

Subject-based Zine Finding Aid: Trans Experiences

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Introduction

Theme:

Archives are a power source, often controlled by institutions with the power to marginalize (Benoit & Eveleigh, 2019). The concept of provenance refers to the history of a collection that traditionally surrounds a single individual or an institution. Records, however, are now seen as having a “societal provenance” that moves them towards a multifaceted view as they are a product of various historical factors (Nesmith, 2006, p. 351). This perspective shift is crucial when considering the documentation of marginalized communities, which are often excluded and misrepresented within institutional records and archival descriptions.

Community collections are structured by people who organize for the cause it supports (such as 2SLGBTQIA+ community archives), which is beneficial as there are no firm demands in terms of types of material in the collection (Morrone, 2014). Zines, self-published and non-commercial magazines, are an example of the archival material found in community collections (Gabai, 2016, p. 20). They give a voice to marginalized communities as they are a method for people to document their experiences; one does not have to possess any kind of privilege to make a zine (Morrone, 2014, p. 153). ‘Offline media’ is frequently the method by which transgender-identifying people first encounter representation of other transgender people and communities (McInroy & Craig, 2015, p. 607). Themes of queer and trans identity, resistance, and representation unite the zines selected from the QPIRG archives. These works allow individuals identifying within the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, particularly youth and trans people, to share their stories through the art of literacy outside of centralized institutional control.

Zines act as tools of self-expression, community-building and political activism, which is the commonality that led to grouping these works. By centring trans and queer voices, they have both an artistic and an activist intention. As Kate Angell’s introduction in her zine, *My Feminists Friends* (2012) explains, zines “allow us to deconstruct old ideas and notions about gender and any other topic” (as cited

in Morrone, 2014, p. 153). As much as they are personal reflections, zines also act as political interventions where artists can convey empathy and understanding of the trans experience towards the user (Kratzer, 2020). As traditional media, which plays a critical role in shaping trans identity, fails to provide accurate or affirming representations, the nature of zines allows 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals to reclaim their narratives through an engaging and accessible medium (McInroy & Craig, 2015).

Trans and queer individuals experience a sort of ‘exhaustion’ due to institutional discrimination and emotional labour from institutional barriers. This concept coined by Robinson is called Queer Battle Fatigue (QBF) (2022). It is essential to consider this concept when viewing zines such as *Classism in the Transgender Movement: Contingency and Denial of Responsibility in Academic Theory* (Barsic, 1998), that depict different accounts of the trans experience. Understanding the weight misgendering, workplace discrimination, and social exclusion place on transgender people highlights the role of zines as testimonies of resilience.

Feminist and queer zines emerged and can be traced to the feminist and punk rock scene from the 1970s (Gabai, 2016). Gabai defines the Riot Grrrl movement of the 1990s as the response to the erasure of marginalized voices drawing from the inspiration of radical self-published small press pamphlets (2016). Grrrl zines created became “transnational spaces for women, genderqueer and trans people of Asian descent living diaspora to investigate the politics of race, desire and imagination, heritage and nostalgia, homeland, mobility and identity.” (Gabai, 2016, p. 21) Zines have long been recognized for their diverse content, genre, and ability to overcome boundaries by providing safe space and informative content.

Trans and non-binary creators created zines to explore gender identity and systemic oppression. Zines' mixed illustrative and mixed-media nature allows authors to reclaim autonomy over their visual representation. Metzger and Ringelberg explore how transgender visual culture is crucial in challenging gender roles and advocating social change (2020). Zines such as *Femmes in Space: Issue 1* (*Femmes in Space*, n.d.) and *Gender Worrier Warrior* (*Gender Worrier Warrior*, 2017) highlight how queer and trans individuals use artistic mediums—including visual art, street art, graffiti, and creative writing—to challenge dominant narratives about gender and identity. Transgender art and visual culture is a growing field where hope relies on its expansion through shared notions and avoiding any constraints that could create limitations to any “future imaginary” (Metzer & Ringelberg, 2020, p. 159).

