing, and included a reprint of my review of *Menopause: The Musical* in *The Guardian* (Quint, 2007b). My take was that there should be more mainstream media about the menopause and queried why the show was panned by so many critics (Fig. 3).

The subtitle of #4 (Quint, 2008), *Now with Skirts* (Fig. 4), was a commentary of the *Tampax* "skirt" adverts describing a new design that would solve the liquid bridge problem and a nod to the equal marriage campaigns happening at the time. This zine issue talked specifically about the trend for modern advertising to reference fabric and trim: skirts, pearl, silk, braids, making it seem like disposable menstrual products were clothing, and starting to feature a trend toward feeling naked without them, positioning them as an urgent necessity.



Figure 4. Chella Quint, *Adventures in Menstruating* #4: *Now with skirts!* The cover parodies wedding magazines and depicts two brides in long dresses, April 2009.

4. Outsider to Insider

In between making each zine, I had been performing comedy takes on the adverts with friends, past partners, and enthusiastically co-opted fellow gig mates, touring squats and feminist festivals in the school holidays for the cost of travel and a place to stay. Irish feminist punk band Party Weirdo, who'd helped out at a few events, even recorded and pressed a record in tribute to the zines: *Chart Your Cycle*, with lyrics including "Chart Your Cycle! Adventures when you're menstruating!" (Party Weirdo, 2007). I didn't really tell folks at work what I did – hanging out *Ladyfests*, pasting up street art, distributing an underground political zine...even though everything I did was within the law, it all felt a little bit shady to be talking about in a sensible secondary school where I was the weird new teacher from New York.

After issue #4, I really started to hit my stride with the performative aspects of the work. Readings became sketches, audience participation became consistent, and I started using PowerPoint presentations to share the ads on screen. I was still acting ads out, but adding modern sketches as well. I included *Stains*TM (Quint, 2009a) for the first time, a bit of activism that was designed to reclaim leakage horror and sell it back to advertisers, using their own language (Quint, 2019).

The zine series started out mocking advertising, but my feminist perspective came through the sarcasm fairly quickly. I was surprised to be approached by Boston professor Chris Bobel to be interviewed for her book on menstrual activism (Bobel, 2010). I tended to get so caught up in the enjoyment of

the comedy and the design that I forgot how powerful zines could be, and how far mine had already travelled.

As I was putting together *Adventures in Menstruating* #5 (Quint, 2009b) (Fig. 5), I was asked to speak to students at the *London School of Economics* about menstrual product marketing messages. At the time I was a drama teacher most well known outside the classroom for having terrible allergies, writing popular comedy sketches for assemblies, and proving surprisingly skillful at fixing complex photocopier jams. I still hadn't told folks at work what I was doing in my spare time. Hanging out in squats, pasting up street art, distributing an underground political zine critical of capitalism...it all felt a little bit shady to be talking about in a sensible secondary school and being a non-citizen was a genuine worry. So the head teacher was shocked when I asked her for permission to take the day off to go to London, and said "Why on Earth does the London School of Economics want a presentation from YOU?" I mumbled something unconvincing about writing about marketing in my free time. I never put forward an argument for why I was qualified, and I didn't pursue it, which in hindsight feels ridiculous.

Meanwhile, I was putting my academic skills into my zines. I knew from reader feedback that this was becoming a valuable educational resource for them because while I'd read zines about reproductive health like *Viva Voce* (Viva Voce Wimmin, n.d.) from Brighton, UK and had come across reusable products zine *Red Alert* (Bloodsisters, n.d.) from Canada, I never found zines about menstrual taboos in the media. I was citing sources, contacting the reproductive health researchers who'd

contacted me, and starting to develop a style guide for how I wrote about menstruation. The first linguistic change I made was in 2005 with inclusive language, talking about “people who menstruate” rather than “women”, to be inclusive of trans menstruators. I rejected the adverts’ framing device of “sanitary protection” from the start because people who menstruate are not unsanitary and I stopped using the phrase *feminine hygiene* a few years later (Quint, 2017).

