

## **Subject-based Zine Finding Aid: Women's Health and Sexuality**

**Date: January 30th, 2025**

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This finding aid was created as part of INFS 645: Archival Principles & Practice, McGill University, School of Information Studies, Winter 2025 taught by Prof. Gracen Brilmyer.

### **Introduction**

The overarching theme that is laced throughout this collection of zines is the complex subject of women's health and sexuality. This is a multifaceted topic that covers a wide range of experiences and issues that concern the well-being of women, such as sexual health, sexuality, the menstrual cycle, and reproductive rights. To ensure that the selected theme was comprehensive of the women's reality, an agreement was made on how to define the theme. Firstly, an agreement had to be made on how to define the term 'women'. As a group, it was decided that women would be used to describe anyone who identifies with that gender expression. As for what issues could fall under the umbrella of women's health and sexuality, a variety of sources were consulted, such as the Pfizer and World Health Organization (WHO) websites. We found, however, that these definitions were too broad, focusing solely on the health issues that plagued people who were assigned female at birth. A more inclusive definition of women's health was agreed upon that deemed that any issue that affected the emotional or physical well-being of a woman would fall under the theme of women's health and sexuality and, ultimately, women's struggles.

### **Context**

The theme of women's health and sexuality has an extensive history behind it including but not limited to the feminist health activism movement that started in the late 1960's (Dubriwny, 2013). From a historical standpoint, medicine has changed drastically over the past few centuries with medical advances such the use of anesthesia and vaccines (Patrick, 2023). However, despite women having benefited from these advances, the relationship between women and medicine has and continues to be complicated. In the realm of medicine, women have been viewed as weaker and therefore more likely to become ill compared to men (Patrick, 2023). In addition to the medical field being male-dominated, the treatment women received was often discriminatory (Patrick, 2023). The care women did receive revolved around reproductive health which included "blaming reproductive organs for their medical

issues” (Patrick, 2023) as well as reducing their role to solely being mothers. Women were merely expected to do as instructed and unfortunately, there was restricted access on what the average person could obtain regarding medical information (Dubriwny, 2013). There was also little to no research being done regarding women’s health issues and women were not being included in clinical trials (Dubriwny, 2013). While there are still significant issues in terms of women’s health today, there is far more awareness and women do have more choice about their health and sexuality as a whole. This is exhibited within the zine collection which discusses various aspects of reproductive health such as menstruation or sexual health.

For further context, the archival literature about activism in archives provides us with the idea of the feminist standpoint appraisal epistemology. The feminist standpoint appraisal believes that the values of records are linked in how well they can “document the actions of and serve the needs of oppressed people” (Caswell, 2019). There is also a shift in allegiances with feminist standpoint appraisal from large institutions to communities that are most oppressed from institutions (Caswell, 2019) such as QPIRG McGill which seeks to work towards social and environmental justice.

### **Overview of Items**

1. 220 REP “Reproduce freely : a reproductive autonomy zine / Reproduire en liberté : un zine sur l’autonomie reproductrice” by Telyn Kusalik (editor)
2. Z520 HOW 1983 / Z 660 HOW 437 “How to Cope with Menstrual Problems—a Wholistic Approach: You Don’t Have to Live with Them Anymore” by Nikki Goldbeck
3. 540 FIR “Fire with Water / Combattre le feu par l’eau : A journal for survivors of sexual assault / Une revue pour les survivants d’agression sexuelle” by various (anonymous) authors
4. 120 FEM 2011 “...femmes trans en prison” by various authors
5. 1800 REP/ABOR 2013 “abortion and its’ predecessors / a brief overview of techniques of pregnancy termination throughout history and the history of abortion in Canada” by unknown author
6. 500 PLE 2007 “Il Pleut des Gouines / It’s Raining Dykes” by lolagouine
7. 240 DEA “Deafula #8” by Kerri Radley
8. 200 COM “Complaints And Disorders / The Sexual Politics of Sickness” by Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English

### *Background Information*

Three of these zines are collections, assembled either by organizations or individuals with a mix of genres within each publication—poetry, resource lists, essays, and comics. “Fire with Water” contains works collected by the Sexual Assault Centre of

the McGill Students' Society (SACOMSS). SACOMSS and several associated organizations dedicated to helping victims solicit art about surviving sexual violence from across Canada. Their annual show, *Fire With Water*, displays the multimedia and performance art and publishes the written works in a zine (*Union for Gender Empowerment*). Some of these zines, such as Telyn Kusamik's "Reproduce freely", take place specifically within McGill University's political climate. Kusamik assembled it as part of a pro-choice movement she was starting to counter a growing pro-life group and their propaganda at the University. Every part of the zine is for locals seeking abortion help in Montreal, particularly for McGill students.

In contrast, "... femmes trans en prison" collects published articles from mainstream and anarchist publications and arranges them to provide an overview of trans women's problems in prison. They take works from the United States and translate them to French, fully acknowledging in the introduction that some elements will not apply to France's issues. There is no listed author or editor.