Robinson’s study on QBF emphasizes using creative expression, for example, poetry, as a coping mechanism for marginalized individuals (2022). In this case, the creative expression is the art in the zines, or within the photographs of Montreal graffiti. The zine themselves are different forms of political acts that challenge the erasure of trans and queer experiences by implementing a visual representation decided by themselves. These creative expressions become research methods to

connect with marginalized communities by creating representation, centering “their reality [and] claims their experience as valid.” (Robinson, 2022, p. 913).

Archives will always contain more material from those who have exploited and conquered as “archival records were [...]created by the ‘winners.’”(Bastian, 2006, p. 268). However, this collection's zines represent self-publishing's power as a transformative act of resistance and identity affirmation through raw, unfiltered, deeply personal narratives. These are not just documents of queer and trans experiences but also a means to create bonds of solidarity, challenge institutional exclusion, and inspire change. These zines amplify voices usually silenced in the mainstream discourse and affirm that independent media is necessary in the continuous struggle for visibility, rights, and liberation of 2SLGBTQIA+. Integrating art through street arts, visual media, and creative writing shows that artistic expression is still crucial in individual identity formation and collective activism.

Overview of Items

The zines were selected based on how they represent the diverse spectrum of experiences which transgender people experience, are influenced by, and how the trans identity, in turn, influences experiences. In our collection, these criteria were met in multiple ways: in regards to class, such as in the zine entitled *Classism in the Transgender Movement: Contingency and Denial of Responsibility in Academic Theory* (Barsic, 1998); youth, as the *Queer and Trans Youth Resistance!* (Tea-Rex, 2009) describes; by being imprisoned, as the *Imprisoned Pride: How Queer and Trans Prisoners Get Written out of Mainstream Pride Movements* (Prisoner Correspondence Project, 2008) describes; being a femme, as shown in the *Femmes in Space* (Femmes in Space, n.d.) zine; which treatments to use for their pain, as Jacoby Ballard describes in his two zines on herbal remedies for transgender people (Ballard, n.d., a. and Ballard n.d., b.); or represented in street art, as *Gender Worrier Warrior* (2017) shows. This criteria for selection, where the zines were selected for how they represent the variety of ways in which the trans experience can influence one's life, allows for a collection that brings awareness of the many, often hidden or not as obvious, ways that transgender's people gender identity informs their experiences. Furthermore, by portraying the honest truth of the complexity of transgender peoples experiences, these zines act as voices of resistance and activism against attempts to silence or quiet their creators, by outside, powerful institutions.

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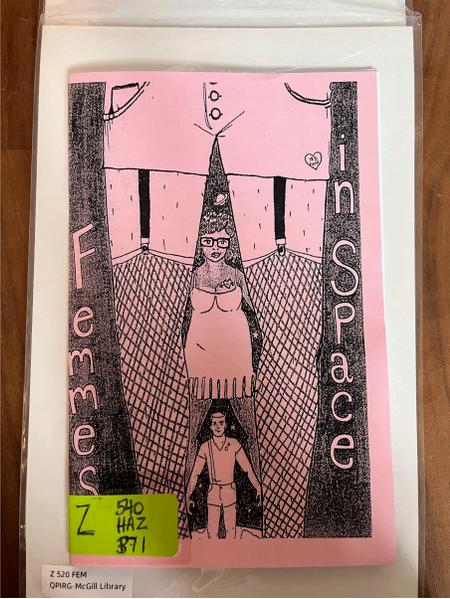
It is often useful to know the group or individual that is creating the zine because it can give more context to the subject matter of the works. The information which we were able to extract from the zines was quite varied in detail and type. In the case of