So in autumn 2009, I was finding a lot more menstrual inspiration and producing more content. I was blogging and gigging regularly, the University of Leeds feminist society booked me for a series of events, and I was about to get a big boost from some of the attendees and organisers of the *Feminism in London* conference.

The night before the conference, some work meetings were running over, but I needed to prep my conference materials. I was mentally ticking off closing times of copy shops around Sheffield, and finally the head teachers asked what was wrong. I explained the problem, and they let me print my resources at school. When I came back, copies in hand, they were fascinated.

The next day I met activists who validated my work and connected me with more folks from around the UK who wanted me to help them put on performances and events about menstruation. I even performed my new song, *The Crimson Tide* (Quint, 2009c), at *The Soho Comedy Club* as part of the conference afterparty.



Figure 5. Chella Quint, *Adventures in Menstruating* #5: *Here's the science bit*. The cover parodies science magazines and shows Kitten Von Mew posing with underwear and test tubes, December 2009.

I returned to Sheffield with renewed confidence, finally feeling I could talk about what I did in my free time. I contacted *The Guardian* and set up an interview alongside Chris Bobel and other menstrual writers and artists I'd connected with (Cochrane, 2009). It was difficult to hide something in *The Guardian* from teachers at a state school in the North of England. My secret was out.

Because of all of this input and output, issue #5 was the most detailed. I was now starting to print about 500 copies in each first run, sometimes did second and third runs, and had moved to litho printing with Martin's new business, because at those quantities the price was fair and the saved labour of machine collating, folding and stapling was hard to resist. This issue also featured quotes from Chris Bobel and other board members of The Society for Menstrual Cycle Research (SMCR) as I was keen to share their research with zine readers and non-academic audiences. It was also the first time I worked with professional cover model Kitten Von Mew (von Mew, 2020), a vintage burlesque artist for whom I recorded American voice-overs in a skill swap.

I became a UK citizen the following year, and thus felt able to be more open in my art side line and incorporate it into my work. Because I was more open at school about my zines, I was chosen to teach on a new literacy team's Make Your Own Magazine project. A few months later, my independent research into menstruation meant the school heads invited me to be part of the health and sex education team, and shortly after encouraged me to apply to lead that department.

They gave me permission to research menstrual literacy on a part-time MA in education. My DIY art was starting to coalesce with my professional identity and it was incredibly satisfying. I didn't release an issue in 2010, but I did perform a comedy show at Bluestockings that was featured in *Time Out New York*, and my existing zines were part of a number of small scale exhibitions, some put on by fellow zinesters turned academics (Clyde & Bakaitis, 2017).

5. New Opportunities

It seemed that more people were becoming what I now like to call “menstrually woke” (Radnor, 2017), but back then I was just noticing that there were far fewer visceral reactions to the name of my zine. More zinesters of all genders were happy to swap with me at zine fairs, companies seemed to be slowly improving their messaging, periods were in the media more, and there was a sense that 2009 and 2010 had been a turning point for me. I worried that I had nothing more to say, so issue #6 (Quint, 2011) talked about what to do when the surface is calm. I started to unpick what was just under the surface: I looked at the structure of why adverts had endured in the same format for 90 years, and what that said about our attitudes towards menstruation.

In 2011 my issue #6 cover designs and zine-related art work (Fig. 6) were getting as much attention as the content. Stains™ was a regular feature of my performances, my talks were becoming tighter and more accessible to mainstream audiences, and my work was featured in several exhibitions and group shows in Sheffield and beyond.

Adventures in Menstruating

April 2011 #6



Nothing to worry about.

In August I gave a talk at Bluestockings called *Zine Girl You'll Be A Woman Soon*, where I acknowledged that zines were not just a medium for teenage me in my bedroom or dorm, but adult me as a professional artist. I'd been a regular contributor to the *London Zine Symposium* but 2011 was its last year. In 2012 I met Bettie Kirkssen from *Backpack Distro* at the first zine fair in Sheffield. When we discovered the organisers weren't planning to continue the fair, we decided to take it on ourselves and put on *Sheffield Zine Fest* (Kirkssen & Quint, 2014).