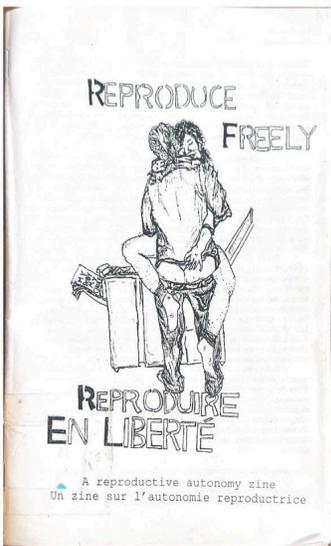
All of these zines present personal stories in some way. However, the independent zinesters in our collection articulate how political realities affect their individual lives by writing and illustrating the zines themselves—usually with their friends as editors, distributors, and coauthors (Coco). They offer intimate meditations on gender, health, their musings on food with limited institutional oversight. lolagouine ([ilpleutdesgouines.blogspot.com](http://ilpleutdesgouines.blogspot.com)) also wrote under Riot Coco ([riotcoco.blogspot.com](http://riotcoco.blogspot.com)) and is a Montreal-based creative in English, French, and Spanish. Much of her work is about gender and sexuality—being trans while rejecting labels, racism, sex toys, relationships, and living in Montreal. The content of her zines are an extension of her blogs, which have remained untouched since 2009.

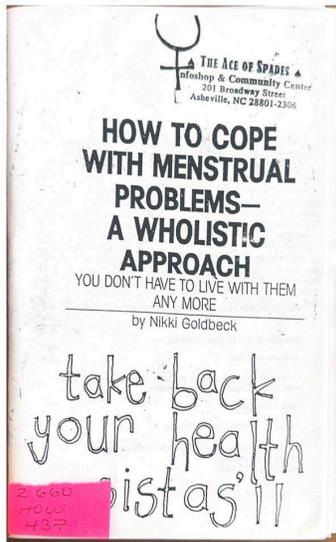
We also have authors providing information rooted in academic research and history rather than personal experience. Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English coauthored "Complaints and Disorders" as a sequel to their best-selling book "Witches, Midwives, and Nurse" in 1974. They began as academics in immunology and English, respectively, and both became award-winning columnists and leftist activists in the 1970s through the 90s.

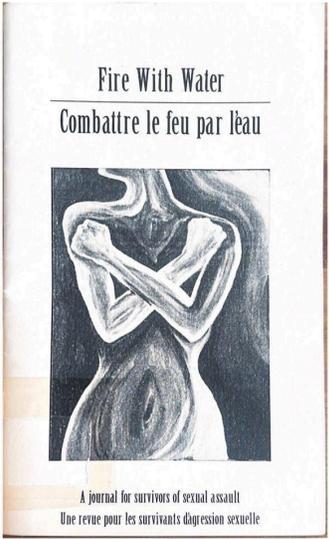
#### *Justification for Arrangement*

This collection is arranged like a guide to women's struggles by illustrating different sides of women's health and sexuality. It begins with reproductive health and ends with the sexist history of medicine. Based on the variety of topics within this collection, the arrangement reflects multiple facets of women's health and sexuality,

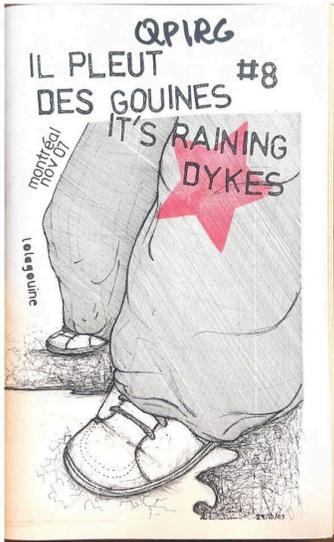
including lesbians', and trans and disabled women's point of views and their unique struggles. This way the finding aid should guide through the topic almost like a storyteller.

<b>Title</b>	Reproduce freely : a reproductive autonomy zine / Reproduire en liberté : un zine sur l'autonomie reproductrice	
<b>Date</b>	2009	
<b>Author/s</b>	Telyn Kusalik	
<b>Publisher</b>		
<b>Language</b>	English, French	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 220 REP	
<b>Subjects</b>	abortion ; pro-choice movement ; reproductive rights ; body politics ; poetry	
<b>Description</b>	<p>“A compilation zine on reproductive rights and bodily autonomy. It is a collection of personal stories, poetry, artwork, facts, and resources on the politics and experiences of abortion and the right to choose. A bilingual zine, in English and French. This zine could be triggering for some readers.” Source: Sarah Tea-Rex.</p>	
<b>Pages</b>	54	
<b>Dimensions</b>	5.5 x 8.5 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