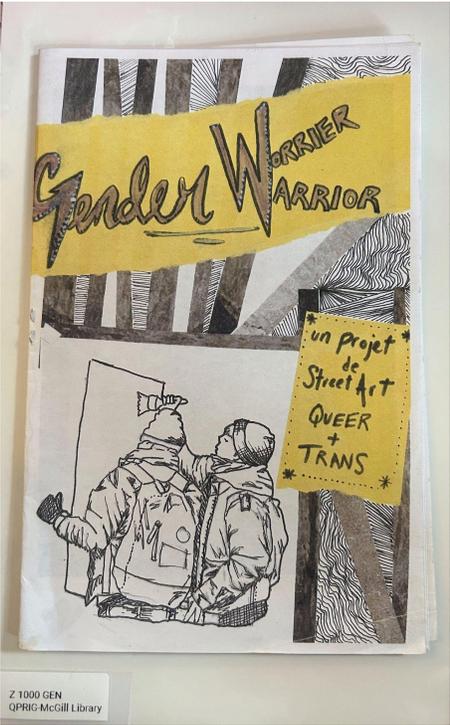
Gender Worrier Warrior (2017), much of the background information is unknown, as the creators preferred to remain anonymous. The lack of authorship could be a purposeful contribution to the overall message of the zine, which is a collection of photographs of anonymous queer street art. Imprisoned Pride: How Queer and Trans Prisoners Get Written out of Mainstream Pride Movements is a zine produced by the Prisoner Correspondence Project, which was originally part of a panel in Montreal in 2008. Their work focuses on LGBTQ+ prisoners. The individual writers of the zines are purposefully left anonymous, however unlike the authors of Gender Worrier Warrior (2017), they gave themselves a group name. The author of the Holistic Care Through Gender Transition zine, Jacoby Ballard, supplied the information that he is a “herbalist, yoga teacher, community educator, and a transman,” along with his full name (Ballard, n.d.). He offers a variety of resources in his website, including “Queer and Trans Yoga”, and workshops on “diversity, equity, and inclusion” (Ballard, n.d. “About” section.). The Femmes in Space zine is dedicated to amplifying queer and trans voices, with a particular focus on exploring queer and trans femme identities (Femmes in Space, n.d.). Unlike Ballard’s Holistic Care Through Gender Transition zine (Ballard, n.d., a.), this issue of the Femmes in Space (Femmes in Space, n.d.) zine features contributions from 10 diverse creators, including essays, personal stories, photographs, and illustrations, and all creators have supplied their names. Each piece offers a unique perspective on the many ways ‘femme’ is embodied, experienced, and understood. Thus, the authorship of the zines in our collection are as varied as the experiences their authors describe within them

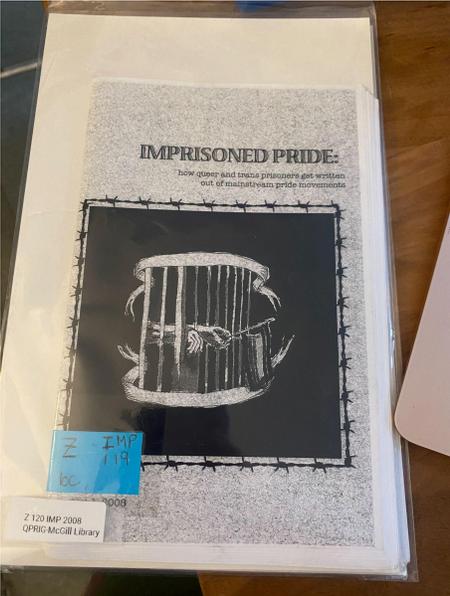
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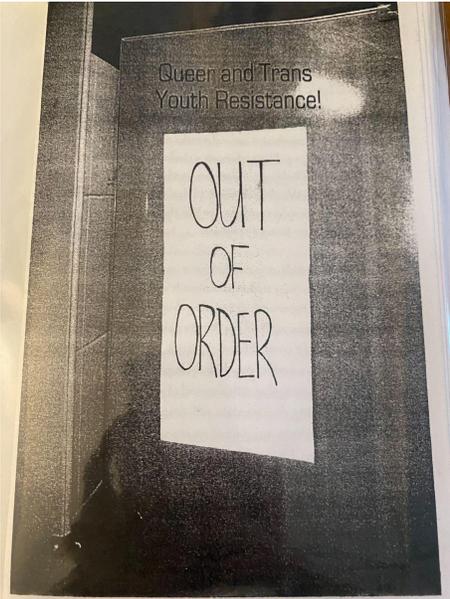
It is important to have a methodological system of organizing a finding aid. For our finding aid, we decided to arrange the zines by the alphabetical order of their titles. This felt like the most user-friendly option for organizing a finding aid in our case, as we wanted to choose a standardized system that would be easiest for the users to browse through the collection. Not all of the zines we chose had the same descriptive metadata, such as dates and authors. We considered organizing our finding aid alphabetically by author, instead of title, but decided against this as there is a zine with anonymous authors. We also considered organizing our finding aid by date, but some zines did not have dates available. While the zines did not all have dates or authors, they all had titles, so we chose to organize them by the alphabetical order of their titles.