Also in 2012, I spoke at *TEDx Sheffield* (TEDxTalks, 2012) and it received a lot of views. I was invited to speak at more events about zines and DIY culture fairly regularly; each opportunity generating the next. Everything was DIY and put together on a shoestring. This had never been a financial enterprise. I was opposed to turning menstrual art into a business; it felt counterintuitive to the point of the work and to my personal values. I was not averse, however, to turning it into education research. The *period talk* had either been corporatised (Kissling, 1996) or was a missed opportunity for teachers, parents, and young people (Bobel, 2018), and if taking some of my public work into the classroom would help young people have a healthier attitude towards menstruation I was all for it. I started planning fieldwork for my Master's degree, *Period Positive Schools* (Quint, 2014a), to explore attitudes to new lesson activities that included my art and humour. I used action research and codesign methods, and by 2013 was asking for parents' and pupils' permission to participate in developing a new menstrual curriculum based on my zines.

That year I only had time to do a compilation issue, the *Comic Poetry Split Special*. A split zine is an issue with two front covers; you flip it over when the first half ends, and there's another zine that starts on the other side.

This issue featured poems and comics from previous issues, plus some new work, including zinester Elvis Bakaitis and their comic all about having a queer *wolf cycle*. One of the covers was an illustration by Sheffield artist Sarah Smizz, based on my poem, *To the leaking girl* (Quint, 2011) with which I had won the Sheffield Off The Shelf Festival poetry slam in 2014 (Fig. 7).



Figure 7. Chella Quint, *Adventures in Menstruating Comic/Poetry Split Special #1*. The split issue flips to show cover illustrations by Sarah Smizz and Chella Quint, June 2013.

I was invited to be a keynote speaker, first at Sheffield Town Hall's International Women's Day wellbeing event and then at the 2013 SMCR conference in New York. This time I *did* ask for time off school. At the conference I performed *Adventures in Menstruating: This Time It's Personal* (SMCR, 2020). If I had had time to write an issue of the zine that year, this would have been the focus: what happens when the personal becomes political. By now zines and menstrual activism pervaded every aspect of my life. My sister starred in the *Stains*TM campaign, my mom would mail zines to friends and family in the US and cut out felt period stains before shows.

When I got back, I won the *Sheffield International Documentary Festival* Specialist Factual New Talent award based on my pitch for the proposed *Stains*TM *The Movie* and a sketch show all about breaking menstrual taboos which eventually became a short educational film for the Open University called *Lifting The Lid* (Quint, 2014). When I got back to school I completed my fieldwork and the pupils really enjoyed the lessons we developed. The following school year I took an unpaid sabbatical from teaching to write up my dissertation and do some freelance sex education advisory and science communication comedy. I finished my Master's while developing *Adventures in Menstruating* into a show for the Edinburgh Fringe. I was broke, but got to write, perform, and design a lot more often.

6. Art to Policy Impact

Mainstream audiences were talking about menstruation, and *Newsweek Magazine* in the US interviewed Chris Bobel and others and declared 2015 the Year of the Period (Jones, 2016).



Figure 8. Chella Quint, *Adventures in Menstruating* #7: *Back to school*. The cover features Chella Quint wearing a graduation gown and a STAINS™ period stain, June 2015.

I took *Adventures in Menstruating* to the Edinburgh Fringe as an unlisted work in progress, and got great feedback (Fig. 8).

Menstruation had gone mainstream. For the first time, I put my face on the zine cover. In *issue #7: Back to School* (Quint, 2015), I talked about the tendency for advertisers to jump on activists' bandwagons, celebrated completing my degree and shared some of my research. This reached people much faster than the process of academic publishing would have, but required less rigour. I also finally started using *Adobe InDesign*, which I had learned over the preceding two years while contributing articles (Quint, 2016a) and freelancing as the designer of the *Sex Education Forum's* e-magazine.