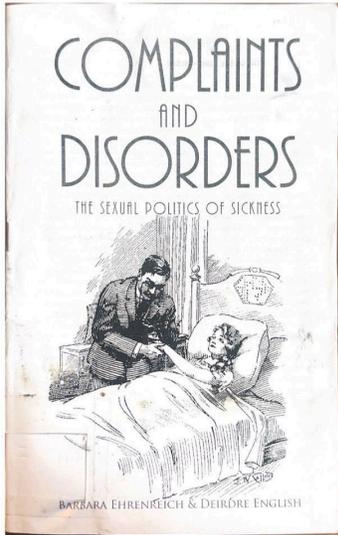
<b>Title</b>	How to Cope with Menstrual Problems - A Wholistic Approach: You Don't Have to Live with Them Anymore	
<b>Date</b>	1983	
<b>Author/s</b>	Nikki Goldbeck	
<b>Publisher</b>	The Ace of Spades	
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 520 HOW 1983	
<b>Subjects</b>	nutrition; menstruation; menstrual cycle; women's health	
<b>Description</b>	<p>This zine discusses various ways of practicing self-care during menstruation including nutrition, exercise, and drug therapy.</p> <p>Source:  <a href="https://library.civicmediacenter.org/collection/zine/how-cope-menstrual-problems-wholistic-approach-you-dont-have-live-them-any-more">https://library.civicmediacenter.org/collection/zine/how-cope-menstrual-problems-wholistic-approach-you-dont-have-live-them-any-more</a></p>	
<b>Pages</b>	26	
<b>Dimensions</b>	8.5 x 5.5 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

<b>Title</b>	Fire with Water / Combattre le feu par l'eau	
<b>Date</b>		
<b>Author/s</b>		
<b>Publisher</b>	Sexual Assault Centre of the McGill Students' Society (SACOMSS)	
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 540 FIR	
<b>Subjects</b>	sexual aggression; sexual harassment	
<b>Description</b>	This zine discusses the stories by survivors of sexual violence in prose and verse formats. Additional source: <a href="https://theconcordian.com/2002/10/sexual-assault-stays-with-victims/">https://theconcordian.com/2002/10/sexual-assault-stays-with-victims/</a>	
<b>Pages</b>	70	
<b>Dimensions</b>	5.5 x 8.5 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

<b>Title</b>	... femmes trans en prison	
<b>Date</b>	June 2011	
<b>Author/s</b>		
<b>Publisher</b>	GRIP Quebec PIRG	
<b>Language</b>	French	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 120 FEM 2011	
<b>Subjects</b>	trans health; prison conditions; trans women; women's health	
<b>Description</b>	A selection of articles and transcriptions from previously published works with and about transgender women about their experience in prison. Source: <a href="https://infokiosques.net/spip.php?article864">https://infokiosques.net/spip.php?article864</a>	
<b>Pages</b>	37	
<b>Dimensions</b>	5.5 x 8.5 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

<b>Title</b>	Il pleut des gouines #8 / It's raining dykes #8	
<b>Date</b>	2007	
<b>Author/s</b>	[Riot Coco]	
<b>Publisher</b>	l'agouine	
<b>Language</b>	English ; French	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 500 PLE 2007	
<b>Subjects</b>	personal stories ; homophobia ; comics ; queer activism ; lesbian	
<b>Description</b>	<p>“This is a zine dealing with queer spaces. The author also tells in drawing and text her street bashing because of her non-conformity gender.” Additional sources:  <a href="https://ilpleutdesgouines.blogspot.com/2007/11/zine-network-and-get-file-for-8.html">https://ilpleutdesgouines.blogspot.com/2007/11/zine-network-and-get-file-for-8.html</a>  <a href="https://anchorarchive.org/zines/il-pleut-des-gouines-8">https://anchorarchive.org/zines/il-pleut-des-gouines-8</a></p>	
<b>Pages</b>	39	
<b>Dimensions</b>	8.5 x 5.5 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

<b>Title</b>	Deafula #8 : The Relationships Issue	
<b>Date</b>	Spring 2015	
<b>Author/s</b>	Kerri [Radley]	
<b>Publisher</b>		
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 240 DEA	
<b>Subjects</b>	disability ; ableism ; sexism	
<b>Description</b>	<p>Kerri talks about her experiences being deaf in a relationship with a hearing person. The zine includes a Q&amp;A with the husband about his wife's disability. Additional source:  <a href="https://sites.hampshire.edu/zines/2020/09/18/deafula-8/">https://sites.hampshire.edu/zines/2020/09/18/deafula-8/</a></p>	
<b>Pages</b>	42	
<b>Dimensions</b>	4.2 x 7 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

<b>Title</b>	Complaints and Disorders: The Sexual Politics of Sickness	
<b>Date</b>	1973	
<b>Author/s</b>	Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English	
<b>Publisher</b>	Lunaria Press	
<b>Language</b>	English	
<b>Call No</b>	Z 200 COM	
<b>Subjects</b>	women's health; sexual health; body politics; gender politics	
<b>Description</b>	This zine contains articles about medicine through the lens of how it impacts women. Article titles include but are not limited to "A Perspective on the Social Role of Medicine" and "Women and Medicine in the Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries".	
<b>Pages</b>	44	
<b>Dimensions</b>	8.5 x 5.5 in	
<b>Number of Copies</b>	1	

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