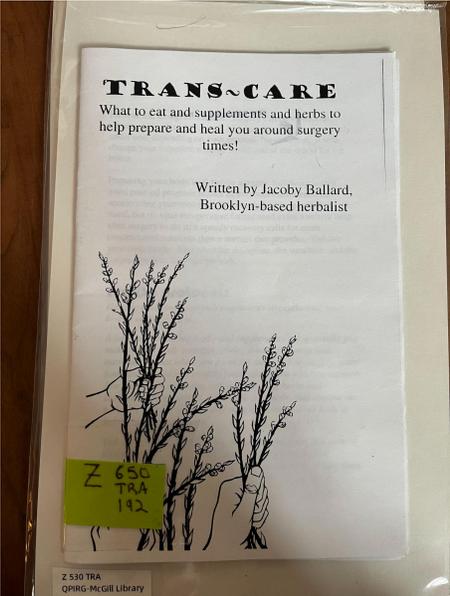
Title	Classism in the Transgender Movement: Contingency and Denial of Responsibility in Academic Theory	
Date	April, 1998	
Author/s	Willyboy; Jayson Barsic	
Publisher		
Language	English	
Call No	Z 530 WIL 1998	
Subjects	transgender; class analysis; transgender politics; queer theory	
Description	Collection of works including poetry, song lyrics, comics, stories, essays and artwork, about the trans experience.	
Pages	40	
Dimensions	8.5 x 5.5	
Number of Copies	1	

Title	Femmes in Space, Issue 1	
Date		
Editor/s	Kate Hazell and Shay Enxuga	
Publisher		
Language	French	
Call No	Z 540 HAZ 371	
Subjects	transgender; writing; femme; art; gender identity	
Description	A collection of essays, creative writing, and art around the topic of "femme" to amplify femme-identifying queer and trans voices.	
Pages	29	
Dimensions	8.5 x 5.5	
Number of Copies	1	

Title	Holistic Care Through Gender Transition: A Nutrition and Herbal Guide to Transgender Care	
Date		
Author/s	Jacob Ballard	
Publisher		
Language	English	
Call No	Z 530 HOL	
Subjects	transgender; trans health; herbal remedies; hormones; transition	
Description	Herbal-based remedies to help ease the pain of transgender people dealing with various diseases, hormonal effects, post-surgery pains, and general pain.	
Pages	24	
Dimensions	8.5 x 5.5	
Number of Copies	1	

Title	Imprisoned Pride: how queer and trans prisoners get written out of mainstream pride movements	
Date	August 1, 2008	
Author/s	Prisoner Correspondence Project	
Publisher		
Language	English	
Call No	Z 120 IMP 2008	
Subjects	transgender; queer; pride; prisoners; incarnation.	
Description	A collection of entries written by imprisoned people who identify as queer or trans. These include individual entries centred around what pride means to them.	
Pages	31	
Dimensions	8.5 x 5.5	
Number of Copies	1	

Title	Queer and Trans Youth Resistance!		
Date	2009		
Author/s	Sarah Tea-Rex		
Publisher			
Language	English		
Call No			
Subjects	transgender; queer activism; resistance; queer resources; Montreal		
Description	A guide for queer and trans youth which includes interviews, vocabulary lists, and Montreal resources.		
Pages	35		
Dimensions	8.5 x 5.5		
Number of Copies	1		

Title	Trans Care - What to eat and supplements and herbs to help prepare and heal you around surgery times!	
Date		
Author/s	Jacob Ballard	
Publisher		
Language	English	
Call No	Z 650 TRA 192	
Subjects	transgender; health care; gender affirming surgery; trans health; herbal remedies	
Description	Pre-operation and post-operation tips for gender-affirming surgery including nutrition information, supplements and herbal remedies.	
Pages	8	
Dimensions	8.5 x 5.5	
Number of Copies	1	

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