I have always described the zine and roadshow to prospective venues as inclusive, accessible, and politically right-on. As far back as 2006, I was summing all of this up by calling it *period positive*. I started using the hashtag *#periodpositive* on Twitter to praise things that met the criteria and started to define *period positivity* in more concrete terms through my research, hoping to develop *Period Positive* schools, workplaces and cities. My appendix included a logo that could serve as a symbol for those ready for a new approach that looked at marketing messages sideways, encouraging education and what researchers like Chris Bobel have started calling "menstrual literacy" (Bobel, 2019, p281).

I created a formalised version of the *Period Positive* campaign, registered the trademark, bought the domain, and created resources, hoping to create a legacy for the education side of

the work, while I focused more on the performance side. I put the blog on hiatus in favour of radio and newspaper coverage, added my research back into my comedy show, and did a proper full run at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2016 (Quint, 2016b) to excellent reviews and enthusiastic crowd participation. Periods had arrived (Fig. 9).

By 2017, as people started talking about period poverty, my comic and journalistic writing were featured in newspapers and on the radio and had support from friends and colleagues to deliver more of the work than I could do myself.



Figure 9. Chella Quint, Period Positive Logo®, a hashtag and 2D smiling red blood droplet image that also references Little Red Riding Hood, 2013.

I didn't want to turn it into a charity or a company, and I didn't want to move to London and get sponsorship from a big tampon company (genuine offers). In hindsight, my work might have been more well-known more quickly if I had but throughout that year, it was frustrating to watch well connected campaigners pounce on this menstrual moment, some in partnership with disposable menstrual product companies that still weren't really changing how they talked about periods but wanted to boost their reputations. In contrast, others were excellent colleagues. I worked with the Girl Guides, who launched a thoughtful and well-planned campaign to share a period poverty badge (Waters, 2018) and call for better education with support from *WaterAid*, and approached schools and city councils, supporting Sheffield to become the first Period Positive city (Learn Sheffield & Period Positive, 2017) and my university to have the first Period Positive students' union (Sheffield Hallam Students' Union, 2018). Throughout 2017 and 2018 I was travelling regularly to contribute to local, national and corporate policy consultations, festivals and workshops across the UK and abroad. I shared a programme of study for menstrual literacy at the All Party Political Group for Women's Health (Quint, 2018), and was supported to put forward an Early Day Motion in Parliament (EDM 2661, 2017-19) with my MP in 2019 calling for removal of euphemistic language in policy and industry. Every now and again there was a little nudge, and I noticed an organisation, corporation, or school making a shift or rule change towards a more period positive environment. Still no new zine issues, but I was having plenty of adventures in menstruating.

7. Reflections

In 2019 I hosted the first *Period Positive Week* and launched the *Period Positive Pledge* (Quint, 2020) to introduce a new design template for menstrual literacy, and followed up with a call for global partners who have already started contributing with translations, local outreach, and online collaborations. This has meant I could step back a little. I can work on a book I've been planning based on these experiences, I can develop a book and a show for kids, and create online video resources so that there's a record of some of my live work (Period Positivity, 2020). I've started applying my research methods and graphic design skills to new work - both creative and academic. The Pledge is also an invitation to organisations and artists new to the menstrual sphere to do the hard work and introspection that I did, but without needing 15 years to do it. My work was first inspired by second-wave feminists and my old copy of *Our Bodies Ourselves* (The Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 1973) that my mother gave me, influenced by the *Riot Grrrl* aesthetic that I grew up in, and helped massively by the internet and social media. My adventures were also made possible because of DIY and feminist artists, activists, venues, collaborations, tours, autonomous gig spaces, hack-labs, fablabs and maker fairs. These spaces need to exist and be supported by cities, universities and artists through policy, funding, volunteering, and safe space policies.

Have you been imagining this article as a zine? Zines often include Top 5 lists.

7.1. Top 5 things I've learned:

1. Treat your topic as a dialogue: as time passes, respond to where it takes you with new work.
2. Encourage colleagues to join you in projects with social justice themes, and don't be afraid to tell them about your out-of-hours activism and passion projects.
3. Maintain high ethical standards in your partnerships.
4. Be generous but know your value – these are not mutually exclusive.
5. Never use elastic bands to bind zines. They are awful to archive.

When I spoke to Kira Cochrane in 2009, she concluded her *Guardian* article by quoting me saying I'd write *Adventures in Menstruating* until I was ready for *Adventures in Menopausal-ing*. That's not happened yet, and there hasn't been a print issue in a while. I've been busy looking at applying the systems and strategies I developed around menstruation to other topics affected by shame and other psychosocial barriers. I have worked on gender stereotypes in education, income inequality, fair tax, sex education, public health messages, and am now researching a PhD in art and design around attitudes to aging. Having said that, I've got a printer, a paper cutter, and a long-armed stapler, and the design for #8 (Quint, 2020b) is done. The issue will look at where we go from here, and how menstruation has gone from invisible to highly present in popular culture. Its subtitle? *Periods In Space!*

Adventures in Menstruating!

Periods in space!

#8

*Robin Ince
vs. tampons!*

*Vaginas vs.
Vulvas!*

*Attack
of The Blob!*



*"I was sonically
probed...
...for science!"*

*Tracking STAINS™
across the galaxy!*

Victoria Wood's out-of-this-world period comedy!

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IV

BIOGRAPHIES

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Architect and Associate Professor in Interior and Spatial Design at Politecnico di Milano. She has been visiting professor at Tsinghua University, School of Art and Design, Beijing (China); Kookmin University, Seoul (South Korea); Hosei University, Tokyo (Japan) and many other international universities. She was Canon Foundation Fellow 2000 in Japan. Awarded by Premio Borromini, selected by Archmarathon and ADI-Index 2019. Sense/time_based design is her the main topic developed in education, conferences, publications, curatorship and professional works.

Author of *Storie di Architettura attraverso i sensi* (Bruno Mondadori, 2000), *Invisible Architectures. Experiencing places through the senses of smell* (Skira, 2006) and *Sensi, tempo e architettura* (Postmedia Books, 2012), *Sensefulness, new paradigms for Spatial Design* (Postmedia Books, 2019) and many other publications.

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Elisa Bertolotti works with storytelling, moving image and communication design. With a Ph.D and postdoc from Politecnico di Milano, Elisa is currently teaching design at the University of Madeira, Portugal.

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PhD in Industrial Design and Multimedia Communication (Politecnico di Milano). Associate professor of Communication/Interaction/Transmedia Design at the Faculty of Design and Art, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano.

Research and design topics since 1995: interaction, experience, multimodal interface design, visual, social and spatial representation, with a strong focus on tech evolution, and accessibility in the field of Cultural and Intangible Heritage and Archives. Previously researcher at the Department of Psychology of the University of Milano-Bicocca (Theory and Technology of Communication; Psychosocial Science of Communication), professor at the Politecnico di Milano and faculty member of the HEC in User Experience Design, the University of Bologna (Internet Science) and the Milan State University (Digital Communication).

Coordinator of the Commission "Theoretical, historical and critical research and editorial projects" of the ADI Design Index, preselection of the Compasso d'Oro Award.

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Her interest involves visual and gender identities in communication design field. She studies theoretical aspects of identity systems and their communication components and developed projects of basic and applied research. She is a member of the Ph.D Design board and of "Centro di Ricerca interuniversitario Culture di genere".

She won the "Compasso d'Oro" Design Award as co-author of the project for the multimedia catalogue of the Poldi Pezzoli Museum (Milan, 1995) and received Honourable Mention, Compasso d'Oro ADI (XXV), for the project "WeMi. La città per il welfare". She is author of several books: *La messa in scena del prodotto* (1999), *Packaging design* (2005), *Altre figure. Intorno alle figure di argomentazione* (2011), *Anticorpi comunicativi* (2012), *Un'interfaccia per il welfare* (2017), *Progetto e culture visive* (2018).

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PhD Candidate at the Design Department of Politecnico di Milano, she works in the research area involving communication design and stereotypes concerning social discriminations, specifically gender discriminations.

After the master degree in Communication Design, with a thesis about gender stereotypes in the communication field, she joined the research group DCxCG (Communication Design for Gender Cultures) contributing to projects on gender issues

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Architect and Visual Designer, Cinzia Ferrara holds a PhD in Industrial Design: she is Assistant Professor in the Department of Architecture at the University of Palermo, where she performs a series of duties such as conducting research on Visual Communication Design and holding courses for both the BA in Industrial Design and the MA in Design & Culture of the Territory. She's also the course leader for a series of masters and workshops, and an organiser of cultural events, conferences and exhibitions. From 2015 to 2018, she has been National President of Aiap (the Italian Association for Visual Communication Design) after serving as Vice President from 2009 to 2015. In 2017, she was one of 100 designers selected to be World Design Ambassadors for the Italian Design Day.

She's author of books and essays published on national and international journals: she's also part of editorial committees, observatories and European projects. She lives and works in Sicily, which is a continent, rather than just an island.

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Co-founder of *PAD. Pages on Arts & Design* journal, since 2011 she has been the PAD editor in chief. Since 2015 to 2017 she has been a member of ADI's executive board, and currently coordinates the technical-scientific committee for long-life professional training of design professionals.

Since 2019 she has been a member of the executive committee of *AIS/Design. Storia e Ricerche* scientific journal.

Authors of more than 140 scientific publications, she is a member of scientific committees in international conferences, reviewer for international scientific journals, and research evaluator for academic research application in NL and PT.

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In the research field, she is member of GREDITS (Design and Social Transformation Research Group). She has specialized on Historical and Historiographical Research of Design. Her research work is focused on Pop Art Design, and specifically on the development of graphical Pop Art in Catalonia and Spain as a result of her PhD thesis.

She is currently interested on research projects that seed to make visible the contribution of female graphic designers.

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Assistant professor at Politecnico di Milano (Department of Design, School of Design, Bachelor in Communication Design), he is secretary of the BSc + MSc Communication Design Courses. PhD in Design and Technology for the Enhancement of Cultural Heritage, he has more than 25 years of experience as a graphic design consultant.

Board member of Aiap (the Italian Association for Visual Communication Design), actually he is coordinator of activities and researches for the Graphic Design Documentation Centre (Aiap CDPG). Since 2013 he is a member of the editorial committee of *AIS/Design. Storia e Ricerche* journal and since 2014 of *PAD. Pages on Arts & Design* journal.

Starting from 1997 his contributions on graphic design and visual communication are published in journals, books and conference proceedings.

His main research activities are in the fields of visual identities, speculative and experience design, and graphic design micro-histories.

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Chella Quint

She is a Brooklyn, US-born, Sheffield, UK-based designer, writer, performer, researcher and founder of the Period Positive movement. In between performing feminist sketch comedy and studying for an MA in Education, she coined the term 'period positive' to describe the zeitgeist of her zines, art and craftivism, and developed the concept into a well-known desing initiative and campaign to find long-term solutions to menstrual illiteracy. She launched the first annual Period Positive Week in May 2019.

She has recently joined Lab4Living's 100 Year Life and Future Home project at Sheffield Hallam University. Her doctoral research explores ways to navigate aging and lifecycle changes where embodied shame can be a barrier to agency in co-design. She co-hosts the annual Sheffield Zine Fest and her zines are held in a number of international zine libraries and collections. She performs and exhibits regularly at science, literary and comedy festivals.

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TI SENTI POCO BENE? AIAP HA TUTTE LE SOLUZIONI PER TE. SCOPRILE.



Aiap CDPG, the *Graphic Design Documentation Centre*. Working to collect, catalogue, archive, enhance and promote any documents related to graphic design and visual communication. These documents (originals as well layouts of projects, books, posters, prints, catalogues, correspondence, photographs) help reconstruct the history of graphic design in Italy and support research and educational activities, as it is the CDGP's intention to make these documents widely available.



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